

Parent Handbook



Early Learning Center Manassas Presbyterian Church

8201 Ashton Ave
Manassas, VA 20109
703-369-5880

www.manassaspreschool.org

elc@mpc-va.org

LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

Dear ELC Families,

As the pastor at Manassas Presbyterian Church, it is a joy to me to have young children on our campus. Hearing their giggles as they play on the playground and the echoes of music and learning in the halls is a special treat. It is a privilege to meet your children as I share with them in chapel time once a month.

We do realize that while ELC is a ministry of the church, many of our preschoolers come from non-Christian faith traditions or from families with no religious preference. We respect and welcome this diversity. As I prepare my messages to share with the children in the church sanctuary, I will embrace themes of God's grace and love that we see through our families and the world around us.

You will receive a sheet that summarizes the message I discussed with the children. If you ever have any questions about what we talk about during our time together, please feel free to contact me.

We at Manassas Presbyterian Church are thankful to be able to offer this educational ministry to the families of this community.

Sincerely,

The Reverend Laura Fitzgibbon



WELCOME

Welcome to Manassas Presbyterian Church Early Learning Center! We are excited to have this opportunity to get to know your family, and are looking forward to watching your child grow and learn during these important early years. It is our hope to instill a joy of learning and curiosity in your child, through the process of exploration, trial and error, and the excitement of success. May you also enjoy this experience with your child!

MISSION STATEMENT

The Early Learning Center (ELC) is a valued ministry of Manassas Presbyterian Church (MPC). In our programs, each child is viewed as an individual person with needs that are unique to him/her. We strive to recognize and meet the needs of each child.

We will work to provide experiences that will enrich and enhance each child's cognitive, language, social, emotional, physical, and creative development. Your child will come to know him/herself as a part of a group and learn the balance of independence and interdependence.

To enable the accomplishments of these objectives, we provide a "rich in experience" classroom environment that is open, loving, supportive, and nurturing. This will allow your child to develop a positive self-concept, knowing that he/she is a precious child of God.

PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

Our school strives to create a positive school experience where children feel confident, curious, and excited about learning and trying new things. Our classroom environments support playful learning as we know children learn best through investigation, discovery and hands-on experiences. We value each stage of a child's development and aim to set a foundation for joyful future learning.

Teachers will offer a variety of large group, small group, and individual activities each day allowing students to choose what is of interest to them. Consistency in message and routine is crucial during early childhood. Our teachers work together

to create a feeling of family and the relationship between teacher and student is highly valued. It is the teacher's job to facilitate and guide play to create a vibrant learning environment.

We want our students to be excited to come to school every day. We want them to feel safe and loved. If we can succeed in these things, then the learning will follow.

RELIGION AND MPC ELC

Manassas Presbyterian Church Early Learning Center is a ministry outreach of the church. Although it is run by a Board of Directors composed of members of Manassas Presbyterian Church, the Early Learning Center is not defined as a Christian preschool. We do, however, hope to offer our community a school that, following the example of Jesus Christ, is welcoming to all. Each day our classrooms offer a general prayer of thanksgiving to God at snack time. Our programs also have a monthly Chapel Time. The focus of these times is to teach the children that God offers us his unconditional love. Our Chapel Time is based on the beliefs of all children of the God of Abraham, but welcomes all regardless of religious background. We do let our Christianity show at Christmas and Easter. Teachers may celebrate these holidays with age appropriate explanations of why these days are important to Christians but we do not expect the children to come away with religious understanding or devotion.

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY

Our program is committed to multicultural education, dedicated to human rights, dignity of the individual, and social justice. We strive to create a program that truly reflects the lives of our children, families, staff, and community. By recognizing the impact culture plays on families, we will make every effort to provide a culturally responsive program by affirming human differences and the right of people to make choices about their own lifestyles. We seek to recognize, appreciate, and respect the uniqueness of each child and each family. We encourage all families to share their customs, cultures, and talents.

LICENSING INFORMATION

Manassas Presbyterian Church Early Learning Center is classified as a "Religiously Exempt Child Day Center" with the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education. The Early Learning Center has general liability insurance covered through the policy held by Manassas Presbyterian Church.

