



Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool

A Christian Program of Love, Learning, and Laughter

Parent Handbook

2023-2024

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Mission Statement

Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool strives to inspire a lifelong love of learning in young children through its developmentally appropriate, play-based educational program set in a joyful, nurturing environment. We encourage our diverse children, families, and staff to use their cultural background, talents, and resources to serve others and spread God's love to the community.

Educational Philosophy: Love, Learning, and Laughter

Love: Love serves as the foundation of our philosophy. We believe children must feel safe and loved to achieve their full learning potential. Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool creates a warm, nurturing environment that promotes children's health and safety as well as feelings of belonging and self-esteem. We embrace and welcome students and families of all backgrounds and abilities and celebrate the diversity of our school community. We foster an atmosphere of camaraderie and mutual respect among staff members that builds strong collaborative relationships. We encourage our students and staff to share the love they receive by modeling kindness and generosity.

Learning: We believe children learn best by exploring and experimenting at their own pace in a stimulating, play-based environment. We provide a high-quality, developmentally appropriate educational program based on current research. We recognize the uniqueness of each child and tailor our instructional program to meet individual needs. We maintain high standards for our staff through offering ongoing professional development, mentoring, and coaching, and by providing educational benefits toward maintaining and improving early childhood credentials. We recognize that families are children's first teachers and seek to promote their important role in their children's lives by inviting their participation in our program, partnering with them to promote children's development, and supporting them with educational workshops and literature. We enhance our classrooms by inviting families to share their cultural experiences with us like how they celebrate Diwali and the Lunar New Year. We include sight words and greetings in multiple languages in each classroom. We also ensure that our music and library selections reflect the diverse student and staff population of our school.

Laughter: We embrace and celebrate the exuberant spirits of young children and encourage a classroom culture that welcomes smiles and giggles. Our teachers plan educational experiences that demonstrate that learning can be filled with wonder, excitement, and fun. Our goal is to show children the joy that comes with following where curiosity leads and thus inspire them to become lifelong learners.

School Vision

GSLP's motto is "A Christian program of love, learning, and laughter." This statement encompasses our vision for the program:

- A. **Christian:** To spread the love of God to the community.
- B. **Love:** To use our talents and resources to serve our community and serve as models of kindness and generosity to the children in our care.
- C. **Learning:** To provide a high-quality, play-based, developmentally appropriate educational program for young children based on current research in the early childhood field.
- D. **Laughter:** To create a warm, nurturing environment where young children feel safe and joyful.

Policy Highlights

1. Nut- and Peanut-Free School (Page 25)

All lunches sent to school must be free of nuts, peanuts, and products that may be cross contaminated with nuts or peanuts. Common items that often include these allergens: peanut butter, Nutella, granola bars, candy, and cookies.

2. Complete, Nutritious Lunches Are Required (Page 25)

Licensing regulations require that all lunches sent to school should contain a full meal, including grains, proteins, and fruits and vegetables. Avoid sending in lunches that are just a snack or dessert.

3. Students Must Go Outside with Their Class (Page 32)

Always send your child to school with clothing appropriate for the weather, including a coat, hat, and mittens when it is cold. As required by licensing regulations, classes will play outside daily except in the case of rain or extreme temperatures. If a child is too sick for outdoor play, please keep them at home.

4. Arrive Promptly for Class (Page 11)

School doors open at 9:25 AM. Classroom doors open by 9:30 AM. Our class day is only 2.5 to 4 hours, and students who arrive late miss a significant amount of learning time.

5. Pick Up Your Student on Time (Page 41)

Families are charged \$5 for every five minutes they are late arriving after dismissal time (12:00 PM for Early Pre-K 2, 1:30 PM for all other classes). Late fees add up quickly! Please add fellow class parents to your pick-up list to avoid them.

6. Withdrawal Requires 30 Days' Notice (Page 40)

Thirty days' notice is required to release your family from the obligation to pay the full annual tuition should you withdraw mid-year. The first tuition payment is nonrefundable and may not be applied to any month aside from May.

7. Toilet Training Required for Early Pre-K 3 and Pre-K (Page 37)

All students in Early Pre-K 3 (except for Early Pre-K 3 STEAM) and Pre-K must be fully toilet trained. These students may not wear diapers or disposable training pants (such as Pull-Ups) to school.

About Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool

Welcome to Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool (GSLP). Whether this is your family's first year with us or you are returning for another year at Good Shepherd, we are delighted to have you as a part of our family. We are a small school, and our size allows us to get to know one another well. While your child is busy exploring and creating in the classroom, we hope you will take advantage of the opportunities the Preschool provides to develop networks with other families and to grow in nurturing skills.

The Preschool serves as an outreach of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. Families interested in information about the church and its programs are encouraged to visit the church website at www.goserve.net.

School History

Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool is fully accredited by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and is licensed by Montgomery County as a Private Educational Institution. GSLP opened its doors in 1991 to three-year-old and four-year-old students and expanded to include afternoon classes in 2000. In 2005, a unique program – licensed as child care but providing a strong educational component – was added for two-year-old students. Providing a developmentally appropriate, research-based curriculum within a Christian environment, the Preschool welcomes children from a broad geographic area and from all religious, ethnic, and language backgrounds.

Governing Body

GSLP is governed by the Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool Board. Composed of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church members, the GSLP Board meets periodically to determine school policies, to review finances, and to generally provide for the well-being of the Preschool. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church members with children enrolled in GSLP can contact the GSLP Directors about serving on the Board.

Staff Members

All staff members meet the educational requirements of the Maryland State Department of Education.

The GSLP Administrative Director, Educational Program Director, and the Teachers of Early Pre-Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten Classes have bachelor's or graduate degrees, teaching experience, and special training and coursework in Early Childhood Education.

The GSLP Directors, Teachers, and Assistant Teachers participate in the Maryland Child Care Credential program, which requires extensive continuing education in child development and other areas of the early childhood field.

Staff members are trained in First Aid and CPR and are active members of area Christian congregations.

Directory of Program Staff



Mrs. Jennifer Coxson
Administrative Director
Preschool Office

See Mrs. Coxson for questions regarding tuition and forms, receipts for tax purposes, updating information in your child's file, adding people to your authorized pick-up list, snack and food allergy policies, and registration for new and returning students.

Mrs. Coxson joined GSLP in 2011. She has a master's degree in business administration.



Mrs. Sandra Lawson
Educational Program Director and Music and Chapel Teacher
Preschool Office

See Mrs. Lawson for questions regarding curriculum, chapel, music class, family programming and events, help connecting with community resources such as Child Find, and classroom issues.

Mrs. Lawson joined GSLP in 2018.



Mrs. Laura Cerezo Vargas
Assistant

Mrs. Cerezo joined the GSLP staff in 2018. She was a frequent parent volunteer at GSLP and MCPS before joining our Early Pre-K 2 team. She has a bachelor's degree and is currently working toward completing the required early childhood education coursework for lead teachers.



Mrs. Lori Forcey
Teacher

Mrs. Forcey joined the GSLP staff in 2011. She has taught in Early Pre-K 2, Early Pre-K 3, and Pre-K over the course of her career here. She has a bachelor's degree and more than 145 clock hours of coursework in early childhood education.



Mrs. Melissa Ganz
Teacher

Mrs. Ganz joined the GSLP staff in 2012. She has taught in Early Pre-K 2, Early Pre-K 3, and Pre-K over the course of her career here. She has a bachelor's degree and more than 145 clock hours of coursework in early childhood education.



Mrs. Tracey German
Teacher

Mrs. German joined the GSLP staff in 2018. She worked in an assisting role in Montgomery County Public Schools before joining our Early Pre-K team. She has a bachelor's degree and has completed all required early childhood education coursework for lead teachers.



Mrs. Nina Jackson
Assistant

Mrs. Jackson joined the GSLP staff in 2017. She has taught in the 3-Day Pre-K and 5-Day Pre-K classes. She has a bachelor's degree and has completed all required early childhood education coursework for lead teachers.



Mrs. Jennifer Jones
Teacher

Mrs. Jones joined the GSLP staff in 2016. She has taught in Early Pre-K 2, Early Pre-K 3, and Pre-K over the course of her career here. She has a master's degree and more than 225 clock hours of coursework in early childhood education.



Mrs. Rebecca Chou
Assistant

Mrs. Chou joined the GSLP staff in 2019. She has taught in Early Pre-K 3 and assisted in the front office. She has completed all the required early childhood education for assistants and continues working on her early childhood education for lead teachers.

Program Information

School Year

The Preschool is in session for 163 days from September to May. While GSLP generally follows Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in determining its schedule, there are deviations at certain times during the year. A school-year calendar can be found at the end of this handbook.

Class Size

Each class has both a teacher and an assistant teacher. The maximum number of students for each class is: 12 for two year old classes and STEAM classes, 14 for Threes classes, and 16 for Pre-Kindergarten classes. Our low student-teacher ratios assure that each child receives the attention necessary for maximum development.

Class Assignment

Students are assigned to specific classrooms for the entire year. Except in rare situations, children do not change teachers and/or classrooms during the year. Classrooms are self-contained and are limited to specific numbers of children.

Daily Schedule

School doors open at 9:25 AM. Classroom doors open by 9:30 AM, and class sessions begin immediately thereafter.

It is important for students to arrive on time for class. Late arrivals disturb classes already in session and lead to students missing valuable learning time. Teachers report that late-arriving students often find it difficult to enter into established playgroups. Please strive to arrive on time as a courtesy to teachers and to other students in the class.

School doors open for dismissal at 1:25 PM for all other classes. Teachers begin dismissing students by 1:30 PM.

Typical Daily Activities

Sessions are 4 hours in length. Each class's unique schedule is posted both inside and outside the classroom. During September, teachers distribute a letter describing classroom routines.

Teachers daily post a note describing classroom activities. All classes have one or more circle times incorporating stories, songs and fingerplays, movement activities, and discussions focusing on the monthly curriculum concepts. Centers time includes open-ended art activities and crafts, dramatic play activities, blocks and block accessories, manipulatives (used to develop spatial relationships, fine motor, and pre-math skills), games, puzzles, play sets that foster language and cooperative play, and hands-on science activities.

Physical Fitness and Outdoor Play

The children explore the playground, weather permitting, for thirty minutes each day. Children are encouraged to run, climb, cycle, and engage in other activities that promote physical fitness and gross-motor development during this time.

Teachers follow guidelines recommended by the Office of Child Care (bit.ly/GSLP-Weather-Guidelines) when determining whether the temperature is appropriate for outdoor play.

Please dress your child appropriately for the weather conditions, as children will go outside to play even when the temperature is cold. On cold days, send children to school with labeled heavy coats, hats, and mittens (not gloves). Please send boots as well if the class will play in the snow. Children may not stay inside while the rest of the class is outside.

On inclement days, indoor gross-motor activities substitute for playground time. Indoor activities include parachute and balance beam activities, beanbags, music with specific activity instructions, rhythm instruments, and games.

STEM and Cultural Arts Programs and Special Visitors

Each year, the Preschool sponsors special presentations relating to science and the arts. Preschool families (including younger siblings) are welcome to attend these programs. The programs frequently are supplemented with follow-up enrichment activities.

In addition, special guests come to visit throughout the school year. Firefighters bring their emergency vehicles to the Preschool and discuss fire safety with students, and police officers come to share general safety tips and offer a look in their vehicles or a visit with their service animal. Various other speakers and performers come to visit as well.

