

St. Joseph School

Pre-Kindergarten Handbook



Welcome and Introduction

Dear Families,

Welcome to the St. Joseph Pre-K program. We designed our program to focus on the developmental needs of children through a quality early childhood educational experience. We understand that children learn best in an environment, which supports and nurtures their curiosity, protects and respects their trust in the adults around them, and fosters creativity, confidence and independence.

As Catholic educators at St. Joseph School, we want to give each student instructions in the Catholic faith and to provide the opportunity to practice that faith in an atmosphere rooted in Christian values and morals. We will strive to create a Christian community for the students. We hope to help our students acquire skills, virtues, and habits of heart and mind required for effective service to others.

We as educators feel a deep personal responsibility and commitment to encouraging and guiding each student to strive for excellence in spiritual, academic, psychological, social and physical development. Through this excellence, we hope that the students mature and realize how best they can fulfill their potentials for the good of society and their own personal lives on their journey toward heaven. Through a series of experiences planned in conjunction with regular academic studies, children will be given opportunities to make decisions and choices in matters related to them and to become more independent and responsible for themselves.

Thank you for letting us be a part of your child's life and for choosing St. Joseph School. You are the most important people in your child's life and we welcome everyone to become active members in your child's learning experience.

This Parent Handbook is provided to keep you informed of our current policies and procedures.

Please feel free to present and ask questions or concerns anytime throughout the year.

Thank you

□ **Mission Statement**

Under the guidance of Saint Joseph, patron of the Universal Church, Saint Joseph School endeavors to achieve academic excellence in a faith-filled and safe environment. The staff and parents collaborate to develop students' spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical well-being.

□ **Program Philosophy**

The program is organized to provide children with a warm and caring environment where they can develop their physical, social, emotional and cognitive skills as well as grow spiritually, as they discover the world around them and the gift of their own uniqueness.

There is a gradual introduction into a school climate where learning is accomplished through play and meaningful experiences. Within this positive atmosphere of our preschool classroom, children are encouraged to grow spiritually and cognitively while increasing their problem solving, reasoning and creative abilities through fun hands-on learning activities.

Preschool children engage in many exciting activities to help them to develop awareness of themselves, their connection with others as members of a larger community, the world and of their special relationship with God. We hope to help continue to develop in our children a Christian way of life based on Christ's invitation to always do the loving thing.

We provide a sound academic curriculum which incorporates Gospel values. The atmosphere at Saint Joseph School is purposeful and conducive to learning self-discipline. Social and emotional development is learned according to the teachings of Christ.



Preschool Goals

- **Christian identity and growth**

- **A positive self image through:**
 - Discovery**
 - Self expression**
 - Interaction with others**

- **Increase social, emotional, and behavioral skills**

- **Increase development of:**
 - Language skills**
 - Self-help skills**
 - Creativity**
 - Thinking/reasoning skills**
 - Gross and fine motor skills**

Pre-K Daily Schedule

- **8:15-8:45** **Arrival Time:**
Put items in cubbies, find name and place in pocket chart
Morning group activity/skill
- **8:45-9:00** **Morning Meeting:**
Children come together for age appropriate activities such as prayer, share and tell, stories, songs, language arts, games, creative movement, question of the day, calendar and weather.
- **9:00-9:55** **Center Time:**
Free choice activities are available for children to engage in such as blocks, art, science, dramatic play, computer, texture table, math, writing, listening center, and library.
Designed activities concentrate on academics and faith building.
- **9:55-10:00** **Clean-up/Wash Hands**
- **10:00-10:15** **Prayer/Snack Time:**
Children are encouraged to prepare a place for snack and serve themselves. This is a natural opportunity for children to learn self-help skills such as hand washing, pouring, opening packages and cleaning their area when finished.
- **10:15-10:30** **Bathroom/Choose a book**
- **10:30-11:00** **Language Arts/Reading Program/Math/Science/Social Studies**
(Teacher Directed Instruction and Guidance)
- **11:00-11:30** **Outdoor Time:**
The children have the opportunity to use the outdoor play area in a variety of different ways. We will also incorporate nature activities by going on walks and exploring our outdoor environment.
- **11:30-12:15** **Wash/ Prayer/ Lunch:**
Children sit in small informal groups for lunch. They are encouraged to independently complete their meal while socializing with their peers.
- **12:15-12:30** **Bathroom/ Set up mats for Rest Time**
- **12:30-1:30** **Nap/Rest Time:**
Children rest on mats with their own pillows and blankets. Children that do not nap will do quiet activities such as look at books, do puzzles, use wipe off boards or some other quiet activity on their mat until rest time is over.

- **1:30-2:00** **Specials: Art, Music, Library, Gym**
(When there is no special we will come together for Phonics/Writing and Religion)
- **2:00-2:30** **Outdoor Recess**
- **2:30-2:45** **Closing Meeting: Children come together for literacy, games, finger play, music and movement, and sharing their favorite part of the day**
- **2:45** **Pre-Kindergarten dismissal**

Curriculum:

Based on our philosophy and program goals, the curriculum is designed to meet the needs of the whole child through a play-oriented, integrated approach. It is Christ-centered and Bible based, supporting our objectives of Catholic education as outlined in the mission and philosophy statement. This will be achieved not only through specific activities, but also through daily interactions and socialization. It includes a consistent daily schedule, a well-defined classroom, a positive verbal and nonverbal climate, instructional strategies, peaceful guidance techniques, and the types of activities presented.

