



Parent Handbook 2017-2018



**School Office Hours
8:30 AM - 3:00 PM
Monday - Friday**

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St. Peter's Early Childhood Development Center Parent Handbook

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OUR PROGRAM

**Jesus said, “Let the little children come...
For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”
Matthew 19:14**

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC) is to provide a weekday early childhood learning program for children ages 15 months through 5 years in which each child can grow and develop spiritually, cognitively, physically, emotionally, and socially within a Christian atmosphere.

This program is a ministry of St. Peter's United Methodist Church and an outreach to the community. We strive to meet the needs of children and to encourage the development of Christian families through parent participation and education.

PHILOSOPHY

We believe each child is a gift of God, a special unique person valued for his own worth who is growing and learning independently while interacting with the environment through play, a “child’s work”.

Children develop and acquire skills at their own pace through a predictable sequence of developmental stages. St. Peter’s ECDC provides a learning environment, based on intentional and purposeful play, which allows a child to build upon existing skills.

Classroom routines encourage active involvement, meaningful experimentation and reinforcement through repetition. Sensory, motor, cognitive and language skills are introduced through materials and activities which are both child-directed and teacher-directed. Emphasis is on the process rather than the product, fostering a sense of pride and accomplishment in each child.

Believing each child is a special unique person our developmentally appropriate environment provides learning opportunities for a wide range of abilities. We make every effort to include children of all abilities in our program and are responsive to the individual needs of the children.

We value the active involvement of parents in our program. Parents and teachers working together can support one other to provide positive learning experiences and to instill a lifelong love for learning.

GOALS OF ST. PETER'S ECDC

St. Peter's ECDC strives to facilitate children's growth in the following areas:

Spiritual Growth through a warm, caring, accepting Christian climate where children feel free to observe, explore, make mistakes, and live within the guidelines of a Christian community and to develop knowledge of God's creation and how God loves us.

Cognitive Growth through a rich, stimulating, well-planned, age-appropriate curriculum and learning environment that encourages curiosity, imagination, creativity, problem solving, and language development as children learn through active play, make believe, art, music, and firsthand experiences.

Physical Growth through activities and equipment that promote physical growth and development involving gross motor skills (large muscles) and fine motor skills (wrist and hand muscles), development of eye-hand coordination, and all senses in learning.

Social Growth through opportunities for children to work, play and communicate with other children as they develop a growing awareness of the needs, rights and feelings of others.

Emotional Growth through an atmosphere that encourages children to develop a positive self-image, feelings of self-worth and self-confidence and a positive attitude toward learning.

St. Peter's ECDC also strives to facilitate **Parent Involvement** through opportunities for parent participation and education, as school and family work together in planning and meeting the needs of the child.

NAEYC ACCREDITATION

St. Peter's Early Childhood Development Center is accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. The Academy is a division of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the nation's largest organization of early childhood professionals, with more than 100,000 members. Annual reports and accreditation reviews every five years ensure that accreditation standards are continuously maintained. Accredited in 1987, St. Peter's Early Childhood Development Center was the third early childhood program in the Houston area to become accredited.

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES

St. Peter's ECDC is regulated by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) in order to protect the health, safety and well being of the children in our care. A copy of the Minimum Standards is available for your review on the DFPS website at: www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_care/. A copy of our most recent Licensing Inspection Report is available for review at any time in the display case outside of the ECDC Office. Information about our program is also available on the DFPS website. The Houston Child Care Licensing office can be reached at 713- 940-3009. The Child Care Information line at 1-800-862-5252 has information about child care in Texas.

CURRICULUM

When planning classroom activities at all levels, teachers take into account a child's age group, interests and needs, as well as the concerns of the child and the family. Individual curriculum units are then adapted by each teacher to meet the interests and needs of the children and to address the curriculum objectives appropriate to the class. Curriculum units include, but are not limited to, holidays, seasons, nature, local community events, and persons, places, and things relevant and important to young children. Classroom experiences include both individual and group activities and teacher-directed and child-directed activities. Center time in various classroom interest areas is also a daily part of the classroom experience.

ECDC uses *The Creative Curriculum*, a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that helps teachers implement developmentally appropriate practice to guide learning in literacy, math, science, social studies, and the arts, while also supporting children's social, emotional, and physical development. At the heart of *The Creative Curriculum* are its 38 **Objectives for Development and Learning: Birth Through Kindergarten**. These objectives are predictive of children's school success and conform to the State of Texas' early learning standards.

The Creative Curriculum further provides detailed information about the progression of learning for each objective, thereby guiding teachers in planning what to teach and when. It clearly defines reasonable expectations for each age group from birth to kindergarten, resulting in both continuity of instruction across all age levels as well as consistency of instruction within them. The objectives define the skills and knowledge your children will acquire during their time with us.

CREATIVE CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

Objectives 1-14 describe major areas of child growth and development.

Objectives 15-36 focus on content learning.

Objectives 37-38 focus on English language acquisition for non-English speakers.

Social-Emotional

1. Regulates own emotions and behavior
 - a. Manages feelings
 - b. Follows limits and expectations
 - c. Takes care of own needs appropriately

2. Establishes and sustains positive relationships
 - a. Forms relationships with adults
 - b. Responds to emotional cues
 - c. Interacts with peers
 - d. Makes friends

3. Participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations
 - a. Balances needs and rights of self and others
 - b. Solves social problems

Physical

4. Demonstrates traveling skills
5. Demonstrates balancing skills
6. Demonstrates gross-motor manipulative skills
7. Demonstrates fine-motor strength and coordination
 - a. Uses finger and hands
 - b. Uses writing and drawing tools

Language

8. Listens to and understands increasingly complex language
 - a. Comprehends language
 - b. Follows directions
9. Uses language to express thoughts and needs
 - a. Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary
 - b. Speaks clearly
 - c. Uses conventional grammar
 - d. Tells about another time or place
10. Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills
 - a. Engages in conversation
 - b. Uses social rules of language

Cognitive

11. Demonstrates positive approaches to learning
 - a. Attends and engages
 - b. Persists
 - c. Solves problems
 - d. Shows curiosity and motivation
 - e. Shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking
12. Remembers and connects experiences
 - a. Recognizes and recalls
 - b. Makes connections
13. Uses classification skills
14. Uses symbols and images to represent something not present
 - a. Thinks symbolically
 - b. Engages in socio-dramatic play

Literacy

15. Demonstrates phonological awareness
 - a. Notices and discriminates rhyme
 - b. Notices and discriminates alliteration
 - c. Notices and discriminates smaller and smaller units of sound
16. Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet
 - a. Identifies and names letters
 - b. Uses letter-sound knowledge