Individual classes may schedule visitors to correlate with their specific curriculum units. Family members are invited to share their own talents and cultural traditions with their child's class. Any presentation that includes food items must be approved by one of the GSLP Directors. No food items may be brought into the Preschool without prior consent.

Technology in the Classroom and Screen Time Guidelines

The preschool incorporates technology in a limited way into your child's classroom experience. Computers and iPads are available as occasional center options, and teachers may show short videos (no longer than 20 minutes) that relate to topics being studied in the classroom.

Age-appropriate, screen-based interactive technology, such as educational games, apps, websites, electronic books, and interactive videos, is used to support, not replace, creative and active play, social interaction, hands-on exploration, and other developmentally appropriate activities. In accordance with child-care regulations, GSLP students are permitted to view no more than 30 minutes per week of non-interactive educational videos.

Every classroom has its own iPad for student and teacher use. Tablets have parental controls enabled to restrict Internet access, app use, and app installation. Classroom computer usage by the children is restricted to specific educational websites and software. Teacher accounts on class computers are password protected to keep children from using the unfiltered Internet.

Celebrating Birthdays and "Growing Days"

Each child will have a special day at school. Depending on the date of a child's birthday, either a child's birthday or a "growing day" will be celebrated. Parents/guardians will be notified of their child's special day. The child will be recognized with a birthday crown and a special celebratory moment during the class circle time. A gift book, chosen by the child, will be given to the child as a memento of their special day.

Parents/guardians do not provide any snacks, treats, party favors, or other items; any of these items sent in will be returned to the parents/guardians. These special days are not meant to function as birthday parties.

Sharing Time and Toys from Home

Toys should not be brought from home unless it is a sharing day and the teacher has designated toys as a sharing option. Security items, such as a special stuffed animal, are permitted at the teacher's discretion at the beginning of the year. Such items should stay in a child's tote bag if possible, and parents and teachers will collaborate on transitioning a child to leaving the item at home.

Curriculum and Assessment

Children learn through play and exploration. Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool is committed to gently guiding its students' education during the early years by following developmentally appropriate practices in all areas of the curriculum.

In developing lessons, teachers implement curriculum that covers all areas of the developing child – social and emotional development, cognitive development, physical development, and language development. Teachers assess the strengths and needs of each child. Class activities are designed to enhance these strengths and to provide experiences in areas needing reinforcement.

The Maryland State Department of Education recommends that all preschool programs utilize a research-based curriculum that aligns with the demanding state pre-kindergarten and kindergarten curricular frameworks, which constitute the foundation of the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards. MSDE regularly publishes lists of recommended curriculums that address all areas of the developing child.

Early Pre-Kindergarten Comprehensive Curriculums

Two- and three-year-old students enter preschool exhibiting a wide range of abilities and needs. Recognizing that a student's first experience in a formal school setting sets the stage for future learning, Early Pre-Kindergarten teachers create a warm and caring atmosphere where students can feel safe and secure while learning to separate from the home environment. Gentle guidance is used to develop independence and confidence. Learning class routines such as cleaning up after centers time, putting on coats, transitioning to the playground, and participating in music and chapel times are important steps in this development.

Within each classroom, teachers create centers, which provide opportunities to use a variety of equipment. Blocks, table toys, construction sets, art materials, a dramatic play center, and books and audio recordings are just a few of the materials which allow children to develop skills at their own pace. Teachers regularly assess children's progress and work with both individuals and small groups.

Teachers rely on *InvestiGator Tots* in Early Pre-Kindergarten 2 classes. This developmentally appropriate, play-based program is aimed at children ages 18 months to 3 years old and is designed to respond to students' needs as assessed by teachers. Lessons are based on a Continuum of Growth and Development that includes the following areas:

- *Language Development and Communication:* Listening and understanding, communicating and speaking, and early reading and writing.
- *Physical and Motor Development:* Gross motor skills, fine motor skills, and health and self-help practices.
- *Cognitive Development:* Exploration and discovery, memory, problem solving, and imitation and symbolic play.
- *Approaches to Learning:* Initiative and curiosity, persistence and attentiveness, and creativity and imagination.
- *Social and Emotional Development:* Building trust and emotional security, self-awareness, self-regulation, and relationships.

Teachers use *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool 6th Edition* in Early Pre-Kindergarten 3 classes (including Early Pre-Kindergarten 3 STEAM). This program follows a developmentally appropriate continuum that begins with expectations for very young children and continues through expectations for kindergarten students. Because the *Creative Curriculum* includes material appropriate for preschool students at different stages of development, teachers can tailor the curriculum to meet individual needs and abilities. The curriculum covers four domains:

- *Social-Emotional* – this domain includes learning to work in a class environment, taking care of self and being a friend, understanding personal needs, sharing and taking turns;
- *Cognitive* – this domain includes problem solving, developing math skills such as sorting, classifying, numeral identification, one-to-one correspondence, patterns and counting;
- *Physical* – this domain includes gross motor development (large muscles used in running and hopping) and small motor development (muscles used in manipulating small toys and puzzle pieces, working with writing tools and other art equipment, and cutting with scissors);
- *Language* – this domain involves learning vocabulary and comprehension through songs, fingerplays, story time and conversation. Alphabet concepts are introduced in informal settings. The sounds of language are a major focus. Students' listening and speaking skills receive special attention.

Classes engage in five- to six-week *studies* focused on topics such as Roads, Bread, and Simple Machines that introduce students to new vocabulary and new learning experiences. Early Pre-Kindergarten 3 STEAM classes uses unique science- and math-focused study topics, which allows a student who is not fully ready for Pre-Kindergarten to return for a distinctive, second year of Early Pre-Kindergarten 3.

Early Pre-Kindergarten 2 classes supplement *Investigator Tots* with theme-based materials from *Creative Curriculum*. Early Pre-Kindergarten 3 teachers supplement *Creative Curriculum* with the hands-on mathematics program *Growing with Mathematics*. This program provides music, art, literature, and movement activities to teach essential math skills.

Pre-Kindergarten Comprehensive Curriculum

Pre-Kindergarten students eagerly explore new concepts. The *Creative Curriculum for Preschool 5th Edition* is implemented at GSLP as is its indicators, which set goals for what children should learn in school. These indicators are based on the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards. They are designed to ensure children are prepared for kindergarten's higher standards.

The *Creative Curriculum* comprehensive curriculum has a strong focus on building children's literacy and social-emotional skills. It was chosen by MSDE for how closely it aligns with the district's integrated approach to teaching subjects. *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool 5th Edition* teaches essential skills in early literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies through monthly themes that interest four- and five-year-old students.

Teachers use *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool 5th Edition* in Pre-Kindergarten This program follows a developmentally appropriate continuum that includes material appropriate for preschool students at different stages of development, teachers can tailor the curriculum to meet individual needs and abilities. The curriculum covers four domains:

- *Social-Emotional* – this domain includes learning to work in a class environment, taking care of self and being a friend, understanding personal needs, sharing and taking turns;
- *Cognitive* – this domain includes problem solving, developing math skills such as numeral identification, one-to-one correspondence, patterns, sorting, classifying, counting and simple addition and subtraction;
- *Physical* – this domain includes gross motor development (large muscles used in running and hopping) and small motor development (muscles used in manipulating small toys and puzzle pieces, working with writing tools and other art equipment, and cutting with scissors);
- *Language* – this domain involves learning vocabulary and comprehension through songs, fingerplays, story time and conversation. Alphabet concepts are introduced in informal settings. The sounds of language are a major focus. Students' listening and speaking skills receive special attention.

Classes engage in the following *studies* focused on topics such as Pet, Clothes, and Rocks that introduce students to new vocabulary and new learning experiences.

Our lesson plans are built around topics in social-emotional development, social studies, and science. The curriculum provides skill development in alphabet recognition, concepts of print, sounds of language, letter/sound relationships, and beginning writing, which are taught through theme-specific literature, music, poetry, and art activities. Children learn mathematics skills through hands-on learning experiences in counting, comparing, and identifying quantities; addition and subtraction; informal measurement; sorting; and identifying and describing shapes. Opportunities for learning in science and engineering come through informational texts, teacher-directed activities, and individual investigations, which complement a variety of learning styles.

Creative Curriculum also has a robust math portion that takes a hands-on approach to teaching essential math skills. The lessons focus on building problem-solving skills in addition to teaching content knowledge. The curriculum is aligned with the Common Core State Standards and is designed to provide a solid foundation for kindergarten math. Teachers will also be able to draw from MCPS's Eureka Math to help create familiar vocabulary and lessons with the transition to kindergarten.

Teachers of Pre-Kindergarten classes consider individual skill levels when planning classroom activities. Thus, a student who is not fully ready for Kindergarten can return for a distinctive, second year of Pre-Kindergarten.

Music Curriculum

Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool students meet weekly for group music classes. During these sessions, students learn seasonal songs; play instruments such as handbells, resonator bells, shakers, and rhythm sticks; and follow cues to dance and perform fingerplays. Lyrics for favorite music class songs are shared in GSLP's monthly newsletter so that families may sing along at home.

Lessons focus on the following fine arts topics adapted from Maryland's *Healthy Beginnings* and *Early Learning Assessment* for preschool students, in addition to integrated literacy and math content:

- **Rhythm:** *Repeats rhythmic patterns with decreasing reliance on adult support and expands ability to create them.*
 - Clap hands to follow an adult's simple rhythm.
 - Tap simple rhythmic patterns, with modeling and independently.
 - Recognize that music has a steady beat.
- **Playing Rhythm Instruments:** *Uses instruments to follow increasingly complex musical patterns.*
 - Imitate an adult's steady beat using rhythm instruments.
 - Use rhythm instruments to follow a song's steady beat.
 - Play rhythm instruments such as shakers, rhythm sticks, jingle bells, maracas, and drums.
- **Singing:** *Responds to familiar songs and expands ability to repeat and create songs.*
 - Chant words to familiar songs with modeling.
 - Sing familiar songs independently.
 - Vary the voice to suit the song (e.g., using a soft voice for a lullaby).
- **Response to Change:** *Recognizes familiar musical sounds and increases ability to respond to changes in music.*
 - Recognize when a quality in the music changes.
 - Identify different dynamics (loud or soft), tempos (fast or slow), pitches (high or low), and note durations (long or short).
 - Adjust own actions to reflect changes in the music.
- **Following Directions and Cues:** *Follows directions or actions during increasingly complex singing games.*
 - Participate in fingerplays (e.g., "Itsy Bitsy Spider") led by adults.
 - Follow adult cues to participate independently in singing games (e.g., "Hokey Pokey").
- **Dance:** *Moves body or parts of body to rhythmic sounds with increasing complexity and coordination. Dances with increasingly complex body movements. Dances with others in increasingly coordinated and complex ways.*
 - Participate in music games that require coordinated full-body movement to the music.
 - Participate in music games that require imitating animals or creating shapes with the body.
 - Dance with props such as scarves or ribbons.
 - Participate in dance games with partners or group formations.

Music is incorporated into the daily activities. In addition, music class is held weekly. During this group music time, two or more classes combine for 20 minutes to share songs and fingerplays relating to classroom topics. This group time fosters a sense of community within the school.

Chapel Curriculum

Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool's Chapel Curriculum is based on child-friendly themes not specific to a particular Christian denomination, such as "We Can Talk to God" (prayer), "Show Love to Everyone," and "Serve Others," as well as Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter. Many chapel lessons include participation elements that allow children to become part of the lesson's story.

