

2018/2019 EARLY PRESCHOOL FAMILY HANDBOOK

First Presbyterian Church
4815 Franklin Pike
Nashville, TN 37220
615-298-9580

To the best of the Early Preschool's ability, translation services will be provided upon request for handbooks, school forms and family/teacher conferences. Please talk to the preschool director if translation services would be helpful.

Welcome to the Early Preschool (EP), an outreach ministry First Presbyterian Church/Nashville.

VISION

First Presbyterian Early Preschool values all people as unique children of God. We endeavor to be a community of life-long learners where children, families, and relationships are respected, nurtured, and highly esteemed. God's grace is the foundation of this community.

OUR CORE VALUES

- **Learning Through Play: Powerful Interactions**
- **Outdoor Exploration: Expanding the Horizons**
- **The Whole Child: Our Curriculum**
- **Community: Building Life-Long Learners**
- **Family Engagement: Connecting Through Relationships**

Stop by the EP office to see our Vision statement in its entirety or read it on line at

<http://childrens.fpcnashville.org/preschool/about/#philosophy>

EARLY PRESCHOOL COMMITTEE and VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

The EP functions under the direction of the Early Preschool Committee. This committee consists of two elder or deacon representatives, parent representatives, teacher representatives, and church member representatives. The EP committee passes recommendations to the Christian Education Council and then to the FPC Session, for final approval.

Our active Parent Team consists of parent and family volunteers. Volunteers are needed for year-long commitments or short term commitments. The goals of the Parent Team are to appreciate and recognize teachers and staff, respond to life events for EP families, and serve as host/hostess for parent-involved activities. Feel free to ask the director or assistant director about volunteer opportunities throughout the school year.

LICENSING and ACCREDITATION

The EP is licensed by the Tennessee Department of Human Services and follows best practices, teacher/child ratios and class sizes as described by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and TN 3 STAR Quality Rating System. The EP received NAEYC accreditation in September 2014 and is dedicated to maintaining this prestigious accreditation. Health and safety standards are maintained and the EP is regularly inspected by the local Fire and Health Departments. Copies of the most recent inspections are always available for you to read in the EP office.

REGISTRATION AND ADMISSION

Registration is held in January for the upcoming school year. A registration form must be completed and submitted along with the non-refundable registration fee. All currently enrolled children are guaranteed a place for the next year as long as all deadlines are met and appropriate fees are received. Every effort will be made to honor your first choice of class days. In the event that your first choice is unavailable, you will be placed on the waiting list for your first choice and enrolled in your second choice. Children are assigned to a class in August for the entire school year. We offer a summer program with a separate registration process.

TUITION AND FEES

A non-refundable deposit (one month's tuition plus supply fee) must be paid upon accepting a spot to secure your child's space in the EP. The tuition portion of the deposit is applied to the May tuition payment of the school year enrolled.

Tuition is due on the first day of each month, September through April (regardless of whether or not a child is in school on that day). Because the EP is operated entirely on funds received from tuition and fees, prompt and regular payments must be made. For your convenience you will have the opportunity to

sign up for an automatic bank draft any time during the school year through our financial office or make payments on line.

LATE FEES

If the financial office does not receive your payment by the 15th of the month, a late fee equal to 10% of the balance due is assessed. Notification of the late fee is sent electronically to your last known email address. All late fees collected are deposited in the Early Preschool designated fund which supports families with financial needs and other unbudgeted needs of the EP.

If a payment cannot be made because of a financial hardship, please speak to the EP director or Sandy Nelson (snelson@fpcnashville.org) in the finance office of First Presbyterian Church-Nashville. These conversations will be completely confidential.

FINANCIAL NEEDS

It is the Early Preschool Committee's wish that no child be excluded from the program because of financial hardship. The Early Preschool Financial Assistance Committee (EPFAC) approves grants on an as needed basis. Submit all requests for financial assistance to the EP Director. Each request is confidentially considered by the EPFAC, with assistance determined by need and availability of funds.

