



Little Seedlings Christian Preschool and Kindergarten

Parent Handbook

A ministry of
First Saints Community Church
St. Paul's Campus

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LICENSE

Little Seedlings Christian Preschool and Kindergarten is licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education, Child Care Division #18-107070.

This is the day, (Echo)
That the Lord has made. (Echo)
Let us rejoice, (Echo)
And be glad in it. (Echo)

This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the day, (Echo)
That the Lord has made.

PHILOSOPHY

Welcome to Little Seedlings Christian Preschool and Kindergarten!

It is our goal to provide your child with a complete developmental experience within an environment of Christian love and care.

While attending Little Seedlings, your child will be encouraged to grow...

Spiritually, through bible stories with real-life application and through building his/her relationship with God;

Intellectually through developmentally appropriate lessons teaching numbers, letters, colors, shapes, calendar, name recognition and more;

Physically by providing opportunities to develop small motor skills through the use of manipulatives and tools, large motor skills through organized games and physical activity.

Socially by growing interaction skills with other children, teaching politeness and respect of others; and

Emotionally by encouraging independent thought and building each child's self-confidence.

We recognize and respect that each child grows at his/her own pace. Your child will be encouraged to participate to the best of his/her ability and will receive positive reinforcement for his/her efforts.

All staff members have met the necessary requirements for licensing from the Office of Child Care. The staff is comprised of a director, teachers for each preschool class (8:1 student to teacher ratio), and the Kindergarten has a teacher (and an aide when necessitated by enrollment numbers). The staff is governed by our First Saints Community Church Board of Directors which consists of seven members, the lead minister, the Director of Children's Ministry, Mother's Day Out Director, Preschool/Kindergarten Director, and one parent representative each from Little Seedlings Christian Preschool and Kindergarten and the Mother's Day Out Program. The Board is scheduled to meet semi-annually. Information about becoming a member of the Board of Directors is available upon request.

GOALS

- To help children learn about God and His importance in their lives
- To help each child realize that he/she is special and loved
- To familiarize each child with Bible stories from Old and New Testaments
- To help children discover who they are and what the world is about
- To stimulate communication between children and each other, with adults and with God
- To teach children Christian values
- To help children develop new skills and build the foundation for the continuing of their education
- To help children build positive relationships with adults and other children
- To show children that church is a good place to be
- To provide theme-related activities that reinforce learning
- To provide learning activities in a non-competitive setting
- To provide teach and encourage students in Kindergarten to become ready for First Grade.

CURRICULUM

At Little Seedlings Christian Preschool and Kindergarten, children become a part of an exciting, Christ-centered preschool and kindergarten curriculum. We are excited to be offering “The InvestiGator Club”, a Maryland State Department of Education approved curriculum.

The InvestiGator Club Early Childhood with STEAM is a comprehensive, fully integrated learning system. While meeting all of the standards is essential, we want the early learning years to be inspiring. The curriculum encourages children to use their innate curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. As children progress through this engaging, inquiry-based, hands-on curriculum, they build the skills and approaches to learning that will help them succeed in school. The InvestiGator Club focuses on child-centered learning. Investigation themes are built around a specific life, earth, or physical science topic while integrating instruction across all content areas. These child-centered investigations empower children and excite them in their quest for knowledge. By offering developmentally appropriate centers, children will “learn through play” in a child-friendly environment. Our Kindergarten follows the Maryland Common Core State Curriculum. The Kindergarten teacher works individually with each student in advancing their literacy, math, and writing skills.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

At this time, we are limiting visits due to COVID guidelines. We look forward to returning to an open door policy in our classroom where parents are always welcome to participate in their child’s day. However, too many parents at one time can be overwhelming, so please schedule a time to visit in advance (when possible) with your child’s teacher. Parental involvement establishes a connection and promotes a unity between home and school.

Many opportunities are available for parents or other adult family members to be involved in the preschool and kindergarten curriculum. These may include providing snack on a special day, attending field trips, sharing skills and talents with the children, volunteering for class parties and activities, and becoming a mystery reader.