17. Demonstrates knowledge of print and its uses
 - a. Uses and appreciates books
 - b. Uses print concepts
18. Comprehends and responds to books and other texts
 - a. Interacts during read-alouds and book conversations
 - b. Uses emergent reading skills
 - c. Retells stories
19. Demonstrates emergent writing skills
 - a. Writes name
 - b. Writes to convey meaning

Mathematics

20. Uses number concepts and operations
 - a. Counts
 - b. Quantifies
 - c. Connects numerals with their quantities
21. Explores and describes spatial relationships and shapes
 - a. Understands spatial relationships
 - b. Understands shapes
22. Compares and measures
23. Demonstrates knowledge of patterns

Science and Technology

24. Uses scientific inquiry skills
25. Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things
26. Demonstrates knowledge of the physical properties of objects and materials
27. Demonstrates knowledge of Earth's environment
28. Uses tools and other technology to perform tasks

Social Studies

29. Demonstrates knowledge of self
30. Shows basic understanding of people and how they live
31. Explores change related to familiar people or places
32. Demonstrates simple geographic knowledge

The Arts

33. Explores the visual arts
34. Explores musical concepts and expression
35. Explores dance and movement concepts
36. Explores drama through actions and language

English Language Acquisition

37. Demonstrates progress in listening to and understanding English
38. Demonstrates progress in speaking English

Special Classes

In addition to daily music and motor skills activities which are incorporated into the classroom curriculum, our program offers additional weekly experiences in music for all ages and in motor skills for Toddlers (22-28 and 29-35 months) attending two days a week and all 3, 4, and 5 year olds. In weekly music class, children are introduced to a variety of songs, rhythm instruments and musical styles. The *KidBuilders* curriculum is used in our motor skills class, and children are exposed to creative movement activities and a variety of gross motor equipment. This class helps children develop control of their large motor skills and spatial awareness.

Spanish classes are offered once a week to all 4 and 5 year olds and to the older 3 year olds attending three days a week.

FIVE YEAR OLD PROGRAM

St. Peter's ECDC offers a four-day program for 5 year olds who are not quite ready for kindergarten. This program covers all of the basic skills introduced in kindergarten. The curriculum includes *Saxon* math and phonics, whole language, weekly journals, inventive spelling, Katy ISD adopted printing, social studies, science, art, drama and more. Daily small group and center based activities maximize learning. Placement is based on age restrictions and teacher recommendations.

GESELL ASSESSMENT

The Gesell Assessment is a requirement for all children before entering our five year old program. This assessment measures children's physical growth, language development, personal-social behavior, overall adaptive behavior, and overall behavioral readiness of children to adjust and adapt to appropriate age and grade expectations in the school setting. The assessment will provide a composite picture of a child's developmental maturity. It is administered in January before registration and is a very helpful tool when deciding about a transitional year prior to kindergarten.

STAFF

We are extremely proud of our teachers. The staff of ECDC is well trained and experienced in early childhood education. Most of our teachers hold college degrees or have earned, or are working on, a CDA (Child Development Associate) Credential. All are active in continuing education involving the latest ideas and teaching techniques in the field of early childhood education. Every class is staffed with a lead teacher and a full-time assistant teacher to insure the proper teacher/child ratio.

All teachers are certified in CPR and Pediatric First Aid. Teachers working with children 15-24 months have annual training in Sudden Infant Death and Shaken Baby Syndrome. ECDC does not require its staff to have adult immunizations.

ENROLLMENT GUIDELINES

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Enrollment is open to any child, provided the program can meet the needs of that child. St. Peter's ECDC does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color or national or ethnic origin in administration of its admissions or educational policies or any other school administered programs. St. Peter's ECDC reserves the right to place children in classes to maintain a reasonable gender balance.

REGISTRATION

Registration for enrollment takes place in January. All students continuing at ECDC will receive an application on their school bag prior to registration. Children must be at least 15 months of age and not older than 5 years on September 1 of the school year for which they are registering.

Priority registration is given to currently enrolled students, members of St. Peter's United Methodist Church, siblings of currently enrolled students, and St. Peter's ECDC alumni. Each child may register for only one class per school year.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A parent or legal guardian must be a registered member of St. Peter's United Methodist Church to participate in priority registration. **Membership must have been established by December 31st prior to registration.**

REGISTRATION /SUPPLY/ACTIVITY FEES

Enrollment for all programs requires payment of a registration, supply, and activity fee. The registration fee is due at the time the child is registered. Supply and activity fees are due in August.

ENROLLMENT FORMS

All forms necessary for enrollment must be received in the ECDC office prior to the child being admitted to class. There are no exceptions. Due dates are specific for each form.

Medical Form/Immunizations

A medical form must be completed for each child and must be signed and dated by the child's physician. All students must provide proof of current immunizations in order to attend our program. **St. Peter's ECDC does not accept the *Exemption From Immunizations for Reasons of Conscience Affidavit from the State of Texas.*** If your child is on a catch-up schedule for medical reasons, you will need a letter signed by your physician stating the dates the immunizations will be given.

As your child receives new immunizations, please bring the doctor's written verification to the ECDC office so we can update our records. In addition, keep us informed regarding any changes with allergies and/or medications your child is taking.

Emergency Information and Authorization to Consent for Treatment Form

This form must be completed and kept on file in the ECDC office. Please keep information current at all times. Should you have changes in emergency contact numbers, physician information or insurance, please notify the ECDC office.

Authorization to Pick Up Form

All persons who are authorized to pick up your child, other than parents or legal guardians, must be listed on the *Authorization to Pick Up* form, which is kept on file in the ECDC office and in your child's classroom. Only an authorized adult will be allowed to pick up a child from school. Any change to your *Authorization to Pick Up* form must be made directly in the ECDC office. If the teacher is not familiar with the person picking up your child, a photo I.D. will be required.

Confidential Information Form

The *Introduce Us to Your Child* form is for the confidential use of the teachers working with your child. It helps them to understand your child, her skills, interests and needs and also provides important information about your culture, values, and language. Teachers use this information when planning classroom activities and curriculum.

Birth Certificate

A copy of your child's birth certificate must be on file in the ECDC office.

FINANCIAL

TUITION

The monthly tuition for all St. Peter's ECDC programs is an annual amount divided into nine equal payments. **Monthly tuition is due the first day of each month.** As in any school, expenses are constant, which prevents credit or discounts for absence due to illness, vacations, scheduled holidays, Katy ISD emergency closings and any ECDC emergency closings. Tuition for May for the upcoming school year is pre-paid each year and is due in May of the current school year, along with enrollment forms.

St. Peter's ECDC offers the option to pay tuition via direct debit which allows ECDC to transfer funds from your bank account on a monthly basis to cover your child's tuition. There is no charge for this service. Enrollment forms are available in the ECDC office.

