

# **UNITED METHODIST PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK**

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The United Methodist Preschool employs a staff of teachers with excellent educational backgrounds and exceptional work experience. Teachers attend workshops, seminars and educational conferences throughout the year to insure the highest quality education for your child.

United Methodist Preschool is licensed by the State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood and is accredited by NAEYC, the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Since 1958 the United Methodist Preschool has dedicated itself to promoting the social, physical, emotional and intellectual growth of young children. We believe that children should develop at their own pace in a safe yet stimulating environment. Our teachers encourage students to express ideas freely. They work toward helping children develop a sense of responsibility and respect for one another. The children form positive feelings about themselves and the world around them. They make new friends as they work and play in a warm, nurturing setting. We respect all families and recognize the important role that families play in the lives of their children.

## **GOALS**

- To encourage independence and opportunities for social, emotional, intellectual and physical growth.
- To provide a nurturing atmosphere in which children have respect for others as well as themselves.
- To offer a wide variety of daily activities and learning experiences.
- To encourage each child's natural curiosity about the world by providing opportunities to explore.
- To work cooperatively with parents in order to make each child's preschool experience a positive one.
- To provide a creative environment where children can express themselves through a variety of modalities and materials.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

We believe in a policy of positive discipline at United Methodist Preschool. Good behavior is recognized throughout the day, and teachers encourage the children often. We establish simple, fair rules and follow them consistently. Teachers help children gain control of emotions, deal with anger, and learn the value of cooperation. They encourage children to use language to express their feelings. Teachers will redirect children to appropriate activities. Children are removed from the group and placed with a trained caring adult (21 years or older) only if they are extremely disruptive or in danger of hurting themselves or others. Children may return to the group when they are calm and appropriate behavior resumes. Staff will not be abusive, neglectful, or use corporal, humiliating or frightening punishment under any circumstances.

## **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

Most problems within a preschool setting can be resolved with communication, patience and understanding. If you have a concern, please follow the described sequence of action:

1. Discuss the problem with the classroom teacher.
2. Discuss the problem with the program director.
3. If the problem is not resolved after speaking with the teacher or preschool director, contact the preschool board chairperson.

The same process works for compliments as well!

## **CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

The staff at United Methodist Preschool are mandated reporters required by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Child Abuse includes; non-accidental physical or mental injury, any form of sexual abuse, neglect of a child and emotional abuse. Mandated reporters must report orally to DCF or a law enforcement agency within 12 hours of suspected abuse/neglect. Within 48 hours of making the report, a written report must be submitted to DCF (DCF – 136). Documentation of DCF-136 and phone call is kept on file.

The administration at UMPS supports a zero tolerance for abuse and neglect and will implement immediate action should there be an allegation that a staff member abused or neglected a child. The administration will protect the child, including immediate notification of a parent/guardian, if there is an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child in our care. The staff member will be immediately removed from his/her position until DCF investigation is complete.

## **TERRIFIC TWO'S PROGRAM**

This program is designed to meet the unique needs of our youngest students. Class options can be two or three mornings per week. We provide developmentally appropriate experiences for the children that encourage social, emotional and physical development along with rich sensory and creative activities that promote cognitive growth. These learning experiences are guided by the needs of each individual child based on their readiness in a caring and nurturing environment.

Our Terrific Twos participate in a music enrichment program twice a month. They have outdoor playtime each day as the weather allows.

## **DISCOVERY THREE'S PROGRAM**

The three year old class meets three or four mornings per week. Emphasis is placed on socialization and self- help skills as the children are exposed to literacy, numeracy and science concepts in a play based environment. They learn through engaging in activities that are developmentally appropriate and geared to their interests. Through play-based hands on activities they learn how to work cooperatively in a group setting and develop confidence in their abilities.

The 3's classes enjoy music and yoga enrichment classes. The group will play outdoors every day as weather allows. Fellowship Hall (in the lower level of the church) is used for playground time in the event of inclement weather

It is recommended that children be potty-trained in order to enter the 3's program. Children should wear underpants to school. (No diapers) We understand that occasional accidents will happen and that is not a problem.

## **PRE-K EXPLORERS AND ADVENTURERS PROGRAMS**

These classes are offered four or five mornings a week. A child entering either of these classes must be four years old by December 31<sup>st</sup>.

In the Pre-K, children work in all developmental domains, academic and social, with a focus on communication and language skills as they begin to think critically, problem solve and interact proactively. They are encouraged to be independent thinkers and cooperative members of the preschool community. Activities are planned around topics of interest. Children also participate in a monthly author study. Class activities are designed to involve children in both group and individual projects. The activities are age appropriate and include cooking, art experiences, group games, and science experiments.

The children enjoy music and yoga programs twice a month and weekly Spanish instruction. Storytellers and special guests visit during the year and field trips are scheduled to enhance the curriculum. Daily outdoor playground time is essential.

## **EARLY BIRD SPECIAL**

Early Bird drop off begins at 8:30 for our preschool age children. Sign up forms must be filled out and fees paid prior to drop off. This program is held in the Discovery Room.