In order to make your visit/involvement a positive experience for you, your child, your child’s teacher, and classmates, we must ask that you leave any siblings at home. **Siblings are not able to attend class field trips.** We look forward to seeing siblings at our Christmas, Easter and Graduation programs.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns we ask that you please email the teacher your concerns and schedule a conference as needed rather than attempting to have these important discussions at drop off and pick up times. You may email the teachers at any time and they will respond to you within 48 hours.

During our school day, the teachers' time with the children is limited and therefore precious. They wish to spend as much classroom time as possible teaching your child. Thank you in advance for being understanding! Little Seedlings' Teachers look forward to conferencing with parents two times each year (in the Fall and in the Spring). Teachers will provide a conference sign-up sheet outside your student's classroom. We look forward to meeting with you to review your child's portfolio and discuss your child's progress in our program.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

All children have special and unique needs and we hope you will share them with us (At Enrollment Family Survey Form). If your child has an Individualized Education Program/Individual Family Service Plan, we would like to work with you to provide the best possible experience for your family. Little Seedlings routinely works with outside agencies to help our students receive the services they require (i.e., transition services through the Infants and Toddlers Program, Child Find, Project First Choice and agencies providing evaluations and therapies). If you have any questions or concerns about your student, please share them with us and we will help you research appropriate referrals or services.

SCHEDULE/POLICIES

Hours of Operation –

Tree House Class meets Monday thru Friday from 9:00am –12 noon.

Farm Room Class meets Monday thru Friday from 9:00am – 12 noon.

Kindergarten meets Monday thru Friday, 9am – 1pm.

Extended Day meets Monday thru Friday from noon – 1pm.

Arrival and Dismissal – Please walk your child to the door and check them in with Little Seedlings staff. This is a good time to inform us if there is any change in pick-up up time/person or other info that we may need to know about your child for the day.

Class is scheduled to begin promptly. We look forward to welcoming students into school at 8:55am. We can not have children dropped off before this time. The teachers need time to prepare for the day's activities in order to give your child the greatest benefit while in their care. ***Prompt arrival is important. Many activities that determine your child's day are explained to the children at the beginning of class. It is best for both you and your child if you say a quick good-bye at the door. (Less tears!)***

We also ask that you be prompt in picking up your child. Parents will be charged late fees according to the following schedule:

6-10 minutes late \$ 5.00

11-15 minutes late \$10.00

16-20 minutes late \$15.00

There will be a \$15 charge per 5 minute increments past 16 minutes late.

Late Fees are cumulative. If you should arrive 17 minutes late to pick up your child, the charge would be \$5 (6-10 minutes) + \$10 (11-15 minutes) + \$15 (16-20 minutes late). Total charge = \$30.

If parents are habitually late at pick-up time, we reserve the right to request that your child be withdrawn from the program. We do not want to have to enforce rules such as these. Please be courteous and on time. Please also remember that your child depends on you to be there at pick-up time and may feel insecure and anxious if you are late. **Please use the REMIND App to text the Director if you are running late so that we may reassure your child and relieve them of any fears.**

CHANGES IN CHILD PICK-UP

No child will be released to an unauthorized person. We must know IN WRITING (or in an emergency, a text, communication thru the REMIND App) from the parent or legal guardian, any changes to your list of persons authorized to pick up your child. This is the ONLY way to ensure the Director receives your change in pick up information.

HOLIDAYS AND CLOSINGS

Little Seedlings will be open after Labor Day and end before Memorial Day. For inclement weather or emergency closings; *if the public schools are closed, Little Seedlings will be closed. If public schools are operating on a delayed schedule, Little Seedlings will open at 10:30am. If public schools announce an early dismissal, Little Seedlings will not hold extended day. Little Seedlings will contact you if a change occurs that will affect your student's dismissal time.* Please be sure to sign up with the REMIND System for any updates on these conditions.

PLAYGROUND

The Playground is in use by Little Seedlings and MDO Programs Monday – Friday from 9am -1:15pm (you are welcome to use our playground before the school day begins at 9am and after 1:15pm when all classes have dismissed). If you decide to have your child play before 9am and after 1:15pm, please have them follow the posted playground rules. Consistency in following the rules will help students remember to make good choices each time they are on the playground.