Tuition payments may also be mailed to the school or brought by an adult to the ECDC office and placed in the "Tuition Box." **Please write your child's name or names on all checks.** **Do not attach tuition checks on your child's bag, send tuition checks with your child, or leave them with your child's teacher.**

If a check is not honored by your bank due to insufficient funds, a fee of \$15 will be assessed by St. Peter's ECDC. Returned checks will not be reprocessed; tuition payment must be submitted in cash, and it is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that a written receipt is received at the time of payment. If it becomes difficult to meet the scheduled payment plan, please see the Financial Manager to arrange a more workable plan.

If your child's tuition is not paid by the 10th of the month, you will receive a reminder and a \$10 late fee per child will be charged. If tuition is not paid by the 24th of the month, the late fee will increase to \$20 and notification will be sent to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the ECDC Advisory Council and the Executive Pastor of St. Peter's UMC. **After the 25th, your child may not return to the program unless special arrangements have been made with the Financial Manager.**

WITHDRAWALS/REFUNDS

If a child must withdraw from our program, St. Peter's ECDC requires a **2 week written notification.** **The registration fee is nonrefundable with one exception.** For children in the 15 months to 4 year old classes, the fee is refundable with written notification until June 1 prior to the school year for which the child is enrolled if the family is moving out of the Katy/Houston area. **After June 1, the fee will not be refunded for any reason.**

It is difficult to fill positions left vacant by a child who leaves during the final months of the school year; therefore, pre-paid May tuition is refundable only to families who leave the program on or before March 1 with written notification.

Registration/Supply/Activity fees and pre-paid May tuition for the 5's program will not be refunded for any reason.

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL

ARRIVAL

Hours of Operation

All classes meet from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM. Outside doors are locked between 9:15 AM and 2:00 PM. Hallway doors leading to the classrooms are locked between 9:30 AM and 2:00 PM. Parents are welcome to visit our school and observe their child at any time during the school day. During school hours, parents must sign in at the ECDC Office before going to the classroom and sign out when leaving.

15-35 Months Toddler Classes

Please bring your child to the classroom between 9:00 and 9:15 AM and sign in your child. No child will be accepted before 9:00 AM as teachers are busy preparing for the day, and the teachers want to ensure they will be able to give your child their undivided attention once you arrive. If you do arrive early, you will be asked to wait with your child outside the room until the teachers are ready.

Three, Four, and Five Year Old Classes

For the safety of your child, we strongly encourage all 3, 4, and 5 year olds to use the car line for morning drop-off between 9:00 and 9:15 AM. Staff members will assist the children in getting out of the cars and to their respective classrooms. After 9:15 AM or if a staff member is not present, please park and come to the ECDC office to sign in before personally walking your child to the classroom. **Under no circumstances should any child be allowed to walk to class unsupervised.**

If, after the first few weeks of school, your child still needs to be walked in, for you and your child's safety, please park in the toddler parking area or the east parking lot by the playground and walk your child to the classroom between 9:00 and 9:15 AM. Please do not walk between cars in the drop off line.

How to help your child's day get off to a smooth, successful start!

Allow enough time in the morning to ensure a smooth transition from home to school for your child, and **please make every effort to arrive no later than 9:15 AM**, as the first hour of the day is when much of the learning and socialization takes place, especially in the toddler classes. It can also be very unsettling for a child to arrive late and find that his favorite activity is over or that her favorite friend is already playing with another child.

Parking Lot Safety

Your child's safety is our number one concern. Our parking lot is extremely busy at arrival and dismissal times. Please watch for children and **DRIVE SLOWLY**; do not use your cell phone while in the ECDC parking lot unless you are parked. When crossing through the parking lot, please hold your child's hand. **It is illegal to leave any child in an unattended vehicle, even for a short period of time.**

DISMISSAL

Dismissal is from 2:15-2:30 PM, and all children are to be picked up in their classrooms and signed out by the parent or a person authorized to pick up that child. Before leaving the classroom with your child, ensure that the teacher is aware you are taking your child out of the room. Please keep your child's *Authorization to Pick Up* form updated in the ECDC office as children may be released to an authorized person only. If you need to change your child's pick up during the day, please call the ECDC office and have your child's emergency code number available.

Out of consideration for your child and your child's teachers, please be on time at dismissal. When you are late, your child may experience anxiety. If for some reason you find you will be unavoidably delayed, please call the ECDC office so we may reassure your child that you are coming. **After 2:35 PM, children may be picked up in the ECDC office. A late fee of \$5.00 per child will be charged. Late fees will double for each successive late pickup.**

Dismissal Exceptions- Early Dismissal on Staff Development Days

Dismissal is from 11:45 AM-12:15 PM on early dismissal Staff Development days, and all children are to be picked up in their classrooms and signed out by the parent or a person authorized to pick up that child.

SCHOOL YEAR / INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

The ECDC follows the Katy Independent School District school year calendar **with the exception of beginning and ending dates and Katy ISD early dismissals**. Should bad weather require that the Katy ISD schools be closed, ECDC will also be closed. Please consult radio and television stations for official word concerning Katy ISD closures. In the event of a natural or local disaster or emergency event, the ECDC administration will make decisions regarding school attendance for that specific day. The ECDC Office will notify parents by email regarding school closure in such case. **Any canceled or missed school days will not be made up**. In addition, our school will be closed two days during the school year so that all of our teachers may attend the Early Childhood Methodist Conference. This is a mandatory training for all teachers.

DAY TO DAY

WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL

15 - 35 Months Toddler Classes

- Your child's official ECDC tote bag for carrying his or her belongings.
- A lunch in a divided plastic container and a drink, packed in containers that will keep food hot or cold as needed. All food should be cut up and ready to eat – food should be cut into pieces no larger than ½ inch squares, grapes and hot dogs cut lengthwise.
- A complete change of clothes, including socks and shoes, appropriate for the season, in a gallon size Ziploc bag.
- Sufficient disposable diapers for the day and sufficient training pants and outer clothing if your child is being toilet trained.
- A rest mat and blanket.
- A pacifier, lovey, security blanket, pillow or stuffed toy for naptime.
- At the beginning of the school year, one large box of Kleenex and one large container of disposable baby wipes.

Please be sure all items that are brought are clearly labeled with your child's name.

Three and Four Year Old Classes

- Your child's official ECDC tote bag for carrying his or her belongings.
- A lunch and a drink, packed in containers that will keep food hot or cold as needed. All food should be cut up and ready to eat.
- Your child's personalized smock which is purchased through the school and will be in your child's classroom on the first day of school. The smock will be sent home on the last day of each week for laundering.
- A complete change of clothes, including socks, in a gallon size Ziploc bag.
- A rest mat. A quiet time for relaxation after lunch will be provided. Texas Minimum Standards require that children of all ages have a brief rest time on a rest mat daily.
- At the beginning of the school year, one large container of flushable wipes or disposable baby wipes and one large box of Kleenex.