Stories used for chapel lessons come from the *Children of God Storybook Bible*, adapted by Archbishop Desmond Tutu; *The Rhyme Bible Storybook*, adapted by L.J. Sattgast; and *Read-Aloud Bible Stories* volumes 1-4, adapted by Ella K. Lindvall.

Children attend chapel one to two times each month. Teachers reinforce chapel lessons through retelling and discussing the chapel story in subsequent weeks.

GSLP is a Christian preschool. Chapels are an important part of our program. Typically, the children attend a fifteen-minute chapel in the church sanctuary twice a month. During chapels, a teacher or pastor will share a Bible-based message with the children, lead them in prayer, and close with songs that extend the message of the day. The chapels give the children an opportunity to participate in group worship at their level. Family members are always welcome to attend these chapels.

During the year, the Preschool sponsors two special chapels (for Christmas and for Easter), which families are encouraged to attend. More formal than the bi-weekly chapels, these chapels include special presentations by the students. The Christmas Chapel presents the story of the nativity. The Easter Chapel teaches students in a child-friendly way about Jesus' resurrection.

Kindness Curriculum

Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool believes strongly in the values of kindness and service to the community. Teachers use the Kindness Curriculum to promote these values as well as to reinforce social and emotional skills.

GSLP's Kindness Curriculum is inspired by the program developed by the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for Healthy Minds. This program promotes mindfulness, teaching children to focus and to be aware of themselves and of how they are feeling. It asks children to consider how their feelings may affect their actions and teaches the importance of taking time to think before acting.

The Kindness Curriculum also promotes compassion and gratitude. GSLP has expanded this focus through integrating service projects throughout the year for students. Students will commit time and effort in creating gifts and cards, performing songs, collecting goods, and more as part of learning the importance of service to the community.

Art Program

GSLP's art program promotes exploration of art in its various forms, simultaneously building necessary skills while encouraging creativity. The goal of GSLP's art program is to instill in young children the enjoyment and value of their own creativity by using a variety of art mediums in open-ended art explorations. The process, not the product, is the emphasis.

In addition, a limited number of craft projects are used to teach specific objectives (such as cutting, following directions, and spatial relationships) through production of a particular end product. Craft projects used by GSLP are developmentally appropriate for the age and skill level of the students.

Teachers post selected art projects in the hallway outside individual classrooms. An explanation of the process/objective behind the artwork accompanies the posted artwork. Whether or not a specific art project is posted in the hallway, teachers are under no obligation to provide students who are absent with the materials to complete any missed project.

Assessment

GSLP teachers observe children throughout the school day in order to assess progress in skill development. Assessments take the form of written observations, photographs and videos, performance-based tasks (such as walking on a balance beam or counting a set of teddy bears), and student-generated work (such as art projects or writing samples from learning centers).

Teachers use their observations, child work samples, and other evidence to determine where each child falls on the learning progressions that are part of Maryland's recommended assessment systems, *Healthy Beginnings* and the *Early Learning Assessment*. The information gained from completing these assessments is then used to inform teachers' lesson planning.

Selected photos and student-generated work that provide an overall picture of student growth are collected in student portfolios that teachers share with parents at winter conferences. Portfolios are given to parents at the end of the school year.

All assessment methods above are used to inform teacher's comments and markings on student progress reports. Progress reports are provided at fall and winter conferences and again on the last day of school.

Screenings and Accommodations

Developmental Screenings

The Maryland State Department of Education requires that children in accredited programs be screened using a nationally accepted, research-based assessment tool. GSLP uses the *Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3)* for this purpose. The ASQ is sent home during orientation (Spanish-language questionnaires are available upon request). Parents complete the questionnaire and return it to GSLP.

During the fall, a vision and hearing screening is offered at a minimal fee. This screening is voluntary. *The staff strongly urges parents/guardians to take advantage of this service as it is much more complete than screenings provided at typical health care exams.* In most cases, the results will fall within the normal range. However, in cases where something unexpected is found, early intervention is extremely important.

Throughout the year, other screenings may be offered by GSLP. Notification of such screenings will be sent home in student tote bags or announced in the weekly email newsletter.

Accommodations for Students and Families with Disabilities or Special Needs

The preschool will make reasonable accommodations for any enrolled child with special needs in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. Please make arrangements to meet with the child's teachers and a GSLP Director to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

GSLP requests that parents provide a copy of any individualized education plan, individualized family service plan, or written behavioral plan for the child so that we can incorporate its suggestions into teacher's plans and the learning environment. Classroom teachers can attend meetings to discuss a child's education plan upon a parent's request.

Families of students with special health care needs should fill out a Health Care Plan as well as a Medication Administration Authorization form for any medication that should be kept at school. Please see the section "Allergies, Chronic Conditions, and the Administration of Medications" for more information. Parents should discuss any special health conditions with the child's teacher.

Do not park in spaces designated for people with disabilities unless you or an accompanying family member has a disability. and do not use them for quick pick-ups and drop-offs.

Parking for family members with disabilities is provided right outside the preschool entrance. **The Preschool asks that all preschool families respect the signage marking these spots and not use them for quick pick-ups and drop-offs.** It is important for the safety of our students and family members with disabilities that all families respect the signage marking these spots.

As this special parking area offers limited spaces, please make sure your disability parking placard or license plate is visible when you use these spots out of respect for all our families with disabilities. Visit Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration website [mva.maryland.gov] for more information on parking for people with disabilities.

If someone with a disability on a child's release list is unable to easily enter the building to pick up a child, please contact the Preschool Office (301-963-1955) to arrange for a pick-up accommodation.

Special Needs Services and Resources

GSLP does not offer special-education services but will work with a child's service providers. Children with identified special needs are served through Montgomery County Public Schools or private practitioners.

When a child is identified as having special needs, the classroom teacher, with permission from the parents/guardians, will contact the child's therapists for guidance in assisting the child within the classroom setting. Please provide the preschool with a copy of your child's individualized education plan, individualized family service plan, or written behavioral plan if possible so that teachers can provide appropriate accommodations in the classroom and support plan goals. **GSLP teachers are happy to attend IEP/IFSP meetings as part of your child's education team if invited by parents/guardians.**

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Maryland child care regulations, adults who provide specialized care to a child with special needs will have access to the school and classroom to provide those services as specified in the child's individualized education plan, individualized family service plan, or written behavioral plan. GSLP requires parental permission before allowing other adults, such as observers or therapists, access to children while in the classroom.

When teachers notice that a child is struggling in a particular area, they often refer parents/guardians to Child Find or Infants and Toddlers, the county screening agencies for young children. Parents are encouraged to make use of these resources, which offer free screening and early intervention services to children with significant development delays. If professional intervention is not required, they will provide suggestions for helping the child at home.

Information about Infants and Toddlers, Child Find, and other community resources available to families of children with disabilities and special health care needs is available on the Preschool Parent Resource Board and in the Preschool Office.

Discipline and Withdrawal

Discipline Policy

Discipline usually is not an issue when children are engaged in developmentally appropriate activities. If a problem occurs, children are redirected to another activity.

Staff members are trained in positive guidance techniques for modifying challenging behaviors children exhibit in the classroom. These techniques include creating developmentally appropriate classroom environments, focusing on prevention, providing clear and simple expectations for behavior, and encouraging positive behaviors.

Children are taught how to use words to tell others what they do and do not like. At the beginning of the year, children role-play situations and demonstrate how they can tell another child to stop a particular activity that is bothering them. The objective is to empower children to handle situations themselves.

Students are not forced to apologize for their behavior. In cases of conflict between students, the students are guided toward an understanding of what has happened. If a student has made another student unhappy, it is the former student's responsibility to make the other child feel better. GSLP's goal is to help children understand the feelings and the motivations of others and to help children learn impulse control.

Home and School Partnership on Discipline

As part of Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool's efforts to maintain positive classroom environments and benefit all children in the program, it is expected that caregivers will participate in the process of addressing any challenging behaviors exhibited by their children in the classroom. This commitment includes:

- **Participating in the Developmental Screening Process:** Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) to assess all enrolled children for developmental delays. This questionnaire is administered at home by a caregiver. Parents are expected to complete and return the questionnaire promptly and to attend conferences with their children's teachers to discuss the screening results. Screening results may indicate the need for further screening by specialists. Teachers will provide parents with the resources necessary to continue the screening process so that children can receive the specialized assistance that enables GSLP teachers to best meet these children's needs in the classroom.
- **Conferencing with Staff Members about Challenging Behaviors:** Parents are considered experts on their own children. Therefore, it is essential that parents collaborate with staff in identifying the reasons a child exhibits challenging behaviors and in identifying strategies to help a child learn appropriate behaviors.
- **Collaborate with Staff Members on Creating a Behavior Support Plan:** A Behavior Support Plan identifies and describes challenging behaviors and lays out strategies for preventing and responding to the inappropriate behavior and teaching the child new skills.
- **Following Through with Behavior Support Plans at Home:** Consistency is key to teaching children limits and reinforcing positive behaviors. Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool expects caregivers to make good-faith efforts to implement the strategies created by the parent-teacher team at home while teachers implement it at school.

Suspension and Expulsion Policy for Challenging Behaviors

At Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool, our goal is to promote children's social-emotional and behavioral health and to appropriately address and bring resources to challenging behavior. However, as young children learn to develop social-emotional skills, they may respond to situations with externalized behaviors (e.g., defiance, noncompliance, and aggression). We attempt to create a developmentally appropriate program that meets the needs of each child and precludes the need for children to respond with externalized behaviors that are disruptive to the learning environment. Some of the methods that we use in our program are:

- **Consideration of the Individual Needs of Each Child:** This approach helps us to adapt and respond to individual variation.
- **Utilization of Positive Guidance Techniques:** Children's desired behavior will be reinforced, and consequences for challenging behavior will be developmentally appropriate and consistent.
- **Using Constructive Approaches to Redirection:** Strategies such as class meetings and conflict mediation help to restore balance to the learning environment when young children struggle in large group settings.
- **Maintaining Appropriate Group Sizes:** Compliance with recommended and required teacher/child ratios and group sizes improves child outcomes, helps to reduce behavior problems, and improves the early childhood experience.
- **Engaging Families:** Children benefit when families and early childhood programs work together in partnership. Early childhood educators should engage families to better understand the origin of the behaviors and how parents have addressed the behaviors in the home setting. This information is used as part of the decision-making process to support the child.
- **Demonstrating Cultural Responsiveness:** Intentionally teaching social skills, raising expectations of all children, and recognizing children's positive behaviors in the context of their own culture.
- **Use of Formal and Informal Screenings and Observations:** Early identification through formal and informal screenings and observations helps programs match children with the services that benefit children and their families.

- **Accessing Developmental, Mental Health, and Other Supports for Children and Families:** There are a wealth of resources in the state of Maryland that can provide supports to the child, family, and program. We work with families to suggest and facilitate the use of a variety of options.

Because of the long-term benefits of participation in high-quality early childhood programs, our goal is not to suspend or expel a child from care. Instead, we attempt to collaborate with parents to bring the needed resources and strategies to a situation. Our hope is that these efforts will result in suspensions and expulsions only being used where there are extraordinary circumstances or a determination of a serious safety threat. While we will make efforts to reduce or eliminate such circumstances and/or threats with the provision of reasonable modifications, we reserve the right to suspend or expel in any situation we deem necessary.

At Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool, our goal is to ensure that all our youngest learners have the tools and experiences they need to thrive.