The preschool environment is divided into learning centers including an art area, a block area, a math/manipulative area, a library corner, a family living/dramatic play area, a writing center, a texture table and a science area. During child choice activity times, each learning center provides activities consistent with that area of the classroom. Children are free to choose a center or centers for participation as well as the nature of their interaction with the materials.

The following types of activities are examples of what children will be offered in our preschool program:

- **Religion-** Basic concepts of morality, character building, teachings of Jesus, the Catholic faith and developing a relationship with God.
- **Creative Art-** Painting, collage, gluing, recycled construction, sculpting
- **Manipulatives-** Enhance fine motor skills with the use of buttons, sifters, small blocks, Lego's, beads, tongs where children can sort, count, and develop their fine motor skills
- **Science-** Explore, predict and discover through the use of weights, magnets, balancing, mixing, cooking, sensory experiences, nature and the earth.
- **Texture-** Water, sand, pasta, rice, beans, play dough, puffballs, gravel

- **Creative Dramatics** – Using imagination through circus play, hospital play, restaurant play, beauty parlor, car wash, farm life, baker, and family
- **Large Blocks/Gross Motor** - Examples include climber, balance beam, ride on toys, construction blocks, dancing, tumbling
- **Meeting Time** - Examples include prayers, songs, stories, instruments, finger plays, games, movement, experiments, literacy activities, listening
- **Language Arts**- Journal writing, language experiences, stories, poems, big books, story retelling, book making, dictating experiences, letter searches, letter and sound recognition, handwriting, comprehension
- **Math**- Counting skills, number recognition, shapes, color, graphs and charts, games, measuring, calendar, classifying, patterning
- **Specials** – Library, Gym, Music and Art are extracurricular activities children will participate in once a week with the specials teachers.
- **Social Studies**- Introduction to people and events in history to our present day

Statement on Guidance:

Becoming self-disciplined is a long-term process. One of the major tasks in an early childhood classroom is assisting children with this process. We are committed to supporting each child's progress toward becoming independent and self-disciplined. To accomplish this, we provide an environment, which encourages children to make choices and decisions in a positive manner using Christian attitudes.

When using materials and interacting with others, children will have guidance to follow the classroom rules and routine. We do not allow children to hurt themselves, to hurt others, hurt others feelings or to damage property. If a child is using materials inappropriately, he/she will be given a gentle reminder. If the child continues, then he/she will be asked to find something else to do. This logical consequence is a clear reminder to children that materials have appropriate uses. During conflicts, children are encouraged to negotiate and discuss alternatives to solve the conflict peacefully. The teacher will use guidance or model appropriate conflict resolution techniques to assist the children if necessary.

If a child is repeatedly disruptive, out of control or becomes harmful to himself/herself or others, he/she is removed from the group for a short time with a staff member. The teacher will help the child to regain control, encourage discussion of alternative behaviors and will then rejoin the group. Excessive disruptions or continued aggressive behavior may constitute suspension or dismissal from the program.

Items From Home:

The most important goal is for your child to feel safe and secure in our environment. If your child needs to bring a blanket, stuffed animal, or any special item, we strongly encourage you to do so. Other than a security item, please do not bring toys or other personal items to school. They can be lost, broken or swallowed and we do not want your child to be hurt or disappointed. The materials and equipment we provide offer children a stimulating, educational, fun, safe environment. Any toys of violence such as guns, swords, war toys or other toys of destruction are not appropriate in our school. When children use weapons as a toy we feel this encourages violent behavior and we want to support a peaceful environment. Share and tell items need to be small enough to fit in a backpack.

Children's Supplies:

- Backpack
- Lunch Box with ice pack
- Change of clothes
- Small Blanket
- Small Pillow
- Sleep Mat

Dress:

Please have your child wear clothing that is easy for them to get on and off. Elastic waistbands and leggings work well for easy on and off. Please do not have them wear pants with a belt, snap or button unless they are able to do these on their own after going to the bathroom. Shoes that are safe and without laces are ideal. (No Sandals) Please provide a complete change of clothing including undergarments in case of an accident or spill. Label the bag in permanent marker with your child's first and last name.

*Gym days children wear sneakers, dark blue shorts/sweatpants, dark blue T-shirt/sweatshirt

Family Involvement:

Parents are the primary educators of their children. We at St. Joseph Pre-K, function as teachers to support and facilitate the parent/child relationship. You as the parent know your child best and want you to communicate any and all perceptions, feelings, observations or concerns about your child, or the program. We feel it is a partnership and it is critical that our staff forms a relationship with parents to meet the needs of each family.