Please be sure all items that are brought are clearly labeled with your child's name.

Five Year Old Class

- Your child's official ECDC tote bag for carrying his or her belongings.
- A lunch and drink, packed in containers that will keep food hot or cold as needed.
- A complete change of clothes is recommended.
- A rest mat. A quiet time for relaxation after lunch will be provided. Texas Minimum Standards require that children of all ages have a have a brief rest time on a rest mat daily.
- At the beginning of the school year, one large container of flushable wipes or disposable baby wipes and one large box of Kleenex.

Please be sure all items that are brought are clearly labeled with your child's name.

WHAT NOT TO BRING TO SCHOOL

Toys and Valuables

Except for "security toys" that may be needed during the opening days of school, we ask that all toys be left at home. If brought to school, children must be prepared to share their toys.

Play guns, knives, war toys, action figures and similar toys are inappropriate in our program. In addition, please do not let your child bring money or other valuable items such as jewelry which might be lost. Gum and candy should also be left at home.

Items that are easily damaged or broken should not be sent. Items that are brought for show and tell or items that might relate to the curriculum are always welcome. If the item is fragile, please pack it securely in a closed, taped container labeled with your child's name and a description of the contents. The teacher will be careful to place these items in a safe place until they can be used.

DRESS

Shoes - For safety reasons, shoes should be well fitting and have enclosed toes. **Tennis shoes are strongly recommended and are required for participation in motor skills.** Sandals, Crocs, cowboy boots, and dress shoes should not be worn to school. If your child insists on wearing these, please place a pair of tennis shoes in your child's school bag and your child's teachers will be happy to put them on your child.

Dress - Please dress your child in washable play clothes that allow your child freedom to run, jump, climb, and crawl. We do our best to protect clothing with smocks, but certain washable paint colors and damp playground sand do stain clothes and fabric shoes.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Children enjoy and need outdoor play and exercise. Our children play outdoors in a variety of weather conditions throughout the year. If you feel your child should not be outside for whatever reason, please do not send your child to school. Texas Minimum Standards require that children who come to school must be well enough to participate in all classroom activities including outside play.

CLASSROOM PETS / ANIMALS IN THE CLASSROOM

Although some classrooms have pets, other animals may be brought to school only when the visit has been prearranged and approved by the Director. Parents will be notified in advance and leashes and cages will be required if appropriate. Vaccination records must be on file in the ECDC office before the animal can be brought onto school premises. ECDC welcomes your pets, but please refrain from bringing your pets into the school without prior approval from the Director.

BREASTFEEDING

Mothers are welcome to breastfeed their children on the benches outside of Asbury Hall. If more privacy is desired, mothers may use E-106 or Asbury Hall across from the ECDC office if those rooms are not in use or the Women's Restroom across from the Sanctuary.

SCHOOL PARTIES

Children in our 15 to 35 month old toddler classes enjoy holiday parties at Christmas and Easter only. The 3 year old classes celebrate fall, Christmas, and Easter with class parties. Holiday school parties are celebrated for fall, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Easter by all 4 and 5 year old classes. Parents plan the parties and provide snacks and favors. Parents sign up to help with these parties at Parent Orientation.

Party Guidelines:

- Please keep parties, snacks, and favors simple, inexpensive and nutritious. We recommend a range of \$1.00 to \$2.00 per child for each holiday party.
- **Balloons of any type are not allowed at parties.**
- Texas Minimum Standards require that snacks provided for the class by the parents must be prepared in an environment that is routinely inspected for food safety and prepackaged with an attached ingredient label. Snacks prepared in a home kitchen that is not regulated are not allowed. Party Snack Guidelines will be sent home to help you in planning a healthy snack for your party.
- When planning snacks for parties, please take into consideration children with food allergies and provide an appropriate allergy free snack.

For safety and supervision reasons, St. Peter's ECDC has the following policy for school parties: For 3, 4, and 5 year old class parties, only the four designated "party parents" may attend the parties. All toddler parents may attend both of their child's parties if they so choose. While siblings are welcome at all ECDC family activities, we encourage you to view these parties as a special time with your child. Please make arrangements for younger siblings.

Graduation - ECDC does not celebrate graduation in the 4 year old classes as not all of our 4 year old children go on to kindergarten in the fall, and children at this age do not understand its meaning. There will be many opportunities for you and your child to celebrate graduation in later years when your child is older and better able to understand and appreciate the significance of the day.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays will be celebrated in an age-appropriate manner in the classroom. Each teacher celebrates birthdays in a special way that is unique to the class. Your child's teacher will inform you of how birthdays will be celebrated at Parent Orientation. Children in our 3, 4, and 5 year old classes will also have their birthday recognized in Chapel. **Please do not send special birthday snacks such as cupcakes, cookies, or cakes for the entire class.**

School is not an appropriate place to distribute party invitations unless you are including the entire class. It is also inappropriate to pick up part of a class at school for an after school birthday party. Children who are not included feel left out.

RELIGION

We welcome children and families of all faiths. Our teachers believe in the principles of Christian love, thought, and living as expressed in their daily lives. Children are helped to become aware of God's love as they participate in a caring Christian community. A short Chapel time is offered each week for 3, 4, and 5 year olds in addition to planned and spontaneous prayers and activities in the classroom. An emphasis is placed on the development of such moral values as honesty, responsibility, accountability, kindness, cooperation, fairness, respect, and tolerance. We feel at this young age, these values are often as easily "caught as taught."

GRIEVANCE POLICY

Differences and disagreements are a part of life and St. Peter's ECDC recognizes the need for healthy communication and a way to handle grievances. All parents are encouraged to express questions and concerns as they arise. In general, classroom issues should first be addressed with the teacher. If this does not result in a satisfactory resolution, or if the situation warrants another approach, parents should contact the Director. If still unresolved, the matter may be taken up with the ECDC Advisory Council. The purpose of implementing this type of process is to establish an open and healthy line of communication between our families and the staff of ECDC. We are very proud of our "open door policy", and we hope that our families will take advantage of it in order to promote trust and unity.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Information regarding children who attend St. Peter's ECDC, including enrollment, medical information and assessments, is private and confidential. Information about a child will only be shared with the written permission of the parents or legal guardian.

BITING POLICY

Biting is common among toddlers. Children at this stage of development do not always have the words to express themselves. Their way of expression may come in the form of hitting, pushing or biting. If your child bites or is bitten you will be notified by your child's teacher. All names remain confidential. Preventative techniques will be used in the classroom to prevent future biting and to protect the other children.