Circumstances Leading to Student Withdrawal from GSLP

If, in the professional expertise of the Staff of Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool, GSLP cannot meet the educational needs of a child, the Preschool reserves the right to withdraw the child after consultation with the parents/guardians.

GSLP reserves the right to withdraw a child whose inability to separate successfully from caretakers results in an adverse learning environment for either the child or the other students. Similarly, a child enrolled in an Early Pre-Kindergarten 3 or Pre-Kindergarten class who is not fully toilet trained or is unable to attend to his/her toileting needs independently will be withdrawn from GSLP.

Further, at the discretion of the GSLP Directors, an inability to meet a child's educational needs may be presumed when the suspected developmental issues of a child negatively affect the classroom learning environment and the parents/guardians have elected not to participate in Child Find. In addition, a child whose behavior consistently endangers his/her own safety or well-being or the safety or well-being of others will be removed from GSLP.

In each of the above situations, every effort will be made to work with the child and his/her family to improve the situation before any dismissal actions are initiated, as described above.

Family Engagement and Involvement

Special Events

Each year, the Preschool sponsors special events that include the entire Preschool community. Families are encouraged to attend Fall Festival, the Christmas and Easter Chapels, and the Closing Program. The Preschool also co-sponsors fun weekend and evening events for our families such as Family Movie Nights and Trunk or Treat in partnership with GSLC Children and Youth. Family events are announced in the weekly school email newsletter, the print newsletter, and on signs posted to the events board in the hallway near the office.

Some events are for students only. These include Apple-Pumpkin Week, Teddy Bear Days, and holiday parties. For some activities, a limited number of volunteers and specific contributions are requested. Please provide ONLY the requested item. Any non-requested items (including food items) will be returned to the parent/guardian who provided the item.

Classroom Visits

Parents, guardians, and extended family members are always welcome in the classrooms. Family members have joined classes to tell stories, lead a cooking activity or an art project, or simply help as needed. Teachers post the need for volunteers for special activities on their bulletin boards.

Some parents or guardians visit in order to observe their child in the school setting. Teachers may ask a parent or guardian to visit the classroom before conferences regarding a child's growth and development.

We request that parents please schedule any visit in advance so that the teacher can plan for your inclusion in the daily activities. This will allow you to observe your child in his/her normal environment. GSLP also requests that, when possible, parents wait to schedule visits until October in order to allow teachers and students to settle in and establish a routine.

Distributing Birthday Party and Other Invitations

Individual party invitations cannot be passed out at school unless there is one for every child in the class. At the beginning of the school year, a student directory is distributed which includes addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses of students. Please use this resource in distributing party invitations. In addition, please refrain from discussing invitation-only parties or other social activities in the Preschool hallways or on the playground.

Distributing Gifts, Favors, and Goody Bags

The Preschool appreciates families' generosity in wishing to provide goody bags and other gifts to the other students in their child's class, whether in recognition of a birthday or a holiday or just as a kind gesture. **However, we ask that families please refrain from bringing in gifts or goody bags for students, including at Christmas or on birthdays.**

The only time of year the Preschool permits families to distribute a small gift to children in the class is at Valentine's Day (February 14). Families may attach a small candy or other treat to their Valentine's Day cards for their children's classmates. Cards are exchanged during the class Valentine's Day party. **Please do not attach more than one small treat to your child's cards. We ask that families not send in bags of treats or party favors for students to distribute.**

Caregiver Education Opportunities

The Preschool offers staff-led workshops for caregivers on topics in early childhood, such as nutrition, kindergarten readiness, and building literacy skills. These workshops are held while children are in class. If your child's class does not meet during the time a workshop is scheduled or if you have a younger child not yet enrolled in school, you are welcome to bring your child along with you to the event. Toys and books are provided to engage children in attendance. Following the program, participants are encouraged to socialize with one another.

The Preschool may offer other educational events for caregivers throughout the year. Events are announced in the weekly school email newsletter, the print newsletter, and on signs posted to the events board in the hallway near the office.

Family Play & Learn and Literacy Circle & Centers

Several times a year, GSLP offers Family Play & Learn or Literacy Circle & Centers sessions, where families can engage in educational play with their children at the school with guidance from staff members. Parents can explore the variety of materials available for children's play and introduce younger children to a preschool environment. Staff members also introduce families to quality children's books, songs, and activities that families can use at home to reinforce skills.

Preschool Lending Library

Books and other media appropriate for preschool children may be borrowed from the Lending Library located immediately inside the door of the Preschool Office. The selection includes a variety of books on CD with accompanying paper books, which allow children to follow along with the text as it is read aloud.

Books for adults are also available. These books cover a variety of parenting topics, such as communicating with your child, managing behaviors, and child development. In addition, the Preschool has information available to help families dealing with special circumstances, such as a death in the family. Donations of appropriate books and DVDs to the Lending Library are always welcome.

Scholastic Book Club Orders

A variety of Scholastic Book Club flyers are sent home in students' tote bags. These clubs serve as a convenient way for families to obtain quality books to enjoy at home. When books are purchased, GSLP receives bonus points that are used to acquire new books and educational supplies. There is no obligation to participate in this program.

Books can be ordered either by turning in the order form from the back of the club flyer or through the Scholastic Book Club website. When ordering books using the paper order form, please make checks payable to Scholastic. Cash is not accepted. To pay by credit card, purchase your books using the club website (**clubs.scholastic.com**), entering the Class Activation Code **H8D8G** to ensure that GSLP receives your order. It takes one to two weeks after the order due date for the books to arrive.

Family Contributions to Service Projects

Children will engage in service projects throughout the year as part of the Preschool's Kindness Curriculum. Families are invited to participate in several of these projects as volunteers or through making contributions.

At Halloween, the Preschool will participate in Operation Gratitude's Halloween Candy Give-Back. Teachers will encourage students to donate a portion of their Halloween goodies to service members and first responders through this program.

Later in the fall, each class will collect canned and boxed foods to donate to a food pantry for needy families in the Gaithersburg area. Participation in this voluntary program teaches thankfulness for one's blessings.

Students put together gift bags for children served by the Gaithersburg Judy Center, an agency promoting kindergarten readiness for at-risk children under six years of age. Families wishing to contribute are encouraged to donate funds toward new art and educational materials in the winter and new books in the spring for these bags.

In the spring, students will create Buck-a-Chick eggs to sell as a fundraiser. Each egg purchased provides one chick to a family in need. Chicks will grow into hens and provide a steady source of both protein-rich food and income through the eggs they produce.

Toward the end of the school year, students will collect coins toward the purchase of water filters for people in areas where safe drinking water is not available. We encourage families to save their pocket change for this collection.

Communication

Communicating Questions and Concerns

Communication between parents/guardians and their child's school is an integral part of student success.

Parents/guardians with questions or concerns may email (**office@gslp-gaithersburg.org** or **gspreschool@outlook.com**) or phone (**301-963-1955**) the Preschool Office to leave a message requesting the teacher contact the parents/guardians at the teacher's earliest convenience. Alternatively, families may leave teachers a message in the Message Bin outside their child's classroom.

Preschool Communication Opportunities

During registration, parents/guardians complete a form that provides information about their family. The Preschool formally encourages additional communication through:

- **Gatherings** that are held the week before the start of school at the GSLP playground that provide an opportunity to meet classmates, family members, and teachers
- **A Classroom Visit**, which serves to introduce parents/guardians and children to the classroom setting
- **A Parent/Guardian Orientation**

- A **Back to School Night**, held early in the school year, which serves to introduce parents/guardians to the classroom environment, provide updates on the program, and provide an opportunity to ask questions about the program
- Two **Parent/Guardian and Teacher Conferences**: one in October/November and one in January/February
- Three **Student Progress Reports**
- **Caregiver Education Opportunities** which provide forums for meeting other school families and for growing in caregiving skills through listening to speakers and viewing carefully selected videos
- **Weekly emails** that offer reminders of upcoming events and school news.
- **Monthly print newsletters** that include information on community resources and events, curriculum highlights, words to some of the songs being learned during group music, and general news about the school
- Individual **class bulletin boards** which contain daily notes, calendars, and items of specific interest to that classroom
- A **Preschool Parent Resource Board** and a **GSLP/GSLC Events Board** in the school hallway for the sharing of information about the school and community
- **Questionnaires** that request parent/guardian assessment of various segments of the preschool program
- **Participation** in classroom events and at major school functions
- Scheduled **appointments** with the GSLP Directors or teachers

Progress Reports and Student Records

Formal progress reports are distributed three times during the year. Under *no* circumstances will these reports be released to anyone other than a parent/legal guardian. If a child is not picked-up by a parent/legal guardian on the day that progress reports are distributed, the report will be mailed to the home address.

Parents/legal guardians may request to review their child's student file at any time. Copies may be released to other schools with the written consent of the parent/guardian. Teachers are available to complete the various forms required by private schools in the area. Please give the teacher ample advance notice.

Informing Staff About Family Emergencies and Major Changes

In the event of any family upheaval (death, illness, change in residence, etc.), please inform the teacher immediately. Children react to change in a variety of ways and GSLP staff can assist children much more effectively if made aware of the situation. Instructional materials relating to numerous family events are available in the Preschool Office.

Tote Bags

Each student receives a new GSLP tote bag at the beginning of the school year. Children are encouraged to personalize their tote bags so that they will be able to better recognize their own bag. In the past, students have used puffy paint, decals, buttons, keychains, and appliqués. The child's first name should be written in title-case using block letters on the white strip.

Teachers place newsletters, book orders, and school notices along with classroom projects into the tote bags. **Check your child's tote bag immediately upon returning home from school each day.**

Do not expect teachers or the Preschool Office to receive information sent to GSLP inside the tote bags. Students are responsible for emptying their own tote bags upon arrival at school and often such items are missed. **Please hand all items directly to the classroom teacher or take them to the GSLP Office.**

Social Media

Follow the GSLP page on Facebook ([facebook.com/gslp.gaithersburg](https://www.facebook.com/gslp.gaithersburg)) and the GSLP Twitter account (twitter.com/GSLP_Gburg) to receive announcements of interest to the GSLP community. Due to privacy concerns, GSLP does not post any pictures of Preschool activities featuring children on its social media sites.

GSLP Website

GSLP maintains a website at www.gslp-gaithersburg.org. On the home page of the website, GSLP posts announcements of immediate importance to the GSLP community. Emergency closings and delayed openings are posted on the home page as soon as a decision is reached.

In the “Current Families” menu, selecting the link titled “Announcements” will provide the website user with details about the latest news concerning the Preschool. On the “School Calendar” page, visitors may view upcoming activities and subscribe to the preschool’s Google Calendar. Also available on the website are digital copies of the *Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool Home + School Connection* newsletters.

Student and Staff Contact Information

At the beginning of the school year, a directory of students and staff is distributed to each Preschool family. Arranged by classes, the directory lists the parent/guardian names, addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers for each child. The information is provided by parents/guardians and is published only with their permission. The directory is for the private use of Preschool families and is not distributed to other persons or organizations. Updates to class lists can be obtained from the Preschool Office.

Staff members can be contacted through the Preschool Office. To leave a message for a staff member, please call (301-963-1955) or email (office@gslp-gaithersburg.org or gspreschool@outlook.com) the Preschool. Staff members will respond to messages as quickly as possible.