## **LUNCH BUNCH PROGRAM**

The school offers a Lunch Bunch Program for our preschool age children beginning in September. It is held Monday-Friday from 12:05 until 1:55PM. This program provides an informal setting for socializing, having lunch with friends and outdoor playtime.

Children are expected to bring a nutritious lunch from home in a lunch box clearly marked on the outside with the child's name. Lunch boxes must contain an ice pack.

Signup sheets for Lunch Bunch are sent home every three weeks. The fee for lunch bunch is a per day charge. A credit is given only if a child is absent from the school due to illness.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

We enjoy giving the fours the opportunity to learn more about their community by providing educational field trips during the year. You will be asked to sign a general permission form at the beginning of the school year that encompasses walks around the neighborhood. The classroom teacher will provide notification and details regarding specific field trips as they come up.

## **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Three weeks after school begins, teachers will contact parents to share information about how their child has settled into the school routine. Parents may share any concerns or expectations they have at this time. Parent Night is also in October. Formal parent-teacher conferences are scheduled in January to give parents the opportunity to discuss their child's progress. Conference times will be posted and school will remain in session.

In March, optional conferences can be scheduled for those parents who would like to follow up on a particular concern. Parents, however, should feel free to contact teachers and schedule conferences whenever there is a need to do so. All children's portfolios and assessment records are kept confidential. Parents have access to their children's records.

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION**

The United Methodist Preschool is a welcoming community and does not discriminate against anyone for any reason. We encourage and support cultural diversity as part of our programs mission

## SEPARATION

The first few weeks of school can result in anxiety for some children. The director and teachers are sensitive to these feelings and will make every effort to make your child's adjustment as smooth and anxiety free as possible. Our experience has shown that a smile, a hug and a quick good-bye work best. Let your child know through your actions and words that school is a safe and fun place to be. If you are concerned about whether your child is still upset or crying after you leave, call us and we will give you a morning update

## TOYS FROM HOME

Children should not bring toys to school. Please tell your child that there are many wonderful toys in the classroom that are for all the children to play with.

## CLOTHING

The children are busy and get very involved in a wide variety of activities at school. Play clothes that are comfortable, washable and easy for children to manage by themselves are best. We do try to protect their clothing with smocks when they are engaged in a messy project.

Please dress children according to the weather, they go outside most days. Dressing in layers is advisable. **To ensure their safety when climbing and biking open-toed shoes and clogs are not to be worn to school.** The school keeps several changes of clothing on hand for emergencies. If your child needs to borrow clothing, please wash it and return it to the school promptly in case another child needs it.

## SNACKS and BIRTHDAYS

The school provides a nutritious snack every day. Children should not bring breakfast foods or personal snacks from home unless food allergies are a concern.

A special snack may be sent in for a birthday celebration. Please check with your child's teacher to determine appropriate snacks and the best time for them to be sent.

## **REGISTRATION**

Registration for the next school year will take place in December and January. Registration forms will be sent home and should be returned to the school with a \$75 non-refundable registration fee. Current families have priority placement.

## **TUITION**

Every family enrolled in the school has signed a tuition agreement. Tuition bills are sent out one month prior. A late fee of \$50 will be charged when the tuition payment is more than 30 days past due. If you have an unusual circumstance that prevents you from paying on time, please discuss it with the director before the payment is due to avoid late charges. Payments are due May 1 and November 1.

## **WITHDRAWING YOUR CHILD**

If a parent chooses to withdraw their child from the school, tuition, less the \$500 deposit, will be refunded on a pro-rata basis, only if the child's spot in the class is then filled.

## **REQUIRED FORMS**

Once a child is enrolled in the program the following forms must be completed and returned to us:

1. Tuition payment contract
2. Health form
3. Emergency information form
4. Permission form

**No child may attend the program without a current health form on file.**

## **SUMMER MINI-CAMP**

A three week mini camp experience is offered at the beginning of the summer. Parents may enroll their child for any or all of the three sessions. Registration takes place in March.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **CIVIL EMERGENCIES**

In the event of a civil emergency or natural disaster, please be assured that the school has emergency preparedness plans in place. They are posted in each classroom. The safety and welfare of the children remain our highest priority. Parents will always be contacted as soon as possible in the event of an emergency situation. Ratios will be maintained at all times

### **INCIDENTS AND ACCIDENTS**

In the event of an incident or accident at school, the teachers will fill out an accident report describing the event which needs to be signed by the teacher, director and parent. Depending on the seriousness of the incident or accident parents will either be notified immediately or at pick-up.

### **MEDICATIONS**

If a student requires medication, the medication must be accompanied by a written order from the authorized health care provider and the written permission of the child's parent. Medication must be in the original container with the original prescription label. Medications will be kept in a locked area. Staff members are required to have certification for Medication Administration Training, Pediatric First-aid and CPR.

### **ALLERGY POLICY**

We recognize that many children suffer from allergies, some of which may be life threatening. While we will make every effort to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children who have allergies, the school cannot guarantee the complete elimination of all allergens from the school environment.