STAFF

ELC operates under a volunteer Board of Directors ("Board") – which includes members of the congregation, and a church Session representative. The Director and/or the Assistant Director attend all board meetings. Important matters are reviewed by the Board, which is concerned with all phases of the school's program.

The Director is responsible for the daily operations of the preschool. This includes incorporating suggestions from parents and teachers, recommending changes in school policies and procedures and implementing decisions made by the Board. The Director is always available to answer any questions or discuss problems parents might have.

Each staff member at ELC has demonstrated a love for preschool age children and has a combination of education and experience that demonstrates a background in early childhood development. In addition, during the school year, each employee is required to obtain a minimum of 16 hours of professional development related to early childhood education.

All staff are certified by a practicing physician to be free from any disability which would prevent them from caring for children. Each staff member must be fingerprinted and pass criminal and child protection background checks.

All substitute teachers are also subject to fingerprinting and complete background checks.

REPORTING OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OF NEGLECT

The MPC ELC staff is required by the Commonwealth of Virginia to report any and all instances of known or suspected child abuse, neglect, and/or endangerment. All staff are trained annually to be able to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. When a staff member has information or evidence of suspected child abuse, the Director or Church Pastor is informed of the concern, who will then contact the Department of Social Services. The Department of Social Services will determine the action to be taken from the point of contact.

LOCATION AND FACILITIES

The Early Learning Center is accessed through the doorway at the rear of the Manassas Presbyterian Church, 8201 Ashton Avenue, Manassas, VA. Please follow the driveway on the left side past the church building. The ELC consists of 8 classrooms and a music room used on a daily basis to accommodate the enrollment of up to 112 children daily, with a maximum enrollment of up to 176 children a year. The ELC and the Property Committee of Manassas Presbyterian Church maintain two outdoor playgrounds adjacent to the preschool wing consisting of swings, slides, climbing equipment, balance beams, etc.

BRIGHTWHEEL PROGRAM

The ELC uses the Brightwheel app to enhance parent communications and support administrative processes. You will be required to create a Brightwheel account when you register your child. Over the course of the year, Brightwheel will be used for invoicing, payments, attendance, and communication between parents and staff (including pictures).

REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

To register your child for ELC, you need to submit an online registration form using Brightwheel and pay a registration fee. Returning students wishing to re-register for the next school year must be in good financial standing and have a complete student file (Virginia School Entrance Health Form with vaccination record and birth certificate). Registration dates, current program descriptions, registration fees, and tuition rates for the year are available in the preschool office and on the website. Submission dates vary year to year, but typically registration opens for the new school year in early February.

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

Children who are 2 years old (by September 30th) up to kindergarten age are eligible to enroll in ELC. ELC admits children regardless of race, creed, color, sex, national origin, or religion. Children with special needs will be accepted on the approval of the Director and Preschool Board after receipt of their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and a meeting with the teacher. (This is to ensure that we can provide the resources and facilities to meet each child's needs.)

All students must submit the following documents for their student file:

- Enrollment Form, with acknowledgment of the policies in the parent handbook
- Virginia School Entrance Health Form, signed by a physician/health department official, or his/her designee, **including their vaccination record.**
- A copy of their birth certificate

POTTY-TRAINING POLICY

All students in our 3 and 4-year old classes **MUST** be fully independent in the bathroom. This means:

- 1) The child is willing and able to communicate his/her need to a teacher;
- 2) The child can pull down and pull up to their bottom clothing without assistance;
- 3) The child can manage the process without assistance.

PROGRAM OFFERINGS

ELC strives to offer classes as needed by the community; and as space is available to accommodate the programs. The following classes are offered and filled on a first-come/first-served basis according to the registration guidelines.

- 2-year-old class - A child must have their 2nd birthday by September 30.
- 3-year-old class - A child must have their 3rd birthday by September 30.
The child must be able to completely care for his/her toilet needs; No diapers or pull-ups are permitted at any time.
- 4-year-old class - A child must have their 4th birthday by September 30.
The child must be able to completely care for his/her toilet needs; No diapers or pull-ups are permitted at any time.