Nutrition

Daily Snacks

The Preschool participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, which sets guidelines for providing nutritious snacks to preschool students. A daily snack is provided by the Preschool during every regular class session, including those that also serve lunch. Each snack includes items from two of the following groups:

- Fruits (apple slices, mandarin oranges, bananas, raisins, etc.)
- Vegetables (baby carrots, cucumber slices, celery sticks, etc.)
- Cereal, crackers, or bread made with whole grains
- Proteins (string cheese, Wowbutter, hummus, etc.)
- Low-fat (1%) milk

Snack menus are posted in the Preschool Office and on the Preschool Parent Resource Board in the hallway across from the office. Weekly menus ensure that students are served snacks that are limited in fat, sugar, and salt content and that snacks that include whole grains as well as fresh fruit or vegetables are served at least four times a week.

Water Is Always Available

Water is always available to students while enjoying their snacks and lunches and throughout the day upon request.

Families do not need to send water bottles to school with students.

If you do send a water bottle to school, please pack it in your child’s lunchbox. Water bottles used outside of the lunch period tend to get lost among the toys or mixed up in other children’s personal belongings.

Lunches from Home

Class sessions lasting 4 hours eat lunches brought from home. The Preschool provides low-fat milk and water alongside all lunches, as well as the daily snack.

No class sessions include breakfast. All students should eat breakfast before coming to school.

Lunchboxes and Food Containers



Students in 4-hour classes bring lunches from home to consume at school. **Lunches must be packed in a flat lunchbox that the student can eat from when it is unzipped or unlatched, like the lunchbox pictured to the left.** These lunchboxes help keep the child's food contained while they eat, making it easier for children to identify which food items belong to them.

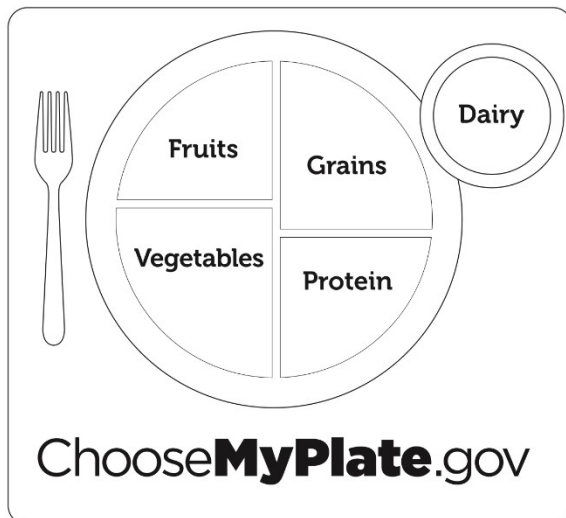
Be cautious in purchasing bento boxes, as any perishable foods must be packed separately and removed for refrigeration, and many bento boxes do not offer removable containers (see "Perishable Foods in Lunches Must Be Separated and Refrigerated," below).

All lunchboxes should have the student's name written prominently on the front and on the inside in permanent marker.

GSLP encourages children to take care of their own lunch needs as part of building independence. **Test all food containers, such as plastic tubs, bento boxes, and food jars, to see whether your child can open them on their own before sending them to school.**

In addition, remember to **pack utensils, such as forks and spoons,** in children's lunchboxes.

Nutritious Lunches Are Required



Keep healthy nutrition for preschoolers in mind when packing lunches for school. A nutritious lunch provides students with the energy to fully participate in the Preschool's program and learn to the best of their abilities.

Students in 4-hour classes must bring a full, complete lunch to eat at school. Licensing regulations and Maryland EXCELS require that students are provided with complete lunches while in care. *A snack or dessert alone is not considered a complete lunch, even if the child will eat more at home after dismissal.*

Teachers are required to monitor student lunches for overall nutrition. **In line with child care regulations, the Preschool may supplement lunches as necessary to ensure children are receiving nutritious, balanced meals.** Parents are informed should

a child be offered additional lunch items and requested to adjust packed lunches as necessary.

The USDA provides us with guidance on providing balanced lunches for young children. Packed lunches should include:

- **Children Age 2:** 1 ounce of meat or other protein-based food, ½ ounce of bread or other healthy carbohydrates, and ½ cup of vegetables and/or fruit
- **Children Ages 3 and 4:** 1½ ounces of meat or other protein-based food, ½ ounce of bread or other healthy carbohydrates, and 1 cup of vegetables and/or fruit

Teachers cannot hand-feed children to ensure they eat. Please provide foods that are easy for children to feed themselves independently. Teachers will work with parents to ensure students eat their lunch at school by monitoring consumption and informing parents should children frequently leave items uneaten.

No Peanuts, Nuts, or Foods Produced on Equipment Shared with Nuts or Peanuts
GSLP is a peanut- and nut-free school. GSLP does not serve products that contain peanuts or tree nuts, nor does GSLP serve products whose labels indicate processing at facilities that process peanut or tree nut products. **GSLP requires that all families follow these rules when packing lunches.** Teachers monitor lunches daily for products containing **nuts, peanuts, or possible cross-contamination with nuts or peanuts**, which are removed and sent home uneaten.

Please read labels carefully and do not send in with lunches any products that contain nuts or peanuts or that are produced on equipment shared with nuts or peanuts. Items that contain nuts or peanuts include (but are not limited to):

- Peanut butter
- Almond butter, cashew butter, and other nut butters
- Nutella and other chocolate spreads (contains hazelnuts or other nuts or peanuts)
- Pesto (contains pine nuts or other nuts)
- Almond or cashew milk
- Many packaged snack trays
- Many granola bars, cookies, and candies

To aid our teachers, please **include a note** in your child's lunchbox if their lunch includes sunflower seed butter, nut-free chocolate spread, or another product that might be mistaken for something containing peanuts or nuts.

Perishable Foods in Lunches Must Be Separated and Refrigerated
Perishable foods in lunches must be packed together in a zip-top bag or other container labeled with the student's name. Perishable foods should be packed separately from nonperishable food.

When dropping off a student, place the labeled container of perishable items in the small bin outside the student's classroom and then place the closed lunchbox in the large white lunches bin. The perishable foods will be stored in the Preschool's refrigerator until lunches are served.

Perishable foods are foods that would normally be kept in a refrigerator before being served. Perishable foods include, but are not limited to:

- Meat and fish
- Tofu and meat substitutes (such as Tofurkey)
- Cheese, yogurt, and other dairy products
- Eggs
- Cut fruits and vegetables (including baby carrots)
- Salads
- Milk or juice in reusable bottles
- Pasta, cooked rice, and other cooked grains
- Sushi rolls
- Sandwiches with meat or cheese
- Casseroles, curries, stir fries, and other cooked entrees

Ice packs are *not* considered an acceptable substitute for refrigerating perishables. All perishable foods must be packed separately and refrigerated, **including foods that families may serve at room temperature at home.** Refrigerating perishable food is required by child care licensing regulations.

Be careful in packing lunch containers with multiple compartments (such as bento-style lunch containers). **If one item in the container is perishable, the whole container will need to be refrigerated.** To save refrigerator space, please pack any perishable items in separate, small containers or bags.

All perishable foods and foods that have come into with a child's mouth or eating utensil that are left after lunch is served will be discarded.

Avoid Choking Hazards in Lunches

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics' HealthyChildren.Org, more than 50 percent of choking incidents among young children involve food. Help keep children under four years of age safe by cutting block cheeses, meats (such as hot dogs), vegetables, and fruits (such as whole grapes) into pieces no larger than half an inch (or one centimeter). Avoid sending seeds, hard or sticky candies, popcorn, or gum in lunches.

Health

When Is My Child Too Sick for School?

Here are general guidelines on deciding when to send your child to school:

WHEN IS SICK TOO SICK FOR SCHOOL

Send me to school if...	Keep me at home if...	Call the doctor if...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">I have a runny nose or just a little cough, but no other symptoms.I haven't taken any fever reducing medicine for 24 hours, and I haven't had a fever during that time.I haven't thrown up or had any diarrhea for 24 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">I have a temperature higher than 100 degrees even after taking medicine.I'm throwing up or have diarrhea.My eyes are pink and crusty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">I have a temperature higher than 100 degrees for more than 24 hours.I've been throwing up or have diarrhea for more than two days.I've had the sniffles for more than a week, and they are getting worse.

Learning is important, and children do not need to stay home for every sniffle. However, children should come to school physically ready to participate in all areas of the curriculum, including outdoor play. Students unable to go outside should not attend school. **Children may not remain indoors when their class is engaged in outdoor activities.**

A child must be fever-free *without the use of fever-lowering medication* for 24 hours and must not have vomited or had diarrhea for 24 hours in order to attend school. If a child has been prescribed an **antibiotic**, the child must have the antibiotic in his/her system for a full 24 hours before attending. This includes ophthalmic antibiotics for conjunctivitis (pinkeye).

If your child will be out for the day, please email or phone the Preschool and leave a message describing your child's illness. A child may not be readmitted to school after an absence of **3 or more school days due to illness** without a written statement from a parent or physician that the child may return to a regular schedule.

A child who is feverish, queasy, or experiencing severe respiratory symptoms or other signs of illness (see below) should stay home to rest and recover. **The Preschool follows the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services guidelines regarding school attendance.** The following information is quoted from their fact sheet:

WHEN TO KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL

When your child is sick, keep him/her home from school. This not only benefits your child but other children and staff in the classroom at school.

WHAT ARE IMPORTANT SIGNS OF ILLNESS?

Some important signs of illness are:

1. A temperature of more than 100 degrees orally
2. Nausea or vomiting
3. Stomachache
4. Diarrhea
5. Pale or flushed face
6. Headache
7. Persistent cough
8. Earache
9. Thick yellowish discharge from nose
10. Sore throat
11. Rash or infection of the skin
12. Red or pink eyes
13. Loss of energy or decrease in activity

Head Lice and Other Contagious Illnesses

Please inform the Preschool if your child develops a contagious illness. In particular, head lice should be reported immediately so that classroom preventative measures can begin. Families will be alerted to medical situations within a classroom. Anonymity will be protected.

Handwashing and Basic Hygiene to Prevent the Spread of Illness

To help stem the spread of illness, all children and visitors must wash their hands upon entering a classroom. Children also must wash their hands:

- before preparing or eating food
- after eating
- when coming in from outdoor play
- before engaging in water play
- after sensory play such as a sand or water table
- after toileting or a diaper change
- after using a tissue or otherwise touching the nasal area
- in any other situation that might lead to dirty hands

All volunteers should also wash hands with similar frequency, especially before preparing and serving food or beverages in a classroom. Hand sanitizer may be used in situations where a sink is not available, such as on the playground.

Work with children at home to reinforce these rules, especially for washing hands after toileting and using a tissue. In addition, reinforce basic hygiene practices, such as coughing and sneezing into the elbow to prevent the spread of germs.

Food Allergies and Medical Dietary Restrictions

GSLP strives to be a peanut- and tree nut-free environment (see “No Peanuts, Nuts, or Foods Produced on Equipment Shared with Nuts or Peanuts,” p. ???) and does not serve snacks containing or potentially contaminated with these ingredients.