SCREEN TIME POLICY

Screen time is used sparingly at Little Seedlings, no more than 30 minutes per week. Our classrooms have access to computers and iPads that are used for educational purposes only. Students may have the opportunity to use technology in the classroom during center rotations. iPads/laptop computers may be used during individual and small group instruction. Occasionally, teachers will present developmentally appropriate academic video clips to enhance the learning experience.

ENROLLMENT

Children must be 3, 4, or 5 years of age (depending on the class) by September 1st to enroll unless special arrangements are made by the Director and the Board of Directors.

All children must be toilet-trained prior to admittance into any program unless a disability prevents toilet-training.

Little Seedlings requires the following forms: Application for Enrollment (completed at registration – does your child have an IEP/IFSP? Would you be willing to share that information with us?), Tuition Agreement, Child Pick-Up Form (provides us with the names of all persons who have permission to

pick your child up from preschool – government issued ID will be required), At Enrollment Family Survey Form, Allergy form, Photo Release and Parent Involvement Opportunities.

The Office of Child Care requires that the following forms be completed and submitted before a child can be admitted to class:

- 1. HEALTH INVENTORY FORM (completed by Physician) includes immunization record and lead screening**
- 2. EMERGENCY INFORMATION CARD**

To register your child, Little Seedlings requires a registration fee at the time of official registration and the first tuition payment. Our classes are filled on a first-come, first-served basis, in accordance with licensing regulations. ***Registration Fee and first tuition payment are Non-Refundable except in the case of Military Orders.***

Non-Discrimination Policy -Little Seedlings is open to **all** children regardless of race, color, sex, religion, special needs or national origin. All children will receive the full benefits of our program and will be treated with dignity and respect.

Religion –Children from all religious backgrounds are welcome and each belief is respected. The daily lessons reflect and teach the views of the Christian faith. Bible stories, verses, songs, dramatic activities and games will be used during the school year.

WHAT NOT TO BRING TO SCHOOL

We have many toys to choose from and share here at school, so please refrain from bringing toys in from home. It is much easier for a student to learn to share a toy from school rather than a favorite toy brought from home. **Jewelry, candy or gum, personal money, sharp or breakable objects, whistles, keys, guns, weapons, smart watches and all forms of technology should also remain at home. We cannot be responsible for lost or broken items brought from home.** There may be designated days for *show and tell* with teacher-designated topic suggestions. Each class will inform you as to when your student's show and tell day will be. ***Please do not send your child to school wearing perfume, cologne, essential oils or other types of scents to assist us in preventing breathing related emergencies at school.***

SNACKS

Parents will be providing a snack (one or two items) and drink for their child each day. We will be encouraging good and healthy eating habits and suggest you send in non-perishable, nutritious, finger foods. Please write your child's name on their lunch box or bag and thermos. (Please refrain from using the juice 'bags' and fruit cups, packed with liquid, as they are difficult for children to manage.)

Please do not send a full lunch with your preschool child. There is not enough time for your child to have a complete lunch before recess. One or two healthy items and a drink is an appropriate snack for the time allotted in our schedule.

Your student's teacher will inform you if any students in the class have food allergies. Please be understanding and respectful of the needs of these students.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are special and we can celebrate birthdays during our regular snack time. Make arrangements in advance with the teacher to schedule a birthday celebration. *(Please, no cupcakes – cookies and donut holes are great!)*

TUITION

Tuition is due by the 1st of each month for the subsequent month. All checks should be made out to: **Little Seedlings Christian Preschool and Kindergarten or LSCPK**. The checks may be placed in your child's folder or given to the Director at arrival and dismissal times.

A \$35 fee will be charged, in addition to any fees required from the bank, for any returned check. If a problem should arise and prompt payment cannot be made, you should contact the director immediately. A late fee of \$10 will be charged for tuition payments not paid by the 5th of the month and \$10 per day after the 5th unless prior arrangements have been made with the Director.

EMERGENCY, IMPORTANT EVENTS & WEATHR RELATED COMMUNICATIONS

Little Seedlings uses the REMIND App to keep parents informed of emergencies, important events and weather-related updates. Parents will be given instructions and their student's class code at open house to assist in signing up in Remind.