- In-school transfers are only permitted on recommendation of the teacher and Director or Board to meet the developmental needs of the child. All transfers must have Board approval.

If classes are full, your child's name will be put on a wait list. If and when an opening occurs during the year (prior to April 1st), we will call from the wait list. You will be given 48 hours to respond.

If there are not enough students registered to form a class by late summer, those students' families will be contacted with an alternate class placement.

Once the school year has begun, new student registrations are accepted as long as there is space in a class. New students are not admitted after March 31st.

TUITION INFORMATION

The first tuition payment for students is due August 15th. This payment is called the Advanced Tuition Deposit and guarantees the child a place in the school. This payment is non-refundable and acts as the May tuition payment (last month's tuition). If the August payment is not received by August 15th, ELC has the right to fill the spot with a child from the wait list.

For families with multiple children we offer a 10% sibling discount. This discount cannot be combined with the pay-in-full discounted option. Please contact the ELC office for more information.

Payment for each remaining month, beginning in September thru/including the month of April, is due on the 1st of the month. If tuition has not been paid by the 7th of the month, a late fee of \$25.00 will be assessed. By the end of the school year, a total of 9 monthly tuition payments will be made to the school. An annual discounted prepayment option is available. If you choose to prepay your total year's tuition in one lump sum, you will receive a 5% discount. This only applies to payments made by August 15th.

Tuition payments can be made by using your bank account or a credit card via Brightwheel. Please note some fees do apply for this convenience. Cash or check is also accepted. Please make checks payable to MPC ELC and write your child's name in the "notes" line. If paying by cash, please bring cash to the preschool office and we will prepare a receipt for you; for the safety of all, you may not leave cash payments with teachers. Receipts for payments can be accessed via Brightwheel. Please note that if the office is closed, a locked payment box is located right outside the school office door.

If your family has temporary hardship, tuition payment agreements can be made. A written agreement of a payment plan will be made and signed by the family and the Director. ELC will do everything in its capability to work with a family to keep a child in the preschool program. However, if tuition account plus late fees

are not paid by the end of the month, ELC has the right to remove the child from the rolls if the family has not contacted the Director. ELC holds the right to place a child from the wait list into the class at this point. The child may only reenter the program after all prior fees are paid if space is available. There is a \$25 fee for all returned checks. After 2 returned checks, all future payments must be made by cash or money order. All fees paid are applied to any outstanding charges first, then to the current tuition month.

MPC ELC offers a limited number of partial scholarships for families in need. The Board considers applications for scholarship funds on a case-by-case basis when money is available. Families that receive MPC ELC scholarships accept their financial commitment to the program, just as ELC accepts our financial commitment to the family. If the family's tuition fees are not paid for 2 months, the scholarship is forfeited, and the child will be removed from the rolls. Scholarship applications are available in the preschool office.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

The preschool retains the right to request withdrawal of any child from the program for any cause determined to be sufficient by the teacher, Director and Preschool Board. The decision to withdraw a child based on behavior or developmental needs is not made lightly, and only after a minimum of two meetings are held with the parent(s), teachers, and/or Director. No parent shall be asked to withdraw a child without the knowledge and approval of the teacher, Director, and Board. Should the preschool request withdrawal of a child, 2 weeks written notice will be given.

Such reasons to dismiss a child include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The program at MPC ELC is not able to fulfill the specific needs of the child. If a child requires a more specialized program than is available at MPC ELC, teacher and/or Director will inform parents of other services open to them (such as Child Find).
- The presence of a child in a class is so disruptive that it endangers the well-being of the other children or prevents the teacher from carrying out the preschool program. This includes, but is not limited to, biting and aggressive behaviors.
- The child poses a safety risk to himself, other children or teachers.
- Tuition fees are consistently not paid. Parents should contact the Director if there is a temporary problem with payment. If funds are available, the Board may grant a partial scholarship. If there is no scholarship money available, the Board may elect to accept a delay in the tuition payments.
- If a family chooses to take a leave of absence for an extended period of time (e.g. one month, two months, three months), tuition payments are required for the period of time that their child will be absent from school in order to hold the child's spot in the program. If they choose not to pay the tuition for the extended absence, the student will be withdrawn from the program. The Advanced Tuition Payment is not returned.