GSLP offers parents/guardians of students with food allergies or medical dietary restrictions four options regarding snacks served at the Preschool (most families choose options 1 or 2 unless a child’s allergy is either particularly mild or severe):

- 1. Limited Waiver (This option may work for children with nut/peanut allergies or mild restrictions.)**
 - a. I authorize GSLP to serve my child any of the snacks normally kept in the snack cabinet in the Preschool Office.
 - b. I will fill out a Perishable Foods Waiver to specify which items from the snack refrigerator may be served to my child.
 - c. I will evaluate any special snacks or cooking project ingredients throughout the year and sign a separate permission slip for each special snack or cooking project ingredient served to my child at GSLP during school hours.
- 2. Labeling (This option may work for children with severe food allergies.)**
 - a. I will place a GSLP-provided sticker with my child’s name, class, and restrictions on every item in the GSLP snack cabinet and refrigerator that my child is allowed to eat. My child will not be served anything that does not have his/her sticker, even if the packaging appears the same. Please plan to sticker new snack packages one to two times a month.
 - b. I will fill out a Perishable Foods Waiver to specify which items not routinely in the snack refrigerator may be served to my child.
 - c. I will evaluate any special snacks or cooking project ingredients throughout the year and sign a separate permission slip for each special snack or cooking project ingredient served to my child at GSLP during school hours.
- 3. Provide Own Food (This is the best option for any child with multiple or severe food allergies.)**
 - a. I will provide all food served to my child at GSLP, including lunches, beverages (excluding water), and snacks.
- 4. Full Waiver (This option may work for children with mild restrictions.)**
 - a. I authorize GSLP to serve my child any food purchased by the Preschool, including special snacks and ingredients for class cooking projects.

- b. I will not receive a separate permission slip for any new foods.

Forms pertaining to all these options are available as part of parent/guardian registration packets and in the Preschool Office. Occasionally, families of children with food restrictions may be asked to provide a substitute for a snack served in the classroom.

In activities where parents/guardians provide food, GSLP has limited control over the content of the snacks/lunches. Consider carefully before enrolling a child in a class with a lunch period.

Health Care Plans for Allergies and Chronic Conditions

If your child has an allergy or chronic medical condition, a **Health Care Plan** form must be completed. The Health Care Plan provides information on what symptoms staff members be aware of and what restrictions are necessary for your child's health.

Teaching children to care for living things is an important learning experience that builds empathy and science skills. As such, classrooms contain various plants and animals. Please speak directly with your child's teacher if your child has an allergy to any plant or animal so that contact with the allergen is minimized. Parents/guardians are notified should any additional animals visit the classroom.

Medications at School

If medications (either prescription or over the counter) are to be kept at the Preschool for possible emergency administration, a **Medication Administration Authorization** form must be completed and signed by a licensed medical practitioner. A separate form must be completed for **each** medication stored at the Preschool.

All medication, whether prescription or over the counter, must be **new and in its original packaging**. Containers for prescription medication must have an **original pharmacy label** attached to the container. The label must include the child's name, effective dates, and administration details. When purchasing a new medication for school, please **check that the expiration date is after the end of the school year**.

Please discuss any chronic medical conditions that may require medication at school (for example, a bee sting allergy, asthma, or diabetes) directly with your child's teacher. Similarly, if your child has any type of recurring seasonal or weather-related problem during certain times of the year (eczema, allergies, etc.), please alert the teacher.

In most cases, any medications necessary for illnesses or for allergy relief, such as **nebulizer treatment**, must be administered at home. If your child is on medication at home, please inform the teacher since it may affect your child's behavior during school.

Please note that items such as cough drops, lip balm, hand lotion, hand sanitizer, bug repellent, and sunscreen are not permitted at the Preschool. Medical uses of these items require written parent permission or, in certain cases, a Medication Administration Authorization form being completed and signed by a licensed medical practitioner. Please apply any topical items **such as sunscreen** before sending your child to school each day and do not allow any of these items to come in the child's tote bag to the Preschool.

Medical Emergencies During School

A signed emergency release form is required before a student can attend GSLP. This release allows the Preschool to initiate whatever medical procedures are necessary before the parent/guardian can be reached. In general:

- If a child suffers a severe injury or medical emergency that requires immediate medical attention, 9-1-1 will be called. The child's parent/guardian will be called next.
- If the injury is not severe, the child's parent/guardian will be notified. A GSLP staff member will attend the child until the parent/guardian or other authorized adult arrives.

Safety

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

The locked outside doors open at 9:25 AM. Please do not schedule your arrival before that time. Each child must be accompanied to his/her classroom by an adult, and an adult must sign the child in on the classroom attendance sheet.

Please line up outside the classroom, keeping close to the wall next to your classroom door to allow others to pass through the hall. Teachers open their classroom doors at 9:30 AM.

If a child arrives more than 10 minutes after the beginning of class, the arrival time must be indicated on the sign-in sheet. Please aim to arrive on time to avoid your child missing valuable learning time.

The outside doors will be unlocked at approximately 1:25 PM for dismissal. Once admitted to the hallway, please line-up outside the classroom and wait for a staff member to call your child to the door. Teachers open their doors at the official class dismissal time, either 12:00 PM or 1:30 PM.

An adult designated in writing by the child's parent/guardian as permitted to pick up the child from GSLP must sign the child out on the classroom attendance sheet. To ensure the safety of your children during these times, the Preschool adheres to the following rules:

- Staff members will release children to parents/guardians or other authorized adults only. Youth under 16 years of age may not pick up students. Photo ID verification may be requested of individuals picking up children.
- A written list of children and drivers involved in carpools must be given to the teacher. Drivers must be listed on each child's Authorized Release List.
- If your child is to go home with someone not on the Authorized Release List, written permission (signed and dated by the parent/guardian) must be given to the Preschool Office.
- In an emergency, email authorization may be sufficient. The email must originate from an email address on file with GSLP. Please contact one of the GSLP Directors by phone before emailing authorization. Unless specified otherwise, emergency authorization will be assumed applicable for a single instance only. Please stop by the Preschool Office to update the official Authorized Release List.
- If a child refuses to leave with an authorized adult, the parent/guardian of the child will be called and is responsible for retrieving the child. No resisting child will be forced by GSLP staff to leave the preschool with a non-parental adult.

Parking Lot Safety

When entering or exiting the parking lot, please drive slowly. Once parked, do not let one child stand outside the car while you help other children to and from their car seats. Keep everyone inside the car until you are ready to walk to the building.

All children should hold an adult's hand while walking to and from cars in the parking lot and along the sidewalk next to the driveway. If you are responsible for more than two children, have the children form a train of interlocking hands.

Do not leave children alone in cars. It is against the law for children under eight years of age to be left alone in a car. The Preschool has a moral and legal obligation to enforce this law. Make arrangements with other class parents to pick up your child should you need to remain in the car with a sleeping infant; new people may be added to your Authorized Release List at any time in the Preschool Office. Call the Office if you need help getting your children to and from class.

Car Safety Seats

All Preschool students must ride in a properly installed child restraint system (safety seat). According to Maryland State Law, children must ride in a safety seat until they reach 8 years of age or 4'9" in height.

The Preschool has backless booster seats that can be borrowed if one is not available for the ride home. Parents may drop off car safety seats in the Preschool Office if a different person will drive their child home.

Playground Safety

Families may use the playground whenever a class is not present. **If a class arrives, please leave as quickly as possible.**

Students in the playground must be closely monitored by a responsible adult. **A child may not be left in the playground and observed from a parked vehicle.**

If a child needs to use the Preschool bathroom before or after school, they must be accompanied inside by a responsible adult. Any siblings must also accompany the parent inside or must be supervised by another responsible adult if they remain outside. Be sure to inform both the other child(ren) and the second responsible adult before leaving for the bathroom.

It is important that children experience consistency in rule enforcement when on the playground. Following the same rules both during class time and outside of class time helps children both remember the rules and remain safe. When using the playground, please obey the following playground rules:

Climbing Structure and Playhouse

- Go down the slide feet first only; no climbing up the slide
- Take turns on the climbing poles and ladders – only one child at a time
- No climbing on top of the tunnel or playhouse

Sandbox

- Sand cannot be dumped or taken outside of the sandbox
- Mulch cannot be brought into the sandbox
- Sandbox cover must be replaced before leaving the playground

Sand Table

- The sand table is for class use only and must remain **closed**

Tires

- Tires must be kept at a distance from the climbing structure
- Tires may not be stacked more than three high

Safe Outdoor Play Weather Conditions

Weather conditions permitting, children will play outside every day, even on chilly days. Children may not remain inside while the rest of the class is outside.

Classes will remain inside for play only in the following conditions:

1. Rain or heavy snow,
2. Thunderstorms or other emergency weather conditions,
3. Playground inaccessible due to heavy snowfall,
4. Temperatures below or exceeding the safe temperatures guidance offered by the Office of Child Care (see chart below).

Understand the Weather

Wind-Chill



- 30° is *chilly* and generally uncomfortable
- 15° to 30° is *cold*
- 0° to 15° is *very cold*
- -20° to 0° is *bitter cold* with significant risk of *frostbite*
- -20° to -60° is *extreme cold* and *frostbite* is likely
- -60° is *frigid* and exposed *skin will freeze* in 1 minute

Heat Index



- 80° or below is considered *comfortable*

Child Care Weather

Wind-Chill Factor Chart (in Fahrenheit)

		Wind Speed in mph					
		Calm	5	10	15	20	25
Air Temperature	40	40	36	34	32	30	28
	30	30	25	21	19	17	15
	20	20	13	9	6	4	3
	10	10	1	-4	-7	-9	-11
	0	0	-11	-16	-19	-22	-25
	-10	-10	-22	-28	-32	-35	-38
	-20	-20	-35	-45	-50	-55	-60



Comfortable for out door play



Caution

Heat Index Chart (in Fahrenheit)

Air Temperature (F)	Relative Humidity (Percent)							
	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75
80	80	80	81	81	82	82	83	84
75	75	75	76	76	77	77	78	79
70	70	70	71	71	72	72	73	74
65	65	65	66	66	67	67	68	69
60	60	60	61	61	62	62	63	64
55	55	55	56	56	57	57	58	59
50	50	50	51	51	52	52	53	54
45	45	45	46	46	47	47	48	49
40	40	40	41	41	42	42	43	44

Appropriate School Clothing and Shoes



GSLP emphasizes active learning. Creativity can be messy, so children should wear comfortable play clothes that are appropriate for indoor and outdoor play. During cool weather, children should wear pants or, if wearing dresses, also wear heavy tights or leggings for warmth.

On cold winter days, every child should wear a **heavy coat, warm hat, and mittens** (*not* gloves; see mittens picture at left). All outdoor clothing should be clearly labeled with the child's name. Labeled snow boots should be brought to school if there is snow or ice on the playground.

Children will play outside every day, weather permitting (see "Safe Outdoor Play Weather Conditions," above), and will wear a school coat if one is not sent in with the child. Children much prefer their own coats, however, so please remember to dress your child appropriately for the weather.

Shoes should be appropriate for running and using climbing equipment outside. **Children should not wear cowboy boots, hard-soled shoes, Crocs, open-toed sandals, or flip-flops.** Stiff-soled shoes make it difficult for children to climb on playground equipment, which is important for young children who are developing muscle strength and balance, and open shoes provide less protection for students' feet.

It is preferable that children wear shoes that they can get on and off without help. Many students have difficulty tying shoelaces, which frequently become untied during vigorous play sessions. The most appropriate shoes are sneakers with **Velcro or zipper closures**.

Spare Clothing

On the first day of school, parents/guardians must provide a complete change of clothing for their child – **shirt, pants, underwear, and socks** – in a labeled plastic zip-top bag. Extra **shoes** are also recommended for children who are working on toilet training. These clothes will be available should the child need to change for any reason, including toileting accidents, food spills, enthusiastic water play, etc.