DRESS CODE

Please dress your child in comfortable, durable and washable clothing that your child can manage independently (belts, buttons, laced boots, and laced shoes are difficult to manage on their own). *We love to see play clothes at school!* Open-toed shoes or sandals are not recommended because the mulch surface of the playground gets caught in the shoe and makes walking uncomfortable. The students will be participating in arts/crafts and science as well as playing outdoors daily, weather permitting. Remember, learning in preschool and Kindergarten is very hands on and often very messy. ***Please label any removable clothing or loose items.*** This will help us ensure each child goes home with their clothes.

ILLNESS

The Maryland State Department of Education requires that all children brought to a school must be clean and in good health, therefore, we cannot accept any child who exhibits signs of illness (such as a fever of 100°F or higher, respiratory/breathing difficulties, vomiting, diarrhea, rash [other than a heat rash], sore throat) or any communicable disease (i.e. impetigo, strep, chicken pox, pink eye, head lice, etc.). We ask that you report any communicable disease to the school, as we are required to report this to the Health Department.

Children who exhibit symptoms of illness after they are dropped off will be removed from their class and isolated with adult supervision until a parent can pick them up. Parents are expected to immediately pick up a sick child once called so that germs will not be spread. We are concerned with the health of your child as well as the health of our other children. **NOTE:** Re-admittance to the school will be when the child is either free from all symptoms, has been on prescription medication for no less than 24 hours or with a doctor's written permission to return stating that the child is no longer contagious.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR PRACTICES

It is our goal to guide children so that they understand their boundaries and the appropriate ways to handle problems they may encounter. In helping children develop this inner discipline, students will be provided with choices. Teachers will model positive behavior and set reasonable limits with logical consequences.

- STEP 1 The Teacher will specify or model acceptable and positive behavior.
- STEP 2 The child will be redirected towards another activity when displaying inappropriate behavior(s).
- STEP 3 The child will be removed from the situation or conflict and will be given a brief quiet time.
- STEP 4 The Teacher will discuss the appropriate and acceptable behavior with the child.
- STEP 5 If the child is unable to rejoin appropriately with the group or activity, the child will be given additional time to gain control with the Director.
- STEP 6 The Teacher or Director will contact the parents/guardians to discuss a more detailed behavior management plan and/or referrals to appropriate agencies for support.
- STEP 7 If the above actions merit no change in behavior the Director will discuss with the parents removal of the child from the program.

EMERGENCIES

The health and safety of your child is of utmost concern to the school staff. In the event of an accident, the staff will administer first aid and, if warranted, call you. In the case of a serious accident, the rescue squad will take your child to the nearest hospital. All staff members are First Aid/CPR certified. You will be informed of bumps, small scratches and small accidents or incidents of which you should be aware. **PLEASE KEEP EMERGENCY CARDS CURRENT AT ALL TIMES.**

Please note: Each student has a change of clothes in their tote bag or book bag, which you provided at the start of school. We have water and food in a storage bin in Brubacher Hall along with the food in Brubacher Hall from the Soup Kitchen (as a back-up in an emergency). We have an accordion divider to section off a small area as a bathroom with toilet paper, a potty seat, and bucket to use if necessary. We have wet wipes and anti-bacterial hand gel to use for hands if the water from the sink is contaminated. We have cups for drinking purposes. We also have a supply of crank operated flashlights and radio.

SAFETY AND SECURITY THREAT FROM WITHIN THE BUILDING

In the event of an emergency (which includes a safety and security threat from within the building), staff will:

- a. Assessment of the emergency situation will be made by the Director and staff.
- b. Account for all students.
- c. Contact will be made with emergency personnel (Fire Department, Sheriff's Office, Rescue personnel). Students will not be dismissed until the threat has been cleared.
- d. Shut off all lights.
- e. Close blinds at the windows and make sure all doors to the outside are closed and locked. Fire doors at each end of our hall will be shut. All classroom doors will be locked.
- f. Keep students away from doors and windows.
- g. Contact all parents thru the REMIND App. If staff cannot contact the parent, call the next number on the emergency card in sequence until a live person is reached (not an answering machine). No messages will be left on answering machines.
- h. When parents arrive, they must enter with their keyless entry card through the door by the playground. Parents will come directly to their student's classroom. At which time, a staff member will come to the classroom door (the door with a window) but not open it. Staff members will require picture identification. Staff will open the door and allow the parent to enter the classroom. The parent will pick up their student and their student's belongings. The teacher will then escort the student and parent out of the door, closing the classroom door behind her, to the hallway.
- i. Staff will escort the parent and student to the keyless entry door and allowed to leave the building. Staff will promptly make sure the door is secure and return to the classroom.
- j. Repeating this scenario for each student until all students are safely in the arms of their parents/guardians.