EP DESIGNATED FUND

The FPC Session has designated a specific fund to assist the EP families' financial needs and to satisfy other unbudgeted needs of the EP. The fund offers an opportunity for donations of monetary gifts to the Early Preschool in honor of a child's birthday, to honor the teachers, or as a way to give back to the preschool in a way that will directly benefit the program. For more information on giving to the EP Designated Fund, contact the EP Director or Sandy Nelson in the finance office (snelson@fpcnashville.org).

WITHDRAWAL

There are many reasons that a child may need to leave our program after the school year has started. In order to make sure that the tuition portion of the deposit is applied to the child's last month in the program; written notice must be received by the EP Director at least 30 days in advance of the child's withdrawal from the program.

ARRIVAL

Children should arrive for school ready to learn. Children are more likely to have a successful day if they are well rested and fed a substantial breakfast before they come to school. Our classrooms open at 9:00 A.M. Parents/Guardians are asked to park in the south parking lot and walk children to the classroom each morning.

DISMISSAL

Children are expected to be picked up in the classroom between 2:15-2:30. If you are late for pick up, your child will be sent to aftercare and you will be charged a drop in fee of \$20. Children are released only to an adult designated on the child's release form or your Brightwheel account. Exceptions to this rule are made only by a phone call or written/email communication with the EP office. It is encouraged that all extraordinary arrangements concerning a child's dismissal are made ahead of time.

In the event that any person picking up a child is deemed impaired in any way or exhibits risky behavior, the EP staff will:

1. Ask the driver to come to the EP office until such time as he/she is determined to be in a suitable condition to drive.
2. Require the driver to contact another approved person, as noted on the child's enrollment form, to transport the child.
3. Notify proper authorities if met with resistance.

BRIGHTWHEEL

Each classroom has a class iPad to sign-in and sign-out children, through the Brightwheel app. This app allows an easy digital check-in and out with personal passcodes for each caregiver. Parents must add all approved caregivers to their Brightwheel account. Brightwheel will email passcodes to these designated caregivers. It is not necessary for a caregiver to have the Brightwheel app in order to sign your child in or out.

INCLEMENT WEATHER/ EMERGENCY AND DISASTER PROCEDURES

The Early Preschool follows the Oak Hill School inclement weather closings. Snow days are built into our school calendar and are not made up. An all-school email will be sent to families to alert them of school closings. Every effort is made to update the EP Director's phone message (298-9580) with closing information. If OHS opens on a delay or closes early, the EP will open or close at the same time.

We have regular fire and tornado drills for the staff and children. Evacuation and Emergency Shelter plans are on file in the EP Director's office. The First Presbyterian Church staff participates in all the EP drills and is prepared to assist in leading the children to the safest place quickly in the event of emergency.

TIME

School begins at 9:00 A.M. Normal dismissal is 2:30 P.M. Please check the school calendar for early dismissal times due to holidays or professional development days. We encourage your child to be present for the entire day. No adjustment in fees is made for partial days.

Extended-care is available at an additional fee and by prior enrollment. After-care is not available on early dismissal days or on Fridays. No adjustment in fees is made for an absence in the before or after-care program once enrolled.

When there is an occasional need for extended-care, parents must call in advance and make sure that there is room for their child. Payment is due when the reservation is made for the child.

ATTENDANCE

If your child cannot come to school, please email the EP director or contact your child's classroom through the Brightwheel app before 9:30 if possible. We will contact you if we don't hear from you by 9:30 to explain your child's absence. There are many good reasons to keep a child home. Our goal in contacting you is to be aware of illness in the program and to help assure the safety of the children.

CALENDAR

The EP school year begins in September and ends in May. A yearly calendar (subject to change) is issued annually listing all closings and early dismissals. You can find an up-to-date calendar on the EP website. Occasionally, the EP will be closed so that our staff can have an opportunity for professional development. Not only is training a requirement for accreditation and licensing, most importantly, it assures that your child's teacher is learning and growing as an early childhood specialist.

CLASSES

The EP program serves children who are 18 months to 5 years of age. Children are most often placed in classes based on their chronological age. To keep children on track for entrance into kindergarten, August 15 is used as the birthday cut-off date. The EP Director will consider input from families and teachers when making classroom assignments.