If your child uses their extra clothes, please make sure to launder and return them to school for the next session. The Preschool maintains a supply of extra spare clothing for children whose extra clothes are missing, but children greatly prefer their own clothes.

When the weather changes, or when a child goes through a growth spurt, the clothes should be exchanged for more appropriate ones. Spare clothing left at the Preschool at the end of the school year will be donated to charity.

Emergency Situations

School Closings for Inclement Weather or Other Emergencies

GSLP *always* follows Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in the event of inclement weather or another emergency.

In specific, if:

- MCPS closes for the day, GSLP is closed;
- MCPS announces a delayed opening; GSLP opens at 10:30 AM. Dismissal is at the usual time;
- MCPS announces a general *emergency* early release for any reason, including inclement weather, all Preschool programs will end at 12:00 PM (including classes which normally meet until 1:30 PM).

Announcements regarding emergencies are posted on the Preschool's website at gslp-gaithersburg.org and on the Preschool's Facebook page at facebook.com/gslp.gaithersburg. GSLP also sends an email alert to all parents who provided permission for school communications on their enrollment applications. Contact the Preschool Office if you would like your email address added to this list.

In addition, Montgomery County Public Schools (montgomeryschoolsmd.org) posts emergency information regarding closures and local television and radio stations carry announcements.

Individuals may subscribe to a free text/email service, **AlertMCPS**, by visiting the MCPS website referenced above, to receive the earliest notifications about closures, delayed openings, and early releases.

GSLP does not add additional days to the class schedule due to snow days.

Fire and Emergency Drills

Fire drills are conducted monthly. In addition, storm drills, shelter drills, and school evacuation drills are conducted throughout the year. If an emergency evacuation drill occurs while parents/guardians are still at school, please exit quickly.

These drills often involve the students walking across the parking lot. If you are in the process of entering or leaving the parking lot when an evacuation drill begins, please stop your vehicle and wait until the emergency drill is over and the students have returned safely to their classrooms.

Emergency Shelter/Evacuation Procedures

As required by law, GSLP maintains a supply of food and water available for consumption should an emergency arise which requires that students remain at the school beyond the scheduled end of the school day. Students with severe food allergies are asked to provide individual supplies appropriate to their dietary needs.

In addition, parents/guardians of any child who requires daily maintenance medication must meet with the GSLP Directors to discuss emergency medication plans. Such plans must include a physician's order should medication need to be maintained and administered at the Preschool in case of an emergency lasting longer than the normal school day.

In accordance with Maryland State Regulations, GSLP has established emergency procedures should conditions warrant lockdown, evacuation, or sheltering (LES).

Lockdown with Options

In the event that an immediate threat to the Preschool requires declaring an emergency lockdown, children remain in their classrooms with doors locked, lights off, and windows covered or will follow the evacuation procedure, depending staff members' assessment of the situation. If students remain in classrooms, teachers will barricade the doors and move students to a protected area of the classroom. Staff will notify emergency services about the situation as needed. No one aside from emergency responders will be allowed to enter or leave the Preschool until the lockdown order is lifted or until police have controlled the emergency situation and notified staff that it is safe to leave.

Evacuation

In the event that students must be evacuated from the Preschool, children (accompanied by their teacher/assistant teacher) will walk to either Epworth Methodist Preschool or Gaithersburg Presbyterian Preschool and Kindergarten. Parents/guardians will be notified of their child's location and students will be dismissed from that site.

In the unlikely event that United States, State of Maryland, Montgomery County, or City of Gaithersburg authorities issue an immediate evacuation order which requires that students be transported out of the Gaithersburg area, children will be transported to the Westview Promenade Shopping Center, 5223 Buckeystown Pike, Frederick, MD 21704. To get to the shopping center, drive straight north on I-270 and take the MD-85S exit (31B) toward MD-85 N/Buckeystown Pike. The shopping center is on the right. Emergency supplies will be evacuated with the students. Parents/guardians will be contacted through local media. Unless instructed by federal, state, or local authorities to do otherwise, GSLP staff will remain with the students at the shopping center until authorized adults retrieve the students.

Sheltering in Place

In the event that Montgomery County Public Schools issues a Public Safety Shelter order for Rosemont Elementary School or that emergency services need unobstructed access inside the building to address a medical issue or other contained incident, GSLP will remain in session, but children will be kept in their classrooms at all times. Staff will ensure that all doors are locked and windows covered as a precaution. Notifications about the shelter-in-place will be available on the GSLP website and answering machine. No one will enter or leave the preschool until the shelter-in-place order is lifted. Families may pick up their children once the order is lifted.

In the event that Montgomery County Public Schools issues a Severe Weather Shelter order for Rosemont Elementary School, GSLP will follow emergency weather shelter procedures. Children and staff will shelter in the school hallway, away from doors and windows, until the weather emergency passes, at which time parents/guardians may pick up their children.

In the event that Montgomery County Public Schools issues an Outside Hazardous Materials Release Order for Rosemont Elementary School, GSLP will remain in session, but children will remain indoors at all times. Staff members will ensure

that all windows and doors are tightly closed and that all individual heating/cooling units and HVAC are immediately shut down. When the shelter order is lifted, parents/guardians may pick up their children.

Conflict Arbitration and Parent Code of Conduct

It is hoped there will not be a situation where a formal procedure for arbitration of differences is necessary. Each parent/guardian is expected to read this handbook carefully and to follow the policies and procedures of GSLP. At orientation, parents/guardians will receive a copy of this handbook and will be required to sign a sheet indicating that they will abide by the policies described herein.

Conflict Arbitration for Classroom Issues

In the event that a problem arises within the classroom, the following procedure has been established:

1. A parent/guardian with a concern should arrange a conference with the child's teacher. If warranted, a GSLP Director will attend the conference to serve as mediator. In a case where the parent/guardian is uncomfortable speaking directly with the teacher, the parent/guardian can schedule a preliminary meeting with a GSLP Director.
2. If a solution cannot be determined at these initial meetings, the following steps will be taken:
 - a. A GSLP Director will take the complaint or issue to the GSLP Board. The Board members include adults who have or once had children in the program and who are aware of the daily routines and situations that exist within the program.
 - b. The GSLP Board may determine that it would like to speak directly with the parent/guardian involved. The Board may request the staff member attend this meeting so that all sides of the issue can be heard.
 - c. The GSLP Board will make a determination concerning the outcome of the dispute.

Conflict Arbitration for Non-Classroom Issues

In the event of a conflict between the GSLP Administrative Director or Educational Program Director and a parent/guardian, Step 2 above will be followed should an initial conference prove unsatisfactory.

Parent Code of Conduct

GSLP works to provide a safe, nurturing environment for all children in our care. As such, the Preschool expects parents/guardians as well as staff members to model respectful behavior for students. Please adhere to the following guidelines while on our grounds:

- Use kind and respectful language with children (especially your own) and other adults.
- Remember that hands are for helping, not for hurting. Hitting children is unacceptable.
- Share any upsetting classroom situations with the GSLP Directors so that we can help.
- Follow the policies included in this Parent Handbook, including those outlined above for conflict resolution.

Admission and Registration Policies

Non-Discrimination Policy

Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not

discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Toilet Training

Except in the Early Pre-Kindergarten 2 and Early Pre-Kindergarten 3 STEAM classes, students must be fully toilet trained. **No diapers or disposable training pants (such as Pull-Ups) will be allowed in the non-early entrance Early Pre-Kindergarten 3 or the Pre-Kindergarten classes.**

Toilet-trained students must complete their visits to the toilet independently, **including wiping after a bowel movement.** Staff members can provide only verbal assistance.

Parents/guardians should dress children in play clothes that are easy for children to manage themselves when using the toilet. Belts, buttons, and zippers are difficult for many young children to use independently. GSLP recommends choosing pants with elastic waists instead.

Accidents are part of the toilet learning process for all young children. Please send spare clothing to school as soon as possible so that children can change after an accident (see "Spare Clothing," p. ???).

Enrollment Forms

In order for a child to attend GSLP, the following must be complete and on file in the Preschool Office:

- Enrollment Application
- Enrollment Agreement
- Authorized Release Information Form
- Dietary Accommodations Form
- Family and Student Information Form
- Medical and Developmental Information Form
- Racial and Ethnic Identification Form
- Student Directory Form
- MSDE Emergency Form
- Health Inventory Form (no substitutions)
- Immunization Certificate (evidencing **all required immunizations**; doctor's office immunization certificate is acceptable)

In addition, children with food allergies, medical dietary restrictions, or chronic medical conditions must also have on file in the Preschool Office:

- Health Care Plan
- Snack and Cooking Project Permissions
- Perishable Foods Waiver
- Medication Administration Authorization (if medication such as Benadryl or an Epi-Pen will be kept at school)

Immunization Requirements

In line with state law, GSLP requires that all students receive the immunizations listed on Maryland's vaccination schedule for children enrolled in a preschool educational program in order to enroll. **A fully vaccinated student body helps prevent the spread of illness among students and helps protect infants and others with compromised immune systems who might be visiting the school.**

While influenza vaccinations are not required by state law, GSLP strongly recommends immunizing all family members, including children six months of age and older, annually in late October to protect health and reduce school days lost to illness. Visit the Montgomery County Government's website to learn about seasonal flu vaccine clinics (montgomerycountymd.gov/resident/flu.html).

Custody Concerns

If parents/guardians are separated or divorced, GSLP must receive completed Enrollment Agreements from each parent to complete a child's enrollment. **GSLP will not enroll a student without a written agreement from both parents/guardians.**

GSLP believes that both parents are a vital part of their child's life and should play an active role in their child's education. Therefore, it is the Preschool's policy to allow both parents to attend school activities and parent-teacher conferences and to access their child's records unless the law or a court order requires otherwise. GSLP's goal in creating policies related to custody issues is to encourage respectful co-parenting that puts the child's need for safety, security, and peace of mind first.

If a court order is in effect pertaining to custody or visitation rights that could affect who may pick up the child, access to the child while at school, parent attendance at school activities and conferences, or access to student records, GSLP requires a **full, certified copy of the current court order** that mandates those rights and restraints.

If a court order restrains a parent/guardian from visitation or contact with a child, GSLP requires:

1. A full, certified copy of the current court order that mandates the restraints,
2. A signed letter from the custodial parent stating that the non-custodial parent is not allowed to pick up the child,
3. A photo of the non-custodial parent to aid in identification.

In the absence of a court order denying custody, children will be released to either parent/guardian at any time.

Neither parent may limit the other parent from picking up a child until custody or restraints are established by a court order.

Failure to provide full written documentation, including certified copies of court orders, of all custody arrangements may be grounds for dismissal from the Preschool. GSLP cannot accept verification of court orders over the phone.

Parents/guardians who are separated or divorced may either complete independent sets of the remaining GSLP student forms or both sign a single set to verify it is mutually acceptable.

If both parents/guardians have custodial rights, then both parents/guardians must agree in writing to any additions to the Authorized Release List. GSLP requires that parents/guardians approve two people who may pick up a child in an emergency, in addition to themselves. These emergency pick-up contacts must be provided before a child may enter the classroom after Parent Orientation. **There are no refunds for class time a child misses while forms, including the Authorized Release Form with two non-parent emergency pick-up contacts, are incomplete.**

Please inform the classroom teacher if duplicate notices, newsletters, etc. should be given to the child in order to keep both parties informed of all school activities. GSLP discourages parents from involving school staff in any relationship or custody disputes so that staff may remain focused on children's needs and maintaining a high-quality program. Out of respect for children's needs, staff aim to maintain respectful relationships with both parents, and parents should not ask a staff member to take sides or offer an opinion in conflicts between a student's parents.