If a student has a food allergy, parents will be asked to send in the student's snack each day. We are a nut free zone and will not serve any nut products for snack. We ask that you do the same when preparing your child's lunch for school. Children are not allowed to share food at school.

## **HEALTH LAWS**

The State Department of Health requires that every child attending school present a yearly, updated health form showing that all immunizations are current. If your child's health form expires during the school year, you have 30 days from the expiration date to update it. Prior to the age of 5, immunization for the flu is required by the state each year.

Our goal is to maintain a safe, healthy environment. We count on you to recognize symptoms of illness and keep children at home for at least 24 hours if any of the following conditions occur: Fever, vomiting or diarrhea, pink eyes accompanied by a discharge. Skin rashes or open sores need to be looked at by a physician and note brought in.

If your child becomes ill at school, he/she will be taken to the director's office until you can be reached. If we cannot reach you, we will call the emergency numbers you have provided. Please call the school to report any communicable diseases such as conjunctivitis, chicken pox, strep throat, or head lice so we can alert other parents to watch for symptoms.

If a student requires medication, the medication must be accompanied by a written order from an authorized health care provider and the written permission of the child's parent. Medication must be in the original container with the original prescription label. Medications will be kept in a locked area.



## **ALTERNATE PICK UP PLANS**

If your child is to be picked up by someone other than a parent we must be notified in writing by the custodial parent. Teachers will not dismiss children to the custody of an adult we do not know, unless instructed in writing by the parent to do so. We will ask for photo identification before releasing the child.

## **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE OF CHILDREN**

Each morning the teachers are preparing the classrooms for the children's arrival. For this reason we ask that you not arrive early. Please wait with your child outside the classroom door until one of the teachers greets you. Call the school office if your child will be absent or late to school. Please be prompt at the end of the day to pick children up. If a child is not picked up by 12:05 or 2:00, we will try to contact a parent by phone, if we are unable to reach a parent, we will call the person designated as an emergency contact in the emergency file to come pick up the child. Parents will be given two warnings. The third time a child is picked up late, a \$25 fee will be assessed. This money goes to our book fund. Two staff members 21 years or older will remain with a child until he/she is released to parent/guardian or authorized alternative adult. If neither parent/guardian nor authorized alternative adult one can be reached after 2 hours, the police will be notified. The non-emergency number for the NC Police Dept. is 359-3500

## **CHILD SAFETY**

When dropping off in the parking lot, please note it is against the law to leave a young child in a car unattended even for a short time. The New Canaan Police strictly enforce this law.

In addition, please do not let children run in the building or the parking lot. This creates an unsafe situation for the child.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER PROCEDURES**

The United Methodist Preschool will be closed when the New Canaan Public Schools are closed. When the public schools are delayed for one hour or more, Methodist will open at 10:00 and close at our normal time of 12:00 noon or 1:55.

In the event of a snowstorm that begins while your child is at school, and early dismissal is announced by the public schools, we will close at 12:00.

Please check our website; [www.mnaskids.org](http://www.mnaskids.org) , listen to the local radio stations or TV news for a listing of school closings and delays. Snow days will not be re-scheduled.

## **PARENT INVOLVMENT**

Parents are an integral part of our program. Family interest and involvement in the school is encouraged. Parents who become involved better understand their child's educational process, develop positive relationships with staff and contribute to the growth of the program. Opportunities for involvement include; field trip chaperones, sharing cultures and customs to broaden the children's experiences, guest readers for classroom enrichment, attending school events during the year and volunteering to be a member of the school's Board of Director's.

We see the majority of our parents on a daily basis, some twice a day. These encounters enable staff to establish a solid relationship with the family and to keep the lines of communication open. We urge families to attend special events that are planned throughout the year as they provide an opportunity to meet other families and establish an ongoing link with the school. The preschool has an open door policy for parents and encourages them to visit whenever time permits.

## **PARENT COFFEES**

Parent coffees will be held throughout the year. These get-togethers are designed to help parents meet one another and discuss topics of mutual concern.

## **PARENT EVALUATION**

Once each year, parents are asked to fill out a survey to help us evaluate the quality and effectiveness of our program. This process also helps us to set future goals. Your participation in the evaluation process is important and your opinions matter greatly. The results of the survey are published in our spring newsletter.

## **PARENT VOLUNTEERS**

Parents are asked to fill out a volunteer form in September. As a vital part of our school and we value your energy and enthusiasm. Committees for various school events are formed from these forms. Parents can also volunteer in classrooms to read stories, sing songs or participate in special class projects.

## **BULLETIN BOARDS**

Bulletin boards are located outside each classroom. Parents should check them daily for notices, articles and other important information concerning our school community and the community at large. There is much that is offered in New Canaan for families with young children.

## **PARENT/GUARDIAN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/AGREEMENT**

To verify that you have received, read and discussed with the director the policies and procedures in this parent handbook including the discipline policy including behavior management techniques, please sign this form and return it to the school office. Thank you.

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parents/Guardian Signature\_\_\_\_\_