- Repeatedly bringing a sick child to school.
- Repeatedly bringing a snack that is not peanut-free.
- Continuously picking up a child late.

In the event a parent wishes to withdraw a child from the program, the preschool requires 1 month's notice. This enables the preschool to fill the vacancy as the child leaves. If you withdraw part way through the school year for any reason other than job relocation or military reassignment, your Advanced Tuition payment will not be returned.

If you withdraw part way through the school year due to job relocation or military reassignment AND we receive 30 days' notice in writing, your May tuition payment may be applied towards your last month's tuition. If 30 days' notice is not given, then the May tuition payment will not be refunded. If your last day occurs in the middle of a month, your May tuition payment may be applied to your last month, however, it will not be prorated and no refund will be given.

CLASSES AND HOURS OF OPERATION

ELC opens one week after Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) open and closes on the Friday before Memorial Day. We closely follow the PWCS School Calendar. Our hours are 9:15 am to 12:15 pm. All children must be picked up by 12:25 p.m. During school months, the preschool office is staffed daily between 8:30 am and 2:30 pm. The office is open during the months of June, July and August but please contact the office for summer hours. The Director is also available by appointment at other times.

Student – Teacher Ratios

- 2-year-old classes contain a maximum of 8 children. A teacher and an assistant are dedicated to these classrooms. (Ratio 1 Adult: 4 children)
- 3-year-old classes contain a maximum of 16 children. A teacher and assistant are dedicated to these classrooms. (Ratio 1 Adult: 8 children)
- 4-year-old classes contain a maximum of 16 children. A teacher and an assistant are dedicated to these classrooms. (Ratio 1 Adult: 8 children)
- Because of the State regulations regarding class size and teacher ratio, missed days may not be made up on non-scheduled days.

WEATHER AND EMERGENCY RELATED CLOSINGS

MPC ELC follows the Prince William County Public Schools emergency closing announcements as stated below:

- If Prince William County Schools (PWCS) do not have students meet in person, the ELC will be closed. This includes all "Code Red", "Code Orange" or "Code Green" days issues by the county.
- If PWCS delays opening by 2 hours, the ELC will open at 11:15 am. Dismissal will be at 1:15pm. If your child stays for Lunch Bunch, pick up will be at 2:30 pm.

- All delays and closings will be announced on the Facebook page, via email and via Brightwheel. The website will NOT be updated for individual days off/delays.
- If PWCS dismisses early for any reason, we ask that you pick up your child as soon as you are able and conditions allow for a safe pick-up.

It is the policy of MPC ELC not to make up days missed due to snow.

BUILDING SECURITY

Our building doors remain locked at all times except during arrival and dismissal. There is a security system installed in our building as well as 9 security cameras. During drop off and pick up, the front doors and back door are unlocked with staff supervision. Any visitors to the building must use the external door camera to buzz the office and gain admittance to the building.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE FOR WALK-INS

- Please park in the front church parking lot and come in the side entrance by the playground. Doors are open between 9:10 – 9:25 am. Interior hallway doors open to the classrooms at 9:15 am.
- You must walk your child to the classroom.
- Please return to the classroom to pick up your child at 12:15 pm. Doors are open between 12:10 and 12:25 pm.
- If you are arriving or departing when the doors are closed, please park in the back of the building and ring doorbell for entry through the main preschool entrance.
- ALL STUDENTS IN THE 2 YEAR OLD PROGRAM MUST BE WALKED IN
- For the safety of all, please do not use the back entrance when the Kiss and Ride is active.

KISS-N-RIDE SERVICE

Kiss-N-Ride is a convenience offered to parents and children in our 3-4 year old programs. Parents or caregivers can drive up to the back door of the preschool, under the canopy, and ELC staff will oversee the arrival of your child into their classroom. You do not have to leave your vehicle. **Kiss-N-Ride is a cell phone free service**; use of a cell phone during this time will revoke your privileges for this program.

Morning Kiss-N-Ride – Children 3 and older will be met in their vehicle at the rear entrance between 9:15 am and 9:25 am. Staff members oversee the arrival of children and walk them to their classrooms. After 9:25 am, you are responsible for walking your child into his/her classroom by ringing the doorbell at the back entrance.