2023-2024 Enrollment

Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool begins enrolling students for the following school year in January each year.

Currently enrolled families, alumni families, and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church members will receive priority in class

placement for the following school year as long as their applications are returned to the GSLP office. All applications received after the registration deadline are processed on a first-come, first-served basis.

All currently enrolled Early Pre-Kindergarten students will receive application information for the following school year in their tote bags in January. Applications can be completed online (gslp-gaithersburg.org/enroll). Paper applications are available in the Preschool Office for families in need of an accommodation.

Once the Preschool has notified a family of their child's class placement for the following school year, the parent/guardian must return their enrollment agreement along with a nonrefundable registration fee and nonrefundable first tuition payment as soon as possible to secure their child's spot in next year's class. If payment is not received on time, the Preschool may remove the child from next year's class list in favor of a child on the waiting list.

If no openings are available in any of a family's preferred classes, there is no fee to register for a class waiting list.

Financial Obligations and Fees

Payment Methods

Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool offers several convenient payment options for families. Families can access an online payment page through the GSLP website (gslp-gaithersburg.org/payments/), which offers the option to make one-time tuition and fees payments through electronic funds transfer (EFT) from a checking or savings account. **Online payments are considered on time when they are initiated by the 1st of the month, even if the payment does not finish processing until later.**

Automatic monthly electronic funds transfer (EFT) is another convenient method for making tuition payments. Each month's tuition payment is deducted from a family's checking or savings account on the 1st of the month. (Please note that each bank's processing time is different, which may mean that the deduction appears on your statement later than the 1st. Drafts are initiated no earlier than the 1st of each month, however.) Application forms are available in the Preschool Office or from the GSLP website.

Tuition and fees paid by check or money order made out either to Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool or to GSLP can be mailed to the Preschool or can be deposited in the wooden lockbox located just inside the Preschool Office. Tuition or fees paid in cash should be given directly to the GSLP Administrative Director, who will provide a receipt at the time of payment. **The Preschool does not accept credit or debit cards.**

Fees Due at Registration

A registration, materials, and activities fee (\$100) must be paid at the time of registration; this fee is not refundable at any time. In addition, a tuition payment equaling one-ninth of the annual class tuition is due at registration. This tuition payment is also not refundable. A second tuition payment is due by September 1, 2023. Consult your enrollment agreement for your full payment schedule.

Tuition

Tuition can be paid annually or monthly. Annual fees are based on the TOTAL number of sessions per school year. **The nine-payment monthly figure is the annual amount divided by nine and does not reflect the actual number of sessions in any one month.** Monthly payments are interest free and may be preferred by families who receive child-care cost reimbursements or seek a tax deduction.

Except for children awarded need-based financial aid, there is no reduction in tuition for any reason. In specific, there is no reduction for enrolling multiple siblings in GSLP or for extended absences.

Tuition Amounts

The annual (monthly) tuition fees are as follows:

Two-Day Threes STEAM

EARLY ENTRANCE OPTION: Must be 3 years old by Dec. 31, 2023; NO toilet training required. Uses same curriculum as other Early Pre-K 3 classes but focuses on different study topics. Classes have 12 students (6:1 ratio).

Tuesday and Thursday 9:30 AM-1:30 PM, \$325/payment (annual tuition: \$2,655)

Two-Day Threes

Must be 3 years old by Sept. 1, 2023; toilet training required. Classes have 12 to 14 students (6:1 or 7:1 ratio).

Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 AM-1:30 PM, \$325/payment (annual tuition: \$2,925)

Three-Day Threes

Must be 3 years old by Sept. 1, 2023 toilet training required. Classes have 12 to 14 students (6:1 or 7:1 ratio).

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 9:30 AM-1:30 PM, \$400/payment (annual tuition: \$3,600)

Five Day Threes

Must be 3 years old by Sept. 1, 2023; toilet training required. Classes have 12 to 14 students (6:1 or 7:1 ratio).

This is a combination of our 2 Day Threes and our 3 Day Threes programs.

Monday- Friday 9:30 AM-1:30 PM, \$625/payment (annual tuition: \$5,625)

Three-Day Pre-Kindergarten

Must be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2023; toilet training required. Classes have 12 to 16 students (6:1, 7:1, or 8:1 ratio).

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 9:30 AM-1:30 PM, \$385/payment (annual tuition: \$3,465)

Five-Day Pre-Kindergarten

Must be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2023; toilet training required. Classes have 12 to 16 students (6:1, 7:1, or 8:1 ratio).

Monday-Friday, 9:30 AM-1:30 PM, \$565/payment (annual tuition: \$5,085)

Prolonged Absences and Withdrawals

There is no reduction in payment amount regardless of days missed due to school holidays, inclement weather, student vacations, or illness.

Students who attend for *one or more days* in a month must make the tuition payment due that month. For the purposes of this policy, the second tuition payment (usually due in August) counts for attendance in September.

Parents/guardians must provide 30 days' advance notice of their intention to remove a child from GSLP in order to be released from ***financial obligation for the remaining annual tuition*** as contracted at registration.

Tuition is due on the first of each month and is considered late after the 1st of each month. If a child will be absent for a prolonged period of time, tuition must continue to be paid by the 1st of each month in order for the child to remain enrolled in GSLP. **GSLP cannot hold spots without continued payment of tuition.**

The tuition payment due upon enrollment applies to May tuition and is nonrefundable, even if a student does not attend in May. Consult your Enrollment Agreement for the full payment schedule.

Scholarships and Custom Payment Plans

There are limited funds available for *need-based* scholarship aid. Scholarship aid is awarded for attendance in the least expensive Early Pre-Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten classes. To apply, request a confidential scholarship application from the Administrative Director. Complete and return the form along with all supporting documents.

After reviewing the application, the Administrative Director will bring the request before the Preschool Board. Once the Board has determined what financial resources can be provided, the Administrative Director will contact the applicant.

Families experiencing temporary financial difficulties can contact the Administrative Director to develop custom payment plans.

Child Care Tax Deductions, Dependent Care FSAs, and Tuition Reimbursement Plans

If a child attends school during a parent's employment hours, the parent may qualify for a tax deduction. Check with a tax advisor for information about deductions.

Families qualifying for a tax deduction should pay tuition monthly, not in a single, annual tuition payment. Similarly, prepayment of tuition often is inadvisable when reimbursement from a company-based plan or dependent care flexible spending account (FSA) is anticipated.

A form stating the amount of tuition paid during a specific month/tax year is available from the Administrative Director.

Other Fees

Late Payment Fee: Tuition is due by the 1st of the month. **Please be advised that this may be a day other than when your child's class is next in session.** After the 1st of the month, a \$20 late fee will be assessed to any unpaid tuition. If the 1st of the month occurs on a non-business day, payment can be made via the GSLP website or mailed. Payments initiated online or postmarked by the 1st of the month are considered on time. **If an account is more than 30 days overdue and arrangements for payment have not been made, the student will be dismissed from GSLP.**

Returned Check Fee: A \$25 processing fee is charged for checks or electronic payments returned by the bank for any reason. This fee and the original amount due must be paid within 10 days of receiving notification of non-payment. If two checks are returned, future payments must be made via cash, money order, or cashier's check.

Late Pick-Up Fee: It is expected that adults will be punctual in retrieving students at the published dismissal time. Children often become upset when their classmates have departed school and they have not. GSLP staff members have activities after school that they are not free to begin until all students are gone for the day. **Out of consideration for your child's feelings and respect for GSLP staff, please be prompt.** In the event that one or more students remain at school after the published dismissal time, the follow fee will be charged per child:

12:06-12:09	1:36-1:39	\$5

12:10-12:14	1:40-1:44	\$10
12:15-12:19	1:45-1:49	\$15
12:20-12:24	1:50-1:54	\$20
12:25-12:29	1:55-1:59	\$25
Fees for dismissal after 12:30 / 2:00 PM will follow the above pattern.		

The late pick-up fee must be paid when the child next returns to school. **Late fees not paid within a week will result in the child's exclusion from class.**

Scholarship Donations and Fundraisers

GSLP maintains a scholarship fund for families in need. Contributions to this fund are tax-deductible.

In addition, GSLP holds fundraisers during the school year in which all proceeds go directly to the scholarship fund:

- GSLP offers for sale logo shirts to promote school spirit.
- The "Dough for Funds" scholarship program through Panera Bread sells coupon strips redeemable for 18 bagels or for a variety of baked goods. Strips can be purchased for \$10 from the Preschool Office.
- In May, parents/guardians may order a photo collection from GSLP that includes both the slide show presented at the end-of-year program and additional pictures of classroom activities not included in the presentation.
- Other events at the discretion of the directors and board.

Message to GSLP Families

The staff of Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool appreciates the confidence you have shown by putting your children in our care. Help us make this a rewarding year for your child by sharing any concerns you may have. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of open communication between home and school. Children respond to the stresses of our world in a variety of ways. It is our role to help children deal with their environment as constructively as possible.

The staff prays for guidance, love, and understanding when working with your children. Please keep us in your prayers as we seek to find, and nurture, the special gifts that God has given each child.



Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool

2023-2024 Yearly Calendar Overview

Aug. 28 – Sept. 1	Playground Gatherings
Sept. 6	Classroom Visits
Sept. 7-8	Mini-Days and Parent Orientation
Sept. 27 – 28	Back to School Night
Sept. 27 - 28	Ages and Stages Questionnaires Due
Oct. 9	GSLP CLOSED
Oct. 11	GSLP EARLY RELEASE – All classes end at 12:00 PM for Staff Meeting
Oct. 16-20	Apple Week for Students
Oct. 23 – 27	Pumpkin Week for Students
Oct. 16 – 227	Fall Parent-Teacher Conferences
Nov. 8	GSLP EARLY RELEASE – All classes end at 12:00 PM for Staff Meeting
Nov. 16, 17	Fall Festival
Nov. 22–24	GSLP CLOSED – Thanksgiving Break
Dec. 12, 13	Christmas Chapel
Dec. 18 - Jan. 2	GSLP CLOSED – Winter Break
Jan. 10	GSLP EARLY RELEASE – All classes end at 12:00 PM for Staff Meeting
Jan. 11, 12	Teddy Bear Days for Students
Jan. 15	GSLP Closed and MCPS CLOSED for Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Jan. 29 - Feb. 9	Winter Parent – Teacher Conferences
Feb. 7	GSLP EARLY RELEASE – All classes end at 12:00 PM for Staff Meeting
Feb. 16	2024-2025 School Year Early Registration Deadline at 1:30 PM
Feb. 19	GSLP CLOSED and MCPS CLOSED for Presidents' Day
Mar. 13	GSLP EARLY RELEASE – All classes end at 12:00 PM for Staff Meeting
Mar. 19,20	Easter Chapels
Mar. 25 – Apr. 1	GSLP CLOSED and MCPS CLOSED for Easter Break
Apr 10	GSLP EARLY RELEASE – All classes end at 12:00 PM for Staff Meeting
May 8	GSLP EARLY RELEASE – All classes end at 12:00 PM for Staff Meeting
May 14	GSLP CLOSED – MD Election Day
May 21, 22	Closing Programs
May 23, 24	Last Day of School