Biting usually stops by the age of three. Most children by then have the confidence and language skills to express their needs. If an older child should bite, all parties involved will be notified by the Director. All names remain confidential. The teacher will work with the parents to understand the reason for the biting, and a plan of action will be developed.

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

Our teachers are empathetic and understanding when dealing with children as they learn to play and work with others. Our teachers know that young children make mistakes and experience occasional difficulties in their "trial and error" efforts to master and control their feelings and behavior and to understand and live within our complex social system.

Our teachers use various methods of positive techniques for guidance and behavior management to help children develop and grow in self control. At no time will a child be physically punished, threatened and/or intimidated. Methods our teachers use include:

- Redirection
- Positive reinforcement by praising and encouraging appropriate behavior
- Use of logical and natural consequences
- Anticipation of and elimination of potential problems
- Use of consistently enforced classroom rules to remind a child of behavior expectations
- Individual and group discussions about acceptable behavior

When none of the above methods seem to be effective, a short "time out" in the classroom, one (1) minute per year per child's age, may prove helpful for some children. It is used not as a punishment but it allows the child to regain focus and self-control. Home and school need to work closely with one another if and when problems with behavior occur. Please contact your child's teacher and /or the Director should you feel there is a problem in this area. Your child's teacher will do likewise.

If your child has experienced or is experiencing any type of stressful or traumatic emotional experience, please inform your child's teacher. This will enable your child's teacher to better understand and deal with any behavior changes or difficulties your child may be exhibiting at school as a result.

For persistent or excessive behavior problems, parents will be contacted by the teacher and/or the Director and with the assistance of the ECDC Educational Consultant, an individualized plan of action that recognizes and encourages positive behaviors may be developed. It is important that home and school work together in this situation. If after two weeks, improvement in behavior is not seen, the parents will be notified and further corrective measures may be taken as the Director deems necessary, including, but not limited to, removal from the program if it is determined to be in the best interest of the child or other children in the program.

INCLUSION

ECDC feels a strong Christian commitment to work with and help the children and families in our program within the limits of our capabilities. Our setting is not designed nor our staff trained, however, to handle children with extreme developmental delays, severe physical handicaps or very difficult behavior. For children with needs we feel we are not adequately meeting, the parents will be contacted by the teacher and/or Director. ECDC has on staff an Educational Consultant who is available to assist parents, teachers, and the Director in coming up with an individualized plan of action in this situation.

Depending on available resources and our facilities, we will make every effort to accommodate a child's developmental delays, physical handicaps, or very difficult behavior. In certain instances, the Director may recommend that an extra aide be brought in to "shadow" a child throughout the school day in order for the school to meet the child's needs; this aide will be provided at the parent's expense.

The Director may also request a professional evaluation, and parents will be referred to ECI-Project Tyke if the child is under the age of three, to the PPCD program at the elementary school where the child is zoned if the child is over the age of three, or to a private professional. Such evaluations could result in a recommendation for additional services or an alternate school environment. If a family chooses not to pursue a professional evaluation or the recommendations from a professional evaluation, the child may be removed from the program at the Director's discretion if it is determined to be in the best interest of the child.

TOILETING POLICY

Children develop toileting success at their own pace when they are physically and developmentally ready. Teachers will work with each child and family on an individual basis to assist efforts at home toward toileting success. Teachers also realize that accidents will happen during the toilet training process. Children are never asked to wipe floors or help clean up the bathroom after a toileting accident, with one exception. If, due to the nature of a toileting accident, the teacher feels that having the child "help" to clean up is a necessary and important part of the learning process, the teacher will involve the child's help in an appropriate manner. The parents will be notified in this situation so home and school can work together.

Toddlers (15 - 35-month classes)

For toddlers, before true potty training can begin, the child must be physically and psychologically ready to begin the process. Parents can watch for the signs of readiness, provide a consistent method when potty training, and support the child **without stress**. Parents should relax and encourage the child to learn to trust her body as she reaches this developmental milestone.

Readiness signs:

- Recognizes bodily function as it occurs
- Stays dry for long periods during awake daytime hours
- Recognizes the urge to eliminate before it occurs
- Controls bowel movements
- Comprehends and follows simple directions
- Effectively communicates need to "go"
- Able to stop the flow of urine.

Whatever the age, until the child's body has reached readiness, there is nothing to be gained from potty training except frustration and low self-esteem. The most important aspect of potty training to remember is that the child is in charge. The child will not train successfully before she is both physically and psychologically ready.

As children make the transition from diapers/pull-ups to underwear, parents should send to school at least two sets of change of clothes, underwear and socks and an extra pair of shoes. Hassle-free clothes that are easy for a toddler to manipulate up and down should be worn (no belts, overalls, onesies). Pants with an elastic waist band and underwear that is slightly big are easiest for a toddler to pull up and down successfully.

Regardless of the child's age level, teachers may not hold down a boy's penis if he is sitting on the toilet or standing up. This policy protects our teachers from any potential physical, sexual, or emotional abuse allegation.

Three Year Olds

As a child is working towards toileting success, teachers will encourage the child to wipe as the child is capable of doing in order to encourage and support his self-help skills. Until a child is successfully toilet trained and no longer using diapers, however, teachers will continue to wipe or clean a child after he has used the toilet. Once a child is successfully toilet trained, teachers may continue to wipe or clean a child if, after the child has attempted to wipe himself, he still needs help to be clean. Children at this age may not be sufficiently proficient in their bathroom hygiene to completely clean themselves on their own. In order to ensure that teachers are aware of instances where children need toileting help, restroom doors are kept open in three year old classes.

Four and Five Year olds

Once children have successfully been toilet trained and are no longer using diapers, teachers are not expected to wipe or clean a child after the child has used the toilet. This policy encourages and supports children's self-help skills and protects our teachers from any potential physical, sexual or emotional abuse allegation. Restroom doors in four and five year old classes are therefore normally closed when a child uses the restroom. However, teachers will encourage children and offer suggestions for cleaning, if necessary, and they may help in those instances where a child is not sufficiently proficient to satisfactorily clean herself. Restroom doors will remain open in these instances.

POLICY CHANGES

Parents will be notified in writing or by email of any policy changes which may occur after this handbook is distributed. Acknowledgement of all such changes must be signed and dated by each family and received in the ECDC office either in writing or by email reply.

THE ROLE OF THE PARENTS

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Meet Your Teacher Day

Meet Your Teacher Day is held the week before school begins in the fall. Your child's teachers will meet with you and your child in the classroom to get acquainted, and your child will have the opportunity to explore and become familiar with the classroom and the routine. The visit is a valuable first step in building a trusting relationship between your child and your child's teachers and is most beneficial in helping to ensure a smooth and successful transition from home to school. Your child's teachers will contact you in mid-August to schedule a visit.