Afternoon Kiss-N-Ride - You must register your child in order to participate in afternoon pick up service. After we receive your registration, Kiss-N-Ride visor tags will be assigned to each family. Your visor tag must be displayed in the car

window when picking up children.

Afternoon Kiss-N-Ride service is available between 12:15 p.m. and 12:25 p.m. After your child is placed into your car, please drive slowly to the rear of the parking lot to fasten seat belts in order to facilitate a quicker pick-up for all families in line.

If you are arriving or departing when the doors are closed, please park in the back of the building and ring doorbell for entry through the main preschool entrance.

LATE PICK-UP

Please pick up your child at the scheduled time. If an unforeseen event causes your arrival to be delayed, please call the office at 703-369-5880 and leave a message or send a message on Brightwheel. To be considerate of our staff, please pick up your child as soon as possible. If late pick-ups become a habit or are consistent (more than 3 occurrences), we reserve the right to assess a fee of \$15 for each 15 minutes late. If a child is left at the Center for more than 15 minutes after the Kiss-N-Ride pick-up ends, and parents have not called/cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be called. After one hour, Child Protective Services (**703-792-4200**) will be called if nobody has contacted the preschool and nobody can be reached.

ABSENCES

If your child will be absent from ELC for any reason, you may use Brightwheel to alert the staff. You may also send a courtesy email or call the office at 703-369-5880. If your child will be absent for a planned extended period for any reason, we would appreciate advance notification. If we have not heard from you while your child is absent, you may receive a call – we miss your child!

If you will be away from ELC for an extended period, you are still responsible for your child's tuition to hold your child's place in the class. If your child has not been in school for 3 weeks, without communication with the office or the classroom teacher, your child will be considered withdrawn, and the school has the right to fill the space with a child from the wait list.

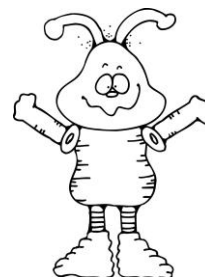
CELL PHONE USE

It is school policy that you remain off your cell phone during the arrival and dismissal times and when operating a vehicle in all areas of our parking lot.

When walking in, your child will not be dismissed from their classroom if you are on a call. This is an important time for you, your child, and the teacher to share brief reminders or important information. Your constant attention in the parking lot is necessary to keep all students safe. We ask all families to help each other be aware and reminded of our policies on cell phones.

ILLNESS POLICY

The health of each child is very important to all of us. Staff members conduct a daily health observation of each child.



Please keep your child home if he/she exhibits any of the following symptoms:

- Has green or yellow nasal discharge accompanied by a fever
- Has pinkeye (Conjunctivitis)
- Has a rash of unknown origin (until medical evaluation determines the child can return to class)
- Has had 1 or more bouts of vomiting or diarrhea within the previous 24 hours
- Has a fever of 100F or higher in the previous 24 hours
- Has symptoms of illness such as behavior change, lethargy, uncontrollable cough, inexplicable irritability or crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing, or other unusual signs (until medical evaluation determines the child can return to class)
- Has "wet" blisters from poison ivy that cannot be covered by bandages

If your child has been ill, and is now on a prescribed antibiotic, your child must be kept home until they have had their medication in their system for a minimum of 24 hours. Similarly, they need to be fever-free without the aid of medication for 24 hours before they can return to school.

Any child well enough to come to school will be considered well enough to play outside, unless a doctor's note is provided precluding outside play for health reasons.

Should a child become ill during the day with any of the above symptoms, the parent is notified immediately. The child will be taken out of the classroom and remain under adult supervision until the parent or an authorized person arrives to take the child home. Please arrange for your child to be picked up within 30 minutes of receiving our call.

Please contact the office if your child contracts a communicable disease (such as COVID-19, strep throat, influenza, hand foot and mouth disease, pinkeye, chicken pox, or parasites such as lice, ringworm, etc.) Communication and cooperation of parents are of great importance in helping to prevent the spread of diseases. Your child may return to school when he/she is no longer considered contagious, as determined by the regulations from the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

If your child has possibly been exposed to any contagious disease in school, you will be notified through a letter sent home from the preschool office. All confidentiality will be maintained. Because classrooms are used by multiple groups throughout the week, all classes meeting in the room where exposure takes place will be notified. The cleaning procedures for your child's classroom

will be modified as necessary.