The following are some ways in which parents can participate:

- We have an open door policy and welcome families to participate in our program. Please schedule your visit with the teacher whenever you would like to involve yourself in the class.
- Family/teacher conferences will be held twice a year or more frequent as the teacher or parent feels necessary.
- Monthly newsletters are available and are an effective way to keep families in touch with any activities and projects children are participating in. We welcome any and all family involvement in the program and always encourage you to share any ideas or concerns.
- Families are encouraged to volunteer their time in the class by sharing a special talent, cultural exchanges, and storytelling or by simply spending time in the classroom.
- A Parent Orientation is scheduled each year before school begins.
- An Open House is scheduled at the beginning of the year and parents are encouraged to visit with their child prior to the start of school. This gives your child an opportunity to become orientated with the setting and the staff.
- Developmental achievements are recorded and used for assessment to assist teachers in proper planning for each child's needs. In addition, we will take photographs periodically so if you do not want your child photographed, please let us know.
- Program evaluations will be given out periodically to provide us with the feedback necessary to ensure we are meeting your needs and they help us to make necessary changes if needed. You do not have to wait for evaluation time to express any concerns. We are always willing to address any issues you may have.
- Family projects will be offered at times as a way to extend the curriculum and offer a fun way to spend time with your child.
- Field trips will be scheduled periodically and families are encouraged to participate as volunteers. Chaperones may be chosen by lottery and limited based on need.

Outside Play:

- ☐ The children should have appropriate seasonal clothing for outside play.
- ☐ Please label all clothing and personal items with your child's name.
- ☐ Sunscreen should be applied at home.
- ☐ Hats and sunglasses may be worn outside.
- ☐ Blankets need to go home to be laundered every Friday.

Safety:

Our school follows the standard requirements for the correct amount of fire, lock down and evacuation drills throughout the year. We need to work together to make these as easy as possible for your child to make them feel safe and realize they have nothing to fear.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures:

In order to ensure the security and safety of the children and continuity of the educational program, the following policies will be in effect:

We encourage parents to arrive with enough time to bring their child into the classroom to get settled before saying goodbye. Please arrive at school by 8:15 and gather in the gym. The school doors are locked at 8:30. If you arrive late and find the doors locked, please go to the main entrance of the school and sign in your child. This is to maintain safety for all students and the classroom as learning begins promptly at 8:30. Extended Morning Care is available at 7:30 a.m. and After Care ends at 5:15. Please call the school at: 860-822-6141 if you run into a problem and may be late.

Please do not linger in the hallway after dropping your child off. This can be disruptive and is necessary for the security of our school.

An authorized person whose name is on the parent release form must sign each child in and out of the preschool. Changes to this form must be kept up to date, as we **will not** take a verbal authorization over the phone. This ensures the staff that the child is being released to the appropriate person.

Please have individuals prepared to show a driver's license when picking up your child until we get to know each individual. Communicate this policy to persons on your list when they pick up your child. This is for your child's safety and protection.

Parents are expected to bring children in on time. Children who arrive late find it

difficult becoming involved in on-going activities.

School personnel must be aware of all custody cases involving children enrolled in our program. Copies of state documents must be given to the staff and kept in your child's file. All files are kept confidential.

Snacks and Lunches:

Please pack one small item to eat as a snack with a drink. A snack can consist of a cut up apple, pretzels, yogurt, banana, cheese stick etc. and a small drink. For lunch if you have an item that needs to be warm, please put it in a thermos. Remember to provide a fork, spoon and napkin. Milk is available for purchase through the school.

Bathroom:

A student may use the bathroom at any time without permission. Please make sure your child is completely potty trained and knows how to correctly flush, wipe and wash their hands.

Nap time:

Students will lie down on their mats for an hour each day. They are to rest quietly and if a child does not go to sleep, they will be given a quiet rest activity such as a puzzle, lacing, wipe off boards or manipulatives.

Share and Tell:

Beginning in October the helper of the day will be able to bring in an item from home to share with the class. This will occur on a rotating basis daily and a calendar will go home to indicate when your child has their share day. The item needs to be able to fit into their backpack and will be on display for the day but not be able to be played with.

Specials:

Students will have Music, Art, Gym and Library every week after two weeks of being in school to get used to the schedule and routine of the classroom first. The schedule of days for each special will be listed on the monthly newsletter.

Money:

When money is being brought to school we ask you to please put it in an envelope labeled with your child's name and what the money is to be used for.

Emergency Forms and Pick Up:

Any adult in or around our school during school hours should be ready at any time to show a valid form of ID. Please make sure all emergency phone numbers are up to date throughout the year and correctly written on all forms.

School Supplies:

Our class will need supplies throughout the year such as paper towels, tissues, flushable wipes, hand sanitizer or other items that come up as needed. I will schedule one family per month and communicate what our classroom needs as we don't have space to store everything at once. Your child needs to have a vinyl sleeping mat – 3 fold only, written with your child's name in permanent marker.

Communication:

A weekly Class News will be provided telling you what we are doing for the week and a monthly Newsletter will go home with information on our class.

You may contact me anytime through email cgacc@verizon.net or by calling the school and leaving a message at 860-822-6141.

Thank you and God Bless,

Ms. Cindy Gaccione PK Teacher