Parent Orientation

Parent Orientation for all parents is held on a Sunday prior to the start of school. The purpose of this mandatory meeting is for you to meet your child's teachers, the administrative staff, ECDC Advisory Council, and other parents in your child's class and to learn about your child's day at school, the daily routine, expectations (yours and your child's teachers), curriculum, classroom procedures, activities, and communication. Parent participation and volunteer opportunities will be shared. This event is for PARENTS ONLY. Childcare is not provided.

Welcome Coffee

During the first week of school, all parents, both new and those returning to ECDC are invited to attend a welcome coffee. Information will be shared regarding a child's first preschool experience and separation issues.

Parent Conferences

During the month of November, parents of 15 to 35 month old children will receive a written evaluation of their child's progress and adjustment to school and will be given the option of a phone conference with the teacher. Parents of 3, 4 and 5 year olds will have a parent-teacher conference in the fall. All parents will have a parent-teacher conference in the spring. Both parents are encouraged to attend. The ECDC office will arrange to have an interpreter present if needed.

Should parents feel the need for an additional conference, they should contact their child's teacher and/or the Director so that arrangements can be made. We ask that parents please not confer with the teacher in the classroom at drop off or pick up or in the morning car line. It is best to discuss progress or problems in a private conversation.

Newsletter

Your child's teacher will send home a monthly class newsletter and calendar describing school news, curriculum themes, special activities, and upcoming events in the classroom. The "Watch Us Grow" Newsletter is sent home monthly from the ECDC office and contains not only information regarding school events and the calendar for the month but information on developmental ages and stages in early childhood. These newsletters provide additional insight into your child's school day and development.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents are welcome to visit the classroom at any time and to participate in school and classroom activities. Below are just a few of the ways parents can get involved. Other opportunities will arise during the school year, and you will be informed through the “Watch Us Grow” Newsletter, emails from the ECDC office, or notes sent home with your child.

ECDC Advisory Council

Our school is governed by the ECDC Advisory Council. This Advisory Council is comprised of 12 to 18 members, two-thirds of whom must be St. Peter's United Methodist Church members, the ECDC Director and Assistant Director, and the St. Peter's UMC Senior Minister, Executive Pastor, and the Director of Children's Ministries or their representatives. The Advisory Council approves school policies and procedures, staff selections, and budget items, and is in charge of fundraising activities.

Library on Wheels – LOW (4 and 5 year old classes)

Library on Wheels is sponsored by our ECDC Advisory Council. Parents volunteer to take the library cart to their child's classroom each week, and children have the opportunity to check out books weekly from the cart. Parent volunteers oversee the check out and check in of the books.

Homeroom Parent

The homeroom parent is the main contact person for the class and is responsible for communicating information from the classroom teacher and the Advisory Council to the parents.

Dad's Night (3, 4, and 5 year old classes)

Dad's Night is held in October for the 4 and 5 year old classes and in February for the 3 year old classes. Fathers are invited to the classroom for a special evening of activities with their children. If Dad is unable to attend, a relative or friend is welcome to attend. Grandfathers are also extended an invitation to this event.

Mother's Day Tea (3, 4, and 5 year old classes)

During the week before Mother's Day in May, mothers are invited to a class tea featuring refreshments and entertainment prepared by the children. If Mom is unable to attend, a relative or friend is welcome to attend. Grandmothers are also extended an invitation to attend this special tea. Please make arrangements for childcare for younger siblings.

Fundraisers

Our budget depends entirely on income from tuition and fees. Fundraising efforts permit the purchase of additional equipment and supplies which enrich our program. We appreciate and welcome your participation in these efforts.

The annual Fall Family Festival, sponsored by the ECDC Advisory Council, takes place in October and is our largest fundraiser. The Advisory Council also sponsors a spring fundraiser and additional fundraisers during the school year, as well.

Sibling Involvement

Siblings are encouraged to attend and participate in scheduled “family” events. When volunteering in the classroom for activities or parties, please make arrangements for sibling care. This will allow you the opportunity to focus on the activity or party you are helping with and to have quality time with your child and his classmates.

Program Evaluation

Each fall and spring a program evaluation survey is sent to each family. Parent input and involvement are very important to St. Peter's ECDC, and we encourage each family to participate in the survey. Results of the surveys are published in the “Watch Us Grow” Newsletter.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

SNACK

Parents will provide a nutritious mid-morning snack for their child each day. All children will be served water with their snack. Please label your child’s snack and send it in a container or wrapper that is easy for your child or the teacher to open.

LUNCH

Children should bring a wholesome, nutritious lunch and drink packed in containers that will keep food hot or cold as needed for the noon meal. Lunches should include a balance of foods chosen from the Basic 4 food groups: Dairy, Meat/Meat Alternative, Fruits/Vegetables and Grains. Drinks should be 100% fruit juice, white milk or water with no added sugars. Well balanced meals provide the food children need to grow, think, fight infection, and fuel their bodies.

All foods should be finger foods if possible and ready to eat. Please send eating utensils, spill proof cups, etc. if needed. Fruit should be peeled and cut up. Grapes should be cut in half lengthwise and carrots and hot dogs cut in lengthwise strips to prevent choking. Sandwiches should be cut in small pieces. Toddler food should be cut into pieces no larger than ½ inch squares. Baby foods, breast milk, milk, and juice should be in plastic containers or a thermos. Glass containers and pull-tab cans are not allowed. To reduce the risk of choking, please do not send pretzels, nuts, popcorn or round hard candies.

Although we encourage all children to bring a wholesome, nutritious snack and lunch, St. Peter’s ECDC is not responsible for the nutritional value of food which is brought from home.

ALLERGY FREE CLASSROOMS

Because some children have extreme food allergies, classrooms may be designated an allergy free classroom and certain foods such as peanuts, tree nuts, shellfish, or other food items will not be allowed for snack or lunch. If your child’s classroom is allergy free, the teacher will inform you of this at Parent Orientation. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in these cases.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

ILLNESS POLICY

Your child's health is a matter of major importance to us. Precautions are taken to safeguard the health of all children at ECDC. This includes refusing to admit sick children into the class and isolating children who become ill while at school. Should your child become ill during school hours, you will be notified to take your child home. If neither parent can be reached, persons listed on the *Emergency Information Card* will be called. It is important that all telephone numbers and information be kept current.

Please notify the school by 9:30 AM if your child is to be absent and the reason for the absence. If your child has a communicable disease, (chicken pox, strep throat, etc.), please let the school know so that other parents may be notified. Texas Minimum Standards require that a record be kept of all absences.