MEDICATION

The ELC has staff that are certified in Allergy and Anaphylaxis Medical Administration Training as approved by the Virginia State Board of Nursing, and the Department of Social Services. The ELC will keep emergency medicines (Epi-pen, Inhaler, liquid Benadryl) on site when submitted with a doctor's written permission. Please contact the office for appropriate forms.

If you have indicated on your child's Registration Form that they have an allergy which requires emergency medication be kept at school, **your child cannot attend class until said medication is on hand in the preschool office along with the appropriate medical forms.** This is for the safety of all parties involved as well as a licensing requirement. The medication and allergy forms, signed by a physician, must be dropped off prior to the first day of school.

At no time may medications be transported to or from school in a child's backpack, for the safety of all children. NO medication may be left in a child's backpack at any time, even if the child is traveling home with a different adult after school.

EMERGENCIES

A Permission for Emergency Care authorizes parents to allow ELC to provide immediate care and, if necessary, the transfer of the student and medical records to the local hospital.

In case of medical emergency during school hours, where permission has been granted as above, the staff will administer first aid. All staff are CPR/1st aide certified. The parent or authorized adult will be notified as quickly as possible. If medical attention is required, the staff will call the local emergency team, who will transport the child to the local hospital. A member of our staff will travel with your child.

In case of medical emergency during school hours, where permission has not been granted as above, the staff will contact the parent or authorized adult immediately. The parent will be responsible for first aid treatment.

Emergency numbers for reaching the parent(s) or guardian(s) and 2 additional authorized persons must be on file in the ELC office. Please keep these numbers, as well as any other changes to your address, updated as needed.

SNACKS

Our school is sensitive to the increased number of peanut allergies in our community and world. ELC is proud to be a peanut free school. During school hours, products with peanuts and peanut butter are not prepared, served, or eaten by staff or children. This policy includes field trips, special events and all

school activities.

A peanut-free snack means:

- the ingredient **label** does not list peanut or peanut products as an ingredient,
- the ingredient **label** does not list peanuts as an allergen,
- the ingredient **label** does not contain wording to the effect of: "may contain trace amounts of peanuts",
- the ingredient **label** does not contain wording to the effect of: "manufactured in a facility that processes peanuts," and
- the **packaging** does not contain any other wording implying possible peanut contamination.

Each child brings his/her own peanut-free snack daily, in a bag labeled with his/her name. Gallon sized zipper top bags are given to each child at the start of school to be used for their snack. By placing snack items in this clear bag teachers can quickly scan ingredient labels for allergens. In addition, all students are required to bring in a water bottle daily.

If your child's snack contains an item with peanuts or items that have been clearly exposed to trace amounts, our staff will not serve it and will replace it with an appropriate item. A note explaining the reason(s) will be sent home with the item. Occasionally your child's snack will return home with no note -- that means your child's class either celebrated a birthday or cooked on that day! Remember, regularly sending in a snack that is not peanut-free (as defined above) is grounds for dismissal from the program.

We support and encourage healthier options such as fruit and veggies and limit prepackaged snacks that are high in sugar. Candy is not to be served. Water is the only beverage that is consumed at snack time. Please be mindful that snack time is not lunch time. All food and drink should be able to be consumed within 15 minutes. One baggie of carrots and a cheese stick, or a squeezzy fruit and bag of Goldfish is more than adequate. We cannot chill or re-heat any food items.

Some classrooms may have a customized snack list to meet the needs of specific severe allergies other than peanuts. However, allergens will only be excluded from classroom snack time if indirect contact could cause a life-threatening allergic reaction. We will do our best, however, to ensure that classroom celebrations provide foods that all children can enjoy.

Questions regarding snack should be directed to your child's teacher or the school office. An open line of communication is the key to a safe environment for everyone. Each teacher has an allergy list for their class posted in the classroom.