TEACHER:STUDENT RATIOS

The EP maintains the following teacher to student ratios:

Toddlers	1:4	3-year olds	1:6
2-year olds	1:5	Pre-K	1:8

Exceptions to our teacher: student ratios may occur when class sizes are low, unexpected events or high teacher absences occur. We then use minimum ratios allowed by DHS and do so only until substitutes can be located.

SICK AND INJURY POLICY

Expect your child's teachers to ask you about the health of your child every day. The more information they have about your child, the better equipped they will be to care for your child. Teachers are interested in how your child slept, ate, and what his/her disposition was before arriving at school. It is important that teachers know if your child has taken medication before arriving at school.

The EP requires you to pick up your child for the following symptoms:

1. Diarrhea - more than one (1) abnormally loose stool
2. Severe coughing - red or blue in the face or makes a high-pitched croupy or whooping sound after coughing
3. Discolored mucus
4. Unusual rashes or spots
5. Difficult or rapid breathing
6. Yellowish skin or eyes
7. Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
8. Fever (temperature of 100 degrees or higher)
9. Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool
10. Stiff neck and headache
11. Sore throat
12. Vomiting
13. Lice, scabies, or other parasitic infestation
14. Headache
15. Unexplained listlessness, sluggishness or other behavior suggestive of illness

All children must have a physical examination by a licensed physician that is signed and dated prior to entering the EP. All children must meet Tennessee's immunization requirements prior to entering our program. A Tennessee Child Health Record should be completed by a physician before the first day of attendance, and the EP must receive an updated form with each new round of immunizations. Please request a new health record for the EP records each time your child has a well-child visit to the doctor that requires an immunization.

The EP is not prepared to accommodate sick children. Please do not send your child to school with a communicable illness. Before bringing your child back to school after an illness, he/she must be fever-free (without medication) for at least 24 hours and free of any vomiting or diarrhea for at least 24 hours.

If your child becomes ill at school, he or she will be taken to the EP office to minimize infecting other children. Every effort will be made to contact a parent/guardian of the ill child so that arrangements can be made for the sick child to rest at home. If a parent/guardian cannot be contacted, a call will be made to the emergency contacts on the child's student data form.

Please report all illnesses to the EP Office. We do everything possible to alert families of their child's exposure to any illness that may be present in the EP. The EP Director or classroom teachers will inform through the Brightwheel App of any possible exposure to a contagious illness.

If your child is seriously injured, we will call 911 and then the emergency contact listed on Brightwheel. If a child goes to the hospital for care, he/she may return to school with a doctor's note of approval.

It is important that the contact number in Brightwheel is current. It is the number that we will call first in an emergency.

MEDICATION POLICY

We administer medication for emergency cases only. If a child needs medication for an emergency situation (such as an allergic reaction) a medical action plan must be completed and signed by the child's physician. The action plan will direct the staff on how and when to administer the medication. This action plan is kept with the child's medication and a second copy is kept in the child's file. All medications are kept on the top shelf of the bookshelf in the EP Office.

PRE-ENTRANCE PAPERWORK

The following forms must be on file at the EP before the child can begin school:

1. TN state immunization form (your child's pediatrician can give this to you)
2. Registration (online)
3. Family Information
4. Child Health & History
5. Family Routines & Culture
6. Family Agreements/Permissions
7. Driver Policy with copy of driver's license and insurance (for pre-k families only)
8. Food Allergy Action Plan (if necessary)
9. Asthma Action Plan (if necessary)
10. Medication Permission (if necessary)
11. Authorization for Bank Draft (if desired)

These forms can be found on line or in the preschool office.

FIELD TRIPS

Throughout the year the EP will host several in-house field trips. In the past we have had the Puppet Truck from the Library, Mounted Police, Fire Department, a dentist, a chiropractor, and many musical guests visit. These visits are usually appropriate for all ages. Our Pre-K classes go on field trips off site each year. In the past they have gone to Traveler's Rest, Owls Hill, Nashville Farmer's Market, Cheekwood, Nashville Children's Theater, the airport, and the Nashville Zoo. These off-site field trips are dependent on parent volunteers to drive. Our policy requires that we have a copy of the driver's license and proof of insurance for each driver. We require two adults in each car; a driver to watch the road and a rider to watch the children. The EP staff will not drive children on field trips but they will assure that proper teacher/child ratios are maintained at all times and they can act as "riders". Children must be secured in approved car seats or boosters.