PLEASE KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME IF YOUR CHILD HAS:

- Fever of 100.0 or has had fever during the previous 24 hours (child must be fever free without fever-reducing medication for 24 hours before returning)
- Diarrhea or vomiting or has had these symptoms during the previous 24 hours (child must be symptom free without the use of preventative medication for 24 hours before returning to school)
- Been on an antibiotic less than 24 hours
- A cold less than four days old
- A heavy nasal discharge, to the extent that it would interfere with class activities
- A constant cough
- Symptoms typical of a communicable disease (child must have a health care professional's statement that the child is no longer contagious before returning)
- Or your child is fussy, cranky, and generally not himself.

MEDICATIONS

St. Peter's ECDC cannot administer **over the counter medications** other than Benadryl. Benadryl may be given if the parent or guardian has given written permission on the *Emergency Information* form.

ECDC will administer **emergency prescription medications**, such as those for allergic reactions or asthma, and **long-term prescription medications** upon parental request and with written authorization. All medications are stored in a locked cabinet in the ECDC office and may be administered by the Director, Assistant Director or the Registrar. All prescription medication must be in its original container and labeled with the child's name, physician's name, dosage, and frequency of administration. Medication can only be administered in amounts according to the label directions. Parents must complete a *Medical Authorization Form* and *Action Plan*, which is kept on file in the ECDC office.

ALLERGIES

If your child has an allergy, please note the allergy on all forms. If your child requires medication for the allergy, a *Medical Authorization Form* and *Action Plan* must be completed and kept on file in the ECDC office with the medication.

SCREENINGS

Hearing and Vision Screening

All children in the 4 and 5 year old classes are required by the State of Texas to have an approved hearing and vision screening performed by a certified evaluator or a private physician each school year. Screening must be completed prior to January 1. Any exceptions should be taken up with the ECDC Registrar. Screening is optional for children in the 3 year old classes. For your convenience, a certified evaluator will be scheduled to come to the ECDC in the fall. You may elect to have your child tested at this time for a nominal fee. Dates, costs and other information will be sent home several weeks prior to the screening dates.

Speech and Language

In addition to hearing and vision screening, a certified and licensed speech-language pathologist will be available during the fall semester to administer speech and language screening for children 3 years of age and older. Information concerning dates and costs will be sent home several weeks prior to the screening dates. Early identification of speech, language, vision or hearing problems is critical to your child's development

INCIDENT REPORT for minor injuries

Should your child experience a minor injury at school, the teacher will treat the injury and fill out an *Incident Report* which must be signed by the parent and a copy will be sent home with your child.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

In case of a more severe injury, appropriate first aid measures will be immediately taken to care for the child, and the parents or those persons listed on the *Emergency Information Form* will be called immediately. Major medical problems will be handled by calling 911. If the child must be taken to the emergency room by ambulance, the Director and the child's teacher will accompany the child and will stay with the child until parents arrive and assume responsibility. An *Incident Report* will be completed.

SUNSCREEN AND INSECT REPELLENT

Parents must apply sunscreen or insect repellent on their child before the child comes to school for the day or parents may apply it at the time of drop off in the morning. Teachers may not apply either sunscreen or insect repellent on your child.

PESTICIDE APPLICATION

St. Peter's ECDC periodically applies pesticides indoors and outdoors. Information on the times and types of application is available upon request.

EMERGENCY CODE NUMBERS- Release of Children

Each child will be assigned an emergency code number. Should your child's pick up plans change during the day and the person picking up your child is not listed on your *Authorization to Pick Up* form, you must call the ECDC office and give us your emergency code number for telephone verification of your identity before we can release your child to that person. Please keep the code number confidential, and do not give it to the person picking up your child. **Please store this number with your driver's license for convenience.**

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

St. Peter's ECDC has an Emergency Preparedness Plan in place in the event of an emergency. Evacuation plans are posted in each classroom. Fire drills are practiced monthly at ECDC, and severe weather and security threat drills are practiced every three months. A record of these drills is available for your review on the bulletin board outside of the ECDC office.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION LOCATION

In the event of a national or local disaster or an emergency other than fire, all children will be kept on the school premises and will remain here until the Director feels they can be safely released to an authorized person. If there should be an emergency or disaster that would make it necessary for us to leave our campus, we will evacuate to Kingsland Baptist Church, 20555 Kingsland Blvd., Katy, TX, 77450. Parents will be notified either by email or by phone.

NOTIFICATION OF PARENTS

Contact information for all children, including emergency contacts, is kept on file in the ECDC office. In addition, each teacher has a copy of this information with them at all times. In the event of any emergency, we will use this information to notify you either by email or phone.

FACEBOOK POLICY

It is the policy of St. Peter's ECDC that our teachers do not "friend" the parents in their classroom on Facebook. At the end of the school year, teachers may accept "friend" requests from parents if they so choose. For privacy reasons, please refrain from posting pictures of your child's classmates on your Facebook page without specific permission from the child's parents.

GANG FREE ZONE

As a licensed child care center, St. Peter's ECDC is designated as a "gang free zone" as required by Texas State law. Prohibited gang related activity in a gang free zone is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of a child care center. For more information, please see the bulletin board outside of the ECDC Office.

PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Texas law requires caregivers and any person who believes that a child is being abused, neglected, or exploited to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the DFPS. A caregiver must make the report within 48 hours of the time the caregiver suspects a child has been or may be abused or neglected.

All ECDC staff members are required to complete one hour of annual training which addresses preventing and responding to abuse and neglect of children.

When children talk about being abused or neglected, take them seriously!

What is abuse?

Abuse is physical, mental, emotional, or sexual injury to a child or failure to prevent such injury to a child.

What are general signs of abuse?

Children who are abused might show physical signs or sudden changes in their behavior or school performance. These signs do not prove that a child is being abused, but they could be a signal that the child or the family needs help.

Children might seem:

- Nervous around adults or afraid of certain adults.
- Reluctant to go home (e.g., coming to school early or staying late).
- Very passive and withdrawn or aggressive and disruptive.
- Tired a lot or they might complain of nightmares or not sleeping well.
- Fearful and anxious.

Signs of Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained burns, bruised, black eyes, or other injuries.
- Apparent fear of a parent or caretaker.
- Faded bruises or healing injuries after missing school.

Signs of Mental or Emotional Abuse:

- Acting overly mature or immature for the child's age.
- Extreme changes in behavior.
- Delays in physical or emotional development.
- Lack of emotional attachment to the parent.
- Attempted suicide.

Signs of Sexual Abuse:

- Difficulty walking or sitting, or other indications of injury in the genital area.
- Sexual knowledge or behavior beyond what is normal for the child's age.
- Running away from home.