Please remember the following:

- If you are repackaging foods at home, please cut out & enclose (or copy)

the ingredient label so the teacher can reference the ingredient list. You can also email a picture or send a picture on Brightwheel.

- For homemade goods, please provide the full list of ingredients and any applicable labels associated with them. Even minor ingredients, including decorative gels and sprinkles, etc. must be checked.
- No glass containers.

ALLERGIES

While we make every possible effort to maintain a safe environment, we cannot guarantee that children suffering from a peanut allergy will not come in contact with peanut traces. While ELC does not permit peanuts and peanut butter, the church itself is not a peanut-free facility, nor are many field trip destinations. We will do everything within our ability to ensure the safety of your child. MPC ELC does not have exclusive use of the classrooms, but custodial staff and the teachers do take care to clean each classroom at the start and end of each day's use. All users of the room are asked to be sensitive to our policy.

If your child has a seasonal allergy, please communicate with the teacher any changes in medication or behavior that these may cause at the appropriate time.

The ELC is aware that at this young age, you and your child may not yet be aware of allergies that may affect your family. If your child has an allergic reaction to anything during the day at school, it will be treated as an emergency and you will be called as soon as possible.

Children with severe allergies that affect their diet must supply ALL of their own food for snacks. We also request special treats that we can keep in the classroom cabinets for birthday and holiday celebrations.

PARENT/SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP

The closer the relationship between the parents and the school, the better your child's preschool experience will be. Questions, suggestions, comments and constructive feedback from parents can only serve to improve the program here at MPC ELC.

MPC ELC welcomes all parents with talents (musical, artistic, athletic, etc.), occupations, or interests that they can share with the children. These visits enrich our program tremendously. Please contact either your classroom teacher or the Director and we will find a date or dates for you to come in and share.

The teachers and staff will always try to keep in touch with parents regarding the children and their day. Sources of information for the parents include the following:

- Brightwheel - Teachers and parents can send messages, pictures and other updates via Brightwheel.
- Monthly classroom newsletter and calendar. Each class will send home a

newsletter and calendar at the beginning of the month to let parents know of important dates, upcoming activities and classroom themes. These newsletters will be placed in your child's communication folder.

- Office electronic newsletter. A newsletter from the office staff will address school-wide activities and general school news and will be sent via email.
- PTO newsletter. The PTO will send home occasional newsletters keeping parents apprised of fundraisers, family fun nights, Picnic & Plays, Spirit Nights and other PTO related information.
- Quick notes, flyers and sign-up sheets for classroom celebrations can be found outside each classroom door or in your child's communication folder.
- Accident/Incident reports.
- MPC ELC Parent Handbook. Hopefully, this Handbook has answered most of your questions about MPC ELC. Paper copies are always available in the office by request, and it is also available on our website for quick reference.

STUDENT ASSESSMENTS/PROGRESS REPORTS

At least 3 individual assessments will be conducted each year: October/November, January/February, and May. The October evaluation is informal. This is our "Touch Base" evaluation when parents are emailed a brief summary of their child's status in class. Mid-year parent-teacher conference dates are set up for in-person meetings. There is no school for students this day. The final evaluation is conducted at the end of the year. Progress Reports from the end of the year evaluation will be sent home to parents on the last day of school. Parent-teacher conferences can be made at any time at the request of the parent.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Your child's teacher would love to help you celebrate your child's birthday in class. Please coordinate with them for details. Please be mindful that our celebration time is during our brief snack time and simple items work best. If you opt to share a special snack with the class, it must be peanut-free and ingredient labels/lists are required for all food items, including homemade ones. Please **DO NOT** send in goodie bags, birthday hats or candles.

CLASSROOM CELEBRATIONS

Your child's class will celebrate a number of holidays during the school year. Some celebrations are for students only, while others are open to family members. Your attendance is always optional but is a way to be involved in your child's preschool experience and to get to know their teachers and classmates.

Typically, these celebrations include special snack items provided by the students. Specific items will be requested by the room parent or teacher and you can sign up for an item of your choice. Please remember our school policy is to be peanut-free; ingredient labels/lists are required on all special snacks – including homemade ones.