ALLERGY AWARE

We are an "Allergy Aware" facility, keeping our facility as safe as possible for all of our children.

- No peanuts, peanut butter, tree nuts or nut spreads should be sent to school.
- No products that "may contain" peanuts or tree nuts should be sent to school.
- If a soy or sun butter product is used in a sandwich it must be labeled each time it is sent to school. Because these products are so similar in looks to peanut butter, we will not serve it to the child if it is not labeled.

LUNCH

We ask that you provide nutritious foods and a beverage (protein, vegetable, fresh fruit, 100 percent juice or milk) in well-labeled, non-breakable containers. We cannot provide refrigeration or heating for lunches. TN state rules require that food is never used as punishment and cannot be "withheld" for any reason. We will present the child with his/her entire lunch. We talk a lot about healthy food choices and encourage children to eat their "healthy" food first. We will not withhold a dessert until the rest of the lunch is eaten. We highly suggest that you only pack nutritious food choices for your child and save dessert treats for afternoon snacks at home.

In addition, we must be highly alert for choking hazards. Grapes and hotdogs must be cut in quarters. Other choking hazards like popcorn and marshmallows should not be sent in lunches. Also, please remember not to send anything with peanuts or tree nuts in accordance to our Allergy Aware policy above.

REST TIME

A rest time is provided in each classroom. The EP day is strenuous, and a quiet time is important for everyone. Children are never required to sleep. After 45 minutes of rest, a non-sleeping child will be given a quiet activity. You will need to supply a blanket and clean crib sheet weekly to cover mats or cots, and if necessary, bring one sleep "lovey".

POTTY TRAINING

Children are not required to be potty trained to attend the EP. When you are ready to begin working on potty training at home, notify your classroom teachers and they will gladly work with you. If your child is still in diapers, we ask that you provide a sufficient amount of disposable diapers for each week. If you use cloth diapers, we will gladly use them too. Our health standards require that we send all soiled diapers and clothing home without rinsing, in a plastic bag.

OUTDOOR PLAY AND EXTRA CLOTHING

Outdoor play is part of our daily schedule. Children will play on the playground and various places around the church campus. Please send your child with appropriate outerwear. At least one change of clothing should be kept in your child's cubby. Send your child in comfortable, casual clothing and sneakers. If your child is sensitive to temperature change, it is suggested that a sweater be kept at school for your child. We also ask that you provide a raincoat and rain boots to be kept at school so that when the weather permits, rain walks and puddle stomping can occur!

It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to determine their child's need for sunscreen and/or insect repellent. These should be applied by the parent or guardian before the child enters the school. Sunscreen and insect repellent should never be kept in a child's bag or cubby. If a parent/guardian believes there is a necessary reapplication of these products during the school day, special arrangements must be made with the EP director or assistant director.

CELL PHONES

Your child deserves your undivided attention when you are at the Early Preschool. Please complete your phone calls and other smart phone business **before** you enter the EP and **before** you sign out your child.

TOYS FROM HOME

Children are discouraged from bringing toys to school from home, unless for a scheduled sharing.

SEASONAL ACTIVITIES

Classrooms will celebrate with age-appropriate activities at various times throughout the year. These celebrations may include Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas New Year's, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Valentine's Day, Easter, and Memorial Day. Families will be invited to share in many of our celebrations, and are occasionally asked to contribute items for special activities. Each celebration is unique and appropriate to the age group. If at any time you have a question or concern about how a holiday is celebrated, please talk to the EP Director.

BIRTHDAYS

We like to celebrate birthdays in special ways, making sure the child knows that we are happy he/she was born. The birthday celebration is a tool for building pro-social skills that promote a sense of classroom community. Each child will have the opportunity to celebrate his/her birthday.

We highly encourage families to give a "gift of time" to their child on his/her birthday. Parents are welcome to visit the classroom to read a favorite book, eat lunch, and/or share a family tradition. We encourage families reserve goodie bags and food treats for celebrations at home.