What is neglect?

Neglect includes (1) failure to provide a child with food, clothing, shelter and/or medical care; and/or (2) leaving a child in a situation where the child is at risk of harm.

What are signs of neglect?

- Missing school frequently.
- Begging for food, stealing food, or stealing money for food.
- Lacking needed medical or dental care.
- Being frequently dirty.
- Saying there is no one at home to take care of them.

What are risk factors for victimization?

- Children younger than 4 years of age.
- Special needs of a child that may increase caregiver burden (e.g., disabilities, mental retardation, mental health issues, and chronic physical illnesses).

If you suspect abuse or neglect

You may want to talk with the child to see if there is a simple explanation. Two or more signs may indicate potential abuse. Consider signs in context of other behavior.

How to report abuse or neglect

- By Phone: Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-252-5400, available 24 hours a day
- Online: www.txabusehotline.org

When reporting suspected cases of abuse or neglect, provide the following information:

- Name of child
- Age of child
- Child's present location
- Parents' names and names of siblings in the home
- Type and extent of abuse
- Name of individual making the report
- Individual's title

Why phone in a report to the Hotline rather than use the website?

Reports made through the website take up to 24 hours to process. Call the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 if:

- You believe your situation requires action in less than 24 hours.
- You prefer to remain anonymous.
- You have insufficient data to complete the required information on the report.
- You do not want an e-mail to confirm your report.

What if the report is an emergency?

An emergency is a situation where a child faces an immediate risk of abuse or neglect that could result in death or serious harm. Call 911 or the local law enforcement agency.

Parent/Staff information

Parents and staff may find additional information on where to find help and parenting tips at www.helpandhope.org. Parenting classes, tips, and support can also be found at www.learntoparent.org. Parents of a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect may find support and information at www.thethreadalliance.org/.

EXTRAS

REFERRALS AND RESOURCES

The staff of St. Peter's ECDC takes great pride in assessing children as they make their journey along the course of development. If for any reason it is determined that your child may benefit from additional services or resources, your child's teacher will contact you and assist with resources or referrals. The following services and resources are available:

- ECI Project Tyke is a year round Early Childhood Intervention program. This program services children under the age of three with developmental delays.
- PPCD-Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities services children between the ages of three and five years of age through the school district.
- ECDC has an Educational Consultant on staff that is available to offer assistance in identifying children who may benefit from additional services and to provide support to the child, family and the teaching staff through recommendations, resources and referrals.

For additional information regarding referrals, resources or services provided by our Educational Consultant, please contact the Director.

**Thank you for choosing St. Peter's ECDC.
May your children's days here be joyful and enriching!**

Going to School

Dear Lord Jesus take my hand,
I'm going to a foreign land.
One not ruled by king or preacher,
But someone with the name of teacher.

My mommy says that I'll have fun:
I'll sing and skip and play and run.
But I am scared 'cause I don't know
Just what to do or where to go.

So please Lord Jesus hug me tight
And keep me in your loving sight.
For with you by my side today,
I know that I will be okay.

Margaret Kennedy

VALUE OF CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

As a child plays, many experiences are happening to enable that child to grow and mature. These “play” activities provide the much-needed opportunities for children to develop at their own pace, all the while discovering that they are truly a child of God.

Through BLOCKS a child:

- has the opportunity to use large muscles (lifting, carrying, and stacking)
- chooses sizes and shapes
- is actively involved in developing early math skills comparing sizes and shapes
- actively uses thought processes
- may enjoy conversation with another child or teacher
- learns to make decisions
- experiments in working with others
- begins to recognize the rights of others
- learns to put materials away

Through HOME LIVING/HOUSEKEEPING materials a child:

- plays out home experiences
- develops muscular coordination (rocking, dressing dolls, “cooking”, setting table)
- has opportunity to play alone
- has opportunity to “help” (cook, set table, serve food, wash and dry dishes, feed and rock the baby, dress up)
- socializes with other classmates
- may begin to learn to cooperate with others
- reveals thought and attitudes through conversations
- may have worship opportunities (thanks at mealtime and other times)

Through PUZZLES AND MANIPULATIVES a child:

- enjoys a sense of achievement and success
- learns to think and reason
- learns to solve problems
- learns to work independently
- has opportunity to make choices
- may enjoy conversation
- develops fine motor skills

Through CREATIVE ART ACTIVITIES such as paint, playdough, finger painting, crayons, markers and various other art activities a child:

- enjoys sensory experiences (seeing, feeling, smelling, sometimes tasting)
- has the opportunity to think and plan for himself
- has an outlet for emotional tensions and frustration
- enjoys manipulation (squeezing, pounding, rolling, pushing, pulling)
- enjoys the success of having made her own creation
- enjoys colors and experimenting with them
- discovers many interesting ways to use materials
- has opportunities for social experiences
- develops fine motor skills

Through GROSS MOTOR SKILLS ACTIVITIES a child:

- has opportunities to develop large muscles and coordination
- has the opportunity to be a member of a team
- learns the enjoyment of physical activity

Through PICTURES a child:

- enjoys looking at them and handling them
- learns to interpret them
- may enjoy conversation about the pictures
- develops imagination
- may understand stories more clearly
- may play out experiences similar to those in the pictures
- enjoys recognition of familiar objects

Through MUSIC a child:

- may become sensitive to the beauty and harmony of music
- may create own music
- has opportunities for feelings of wonder and worship
- feels good inside-when music expresses a child's mood
- enjoys relaxation and rhythmic responses
- enjoys listening to, singing and playing music
- develops coordination through musical instruments
- has opportunities for emotional outlets
- develops social relationships through singing and enjoying music with others

Through BOOKS AND STORYTELLING a child:

- may enjoy handling and looking at books
- may get new ideas and develop interests in various subjects
- learns to listen to stories
- may add to previous experiences
- increases attention span
- increases vocabulary
- develops an appreciation for the printed word
- enjoys the social experiences with an adult when reading together
- learns to take responsibility for the care of books

Through OUTDOOR PLAY TIME a child:

- enjoys the outdoors
- has the opportunity to use muscles through running, climbing, jumping
- has the opportunity to play alone
- has the opportunity to play with others
- develops a sense of wonder of God's creation
- has the opportunity to create and manipulate when using sand, dirt and water, etc.

Through NATURE/DISCOVERY MATERIALS a child:

- learns to appreciate the beauty of God's wonderful creation
- begins to associate God with experiences in nature
- enjoys sensory experiences (seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting)
- has opportunities for worship
- becomes aware of his surroundings
- learns to care for plants, animals and the environment
- may develop tenderness and love through association with classroom pets
- learns to respond more easily to new situations