DRESS

Children are encouraged to wear play clothes including pants with elastic waistbands and without belts. For the 3 and 4-year-old programs, your child needs to have independent skills in the bathroom. (In an emergency, teachers are willing to assist your child if they have bathroom needs. Feel free to discuss your level of comfort with your child's teacher.) For our Two-year-old program, the teachers will diaper and assist your child with toileting.

Please dress your child appropriately for the weather, we will go outside every day for 30-45 minutes throughout the year, weather permitting. Your child's name should be placed on all clothing to help insure their return.

The children at MPC ELC have a very active morning playing indoors and outdoors. For the safety of all, students should wear closed toes shoes that are secured onto the foot during the school day. Sneakers/tennis shoes are highly recommended. Open toed shoes, Crocs, etc. may restrict the activities that your child can participate in on any given day.

Please keep spare clothes (including shirts, pants, underwear, and socks) in your child's bag at all times. Daily activities include active and messy play, and the children should feel comfortable enough to enjoy themselves without worrying about their clothes. At some point during the year, your child will have a bathroom accident, or a snack/craft catastrophe, or be the recipient of another child's snack/craft catastrophe. This can be very upsetting to a child. Having a dry and quick change of clothes brings them much comfort.

PERSONAL ITEMS

Each student should bring to school each day either a backpack or tote bag to carry his/her communication folder (provided by the school), snack, water bottle, and change of clothing.

Children in the 3-4-year-old programs may not bring any personal items to preschool other than on designated show-and-tell days. Weapons and action figures are not permitted at any time. For the safety of all children, live animals may not be brought in to school.

Children in the 2-year-old program may bring one small personal security item (blanket, etc.) to the school for the first few weeks to assist with separation anxiety. Your child's teacher will let you know when these items will no longer be allowed in the room. Pacifiers are not permitted in the classrooms (as regulated by Virginia state health code for our program).

FIELD TRIPS

Office staff will arrange and coordinate both on-site and off-site field trips for our classes. For off-site field trips, each parent or guardian will transport their own child(ren) to and from the field trip location. Regular class will not be held. Each

parent or chaperone will be responsible for supervising their own child while at the field trip destination and must remain with the class for the duration of the field trip. If a parent is unable to attend, they have the option of pre-arranging for an alternate chaperone (as stated on the permission form). Parents/Chaperones will not be allowed to drop off the student and leave the field trip site. Teachers meet students at the field trip location.

Permission slips are still required and will be sent home for parents' signatures prior to each field trip. This provides the office and teachers with information needed for organizing and planning. Some field trips may have an added cost. If you have any questions, please call the preschool office at (703) 369-5880.

SCHOOL PICTURES

Professional individual and class pictures are taken of all students in the fall. You have the option of buying photos after you view them. Details and dates will be sent home in your child's backpack.

FOOD AND SCIENCE ACTIVITIES

The 3 and 4-year-old programs incorporate cooking and science into their monthly lesson plans. Each class shall perform 1 science experiment and 1 cooking/food experience per month, with the exception of December. Your child has an opportunity to become an ELC Chef and Scientist!

Cooking activities have the children take turns counting, measuring, stirring, dipping, pouring, and tasting as they make up delicious concoctions to eat for snack. This also encourages them to try new foods. When kitchen facilities are needed, the Early Learning Center uses the church's stoves, ovens, and sinks in Room 5. Children may be brought into the kitchen in small groups under careful supervision.

Science experiments and sensory explorations will engage the students' curiosity while using all their senses. They will help teach your child how to observe, develop questions, make predictions and gather data.

PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)

MPC ELC is a nonprofit organization which has an active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). The PTO group provides volunteer services within the program and raises funds for needed items. The PTO typically meets once a month during school hours. Please check your child's calendar for dates and plan to attend these productive meetings. Children are always welcome at the meetings. The PTO produces a monthly newsletter to keep all parents aware of its activities. The PTO is run by a PTO Board, composed of a small group of elected parent officials and the Director.

BUSINESS POLICY

It is ELC's policy that advertising and promoting personal businesses or doing

sales for companies by ELC parents or families is not permitted. Distribution of flyers and/or displaying posters is prohibited.