If you have birthday party invitations for the entire class, you may deliver them to the children's cubbies. If you choose not to invite the entire class (which is absolutely appropriate) please **DO NOT** send the invitations through school. Parents are responsible to check their children's cubbies for invitations at drop off in the mornings.

Please **do not** send birthday gifts to school.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Research shows, and our experience concurs, that a child's success in school is correlated with their family's involvement. We encourage families to participate fully in your child's school experience. Get to know your child's teacher and classroom friends. Feel free to spend time in the classroom.

Develop a drop off and pick up routine with your child, taking into account what is best for your child. Some children are happy to be dropped off quickly; others need a transition time. There are opportunities throughout the year to volunteer in the classroom or other areas of the school. We are always happy to have guest readers, adults who can share their profession or a special talent, and lunch visitors.

The EP Committee encourages parents to serve on volunteer teams. There are many opportunities with short or long term commitments. Look for opportunities to serve in newsletters, hallway "sign ups" and Brightwheel updates. The director and assistant director can help get you "plugged in" anytime during the year.

FAMILY SURVEY

The Early Preschool distributes a family survey annually in the spring. We value families' feedback on their preschool experience. The results of the survey are shared with staff and the Early Preschool Committee. This helps in the continual evaluation and improvement of our program. Of course, it is not necessary to wait for the survey to give us feedback, we welcome your input at any time.

COMMUNICATION

Good communication is key to the successful collaboration of families and EP teachers and staff. We use multiple communication tools with families. Our classrooms utilize an app called Brightwheel, which streamlines daily communications between parents and EP teachers. Brightwheel is connected to parent email addresses. Monthly newsletters are sent to parent email addresses. Additionally, family conferences are held at least twice a year. The EP has an open door policy and welcomes a visit from parents at any time. However, we know that a personal visit is not always possible. We can be reached by telephone (615-298-9580) or by email (blutz@fpcnashville.org) and encourage you to contact us at any time you have a question, concern or comment.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Formal conferences are scheduled in the fall and spring of each school year. Results of all assessment tools will be shared with families through letters, emails, phone calls and at parent/teacher conferences. Information shared with families is always kept confidential. Written assessments are kept in the child's file in a locked filing cabinet the preschool office.

If at any time an additional conference is needed, teachers, parents or the Director can schedule one.

FAMILY CONCERNS

The EP is a community of children, families and staff, all interacting and sharing lives together. We all work closely together and hope that our interactions are positive, helpful, kind and understanding. Sometimes differences occur. When a family member has a concern, it is best to speak directly to the person that is causing the concern. Teachers need and want your input, suggestions, questions and concerns. The EP Director and Assistant Director operate with an "open door" policy. They are interested in your concerns and are always willing to talk with you. All staff are willing to schedule conferences whenever one is needed.

ASSESSMENT

At the Early Preschool, we believe that the better we know our children and their families, the more effective we will be in providing experiences that enrich each child's learning and build skills that develop lifelong learners. Therefore, families will receive communication often and in multiple ways from the preschool staff.

We believe that children's learning is influenced by their environment both in school and outside of school, their temperament, and their experiences. We integrate information from the Family Information Form, Child Health & History Form, and conversations with families (email, phone, written notes and face to face), with our ongoing classroom assessments, to inform our planning for children.

Assessment is an ongoing process that includes collecting, synthesizing and interpreting information about students, the classroom and their instruction. Children are assessed throughout the school year by observation, collecting art and writing samples, and utilizing the Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards. (<https://www.tn.gov/education/instruction/academic-standards/early-learning-development-standards.html>)

Within 3 months of a child entering our program, we use a developmental screening tool called the "Brigance Early Childhood Screens III". This screening tool is designed to enable educators to quickly and accurately identify potential developmental delays as well as potential academic giftedness in young children. This information will serve to enhance our teachers' learning plans for each child. It is important to note that the Brigance Early Childhood Screens III does not provide any type of diagnosis. However, the results can be useful in highlighting the need for a more thorough assessment by an outside professional.

We will do our best to administer this 10-15 minute screening to each of our new children at the beginning of the school year, before the end of October. Parents will receive an individualized feedback letter with their child's Brigance screening results at the first Parent/Teacher Conference in the fall. The Parent/Teacher conference will provide a good opportunity to discuss these results in person with your child's teacher, should you have any questions or concerns.

DISCIPLINE AND CLASSROOM GUIDANCE

The philosophy of the EP reflects and promotes problem-solving and social skills in young children. The goals of this philosophy include teaching children to evaluate and make choices, to take responsibility for their own actions, to recognize and express their feelings appropriately, and to be considerate and fair in solving their problems with others. Positive teacher attitudes and expectations encourage cooperation and prevent most behavior problems. In each classroom, we seek to establish a climate of trust, to communicate positively and clearly, to set clear and positive limits, to offer choices whenever possible, to prevent inappropriate behavior with redirection and gentle reminders, to praise efforts and accomplishments, to use natural and logical consequences, and to assist with verbal problem solving and conflict resolution.

When a child breaks a limit that cannot be dealt with using preventive techniques, logical or natural consequences, or conflict resolution, he/she may be asked to leave the activity and have a brief time-out. The child will not be purposely humiliated, isolated, or shamed. We will never use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All assessment information, medical information, and family information will be kept in the child's file in a locked cabinet in the Early Preschool office. This information will be shared only with the child's teachers and will be treated with the utmost confidence and respect. Allergy information will be posted in the child's classroom and the preschool office so that staff has this important information readily available. Student information will not be shared with agencies, schools or individuals without written permission from the child's legal guardian.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Occasionally, a child enters our program with special needs. Sometimes these special needs are diagnosed and the families are aware that certain adaptations will be needed for the child to succeed in our environment. Often, we are the first to observe that there may be a need for intervention on behalf of the child. Teachers and administration will always be willing to work with families to determine a plan of action that will support the education of each child.

The EP's primary goal is the healthy development and success of each child. The EP is limited in the number of children that it can successfully serve and may not have the resources necessary to accommodate the special needs of all children. In the event that the EP cannot serve the needs of a child, the EP will refer the family to other programs or agencies that may better meet the child's needs. Families, teachers and the EP Director are always involved in this decision. We are dedicated to assist in creating a positive transition plan.

REFERRALS FOR DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT

If at any time during a child's time in the Early Preschool a teacher or director suspect that the child would benefit from a Developmental Assessment, the parents will be contacted. A conference by phone or in person will be arranged. When a child is younger than 3-years-old, Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS) is the state agency that provides a free assessment. After the child is 3-years-old, the county school district in which the child is zoned provides the free assessment. A parent always has the choice of an independent assessment. The EP director has more information about these programs in the EP office.

The EP recognizes the benefits of working in partnership with families when educational decisions are being made for the child. In addition to referring children for more in depth assessments, we are also willing to participate in Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meetings or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

Often we find that with early intervention and some minor supports at the EP, a child with special needs can successfully and fully participate in the Early Preschool Program. When it is in the child's best interest to move to a program that is better equipped to provide the special services that the child needs, the EP will assist the family in any way possible to make a smooth transition for the child and family.

TN DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

According to Tennessee law, all persons (including doctors, mental health professionals, child care providers, dentists, family members and friends) must report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Failure to report child abuse or neglect is a violation of the law. The Child Abuse Hotline number is 877-237-0004.

SAFETY

The entrance doors to the EP wing are always locked. Parents are given a code for entrance and are welcome at any time. It is important that this code is kept confidential. It is changed periodically. There are cameras on the church property. Unknown persons picking up a child from the EP will be asked for proof of identification.

SUPERVISION

Children will never be left unattended at the Early Preschool. Staff working with Toddlers and Twos will supervise children by sight and sound at all times. Children are closely supervised by EP staff on the playground, moving from one room to another, as well as in the classroom and during rest time. Children who desire privacy while using the bathroom will be able to use the bathroom privately but a teacher will be close by to assist and check in on children often.

We are delighted that your family has chosen to be a part of the EP community. Should you have any questions about the policies in this handbook, please contact the director.