BIOLOGICAL OR CHEMICAL SITUATION

In the event there is a biological or chemical situation, the following scenario will occur:

- a. Account for all students.
- b. Shut off all lights and turn off all air movement (air conditioning, heating, and vents) to the classroom/Brubacher Hall.
- c. Close blinds at the windows and make sure all doors to the outside are closed and locked. Fire doors at the end of the hall by the Sanctuary and between halls will be closed and locked, as will all doors to the outside.
- d. Keep students away from doors and windows.
- e. Escort the students to Brubacher Hall.
- f. Place plastic over the windows and doors using duct tape to secure. When moving students, bring all portable bookshelves to the Hall.

- g. Contact all parents thru the REMIND App. If the teacher cannot contact the parent, the teacher will contact the next number on the emergency card in sequence until she reaches a live person (not an answering machine). No messages will be left on answering machines.
- h. All information regarding the school will be released to the local media, immediately and would include information regarding student pickup status and locations. This information will also be noted on our website if possible.
- i. Contact will be made with emergency personnel (Fire Department, Sheriff's Office, Rescue personnel).
- j. Assessment of the situation/incident will be made by the Director and the Teachers following the guidelines by the Emergency Management Department of St. Mary's County. When parents arrive; they must go to the doors by Brubacher Hall. If it is deemed safe for the children to leave the Hall, one of the teachers will answer the door, but not open it. Staff will require picture identification. Staff will open the door and allow the parent to enter the building. Staff will then lock the outer door and escort the parent to the doors outside the Hall. Staff will then enter the Hall, retrieve all personal belongings of the student whose parent is waiting. Staff will then escort the student out of the door, closing the Hall door behind her, to the reception area and the awaiting parent.
- k. The parent and student will then be escorted to the doors and allowed to leave the building. The teacher will promptly ensure that the outer doors are locked and return to Brubacher Hall.
- l. Repeating this scenario for each student until all students are safely in the care of their parents/guardians.

TORNADO WARNING SITUATION

In the event there is a Tornado Warning (public is instructed to take shelter immediately), the following scenario will occur. Little Seedlings staff would:

- a. Account for all students.
- b. Escort all students to their designated Tornado shelter area (Farm Room will shelter in the Bathrooms nearest the classroom) (Tree House Room will shelter in the main church hallway away from all window and doors).
- c. Staff and students will remain in their designated shelter area until the Tornado Warning has expired.

*****TORNADO DRILL WILL BE COMPLETED IN THE FALL AND SPRING OF EACH SCHOOL YEAR. Drills will be recorded on the same form as the Fire Drills.*****

EARTHQUAKE SITUATION

In the event of an earthquake, the following scenario will occur. Little Seedlings staff would:

- a. Account for all students while assisting students to be getting in the safest location possible.
- b. Staff will help students shelter under the tables in their classrooms.
- c. Once staff members feel it is safe, students will be evacuated from the building.

- d. Parents will be contacted by telephone or cell phone as per the emergency cards on file. If Staff cannot contact the parent, staff will contact the next number on the emergency card in sequence until she reaches a live person (not an answering machine). No messages will be left on answering machines.

POWER FAILURE

Staff members and children should proceed with activities as usual, or may go to the playground until power resumes.

- If power cannot be restored within a reasonable amount of time, the center will close and parents contacted.
- Lead Teachers and Director will contact parents to inform them of the closing and of the need to immediately pick up their child.
- Activities will resume as possible until parents arrive.

EVACUATION - MOVING STUDENTS FROM THE SCHOOL

In the event that it is necessary to move the students from the school (damage to building, bomb threat, etc), Little Seedlings will evacuate to St. Mary's Hospital. From there Staff will contact all parents by the REMIND System and will follow up with a phone call as necessary until Little Seedlings staff have made contact with all parents.

SHELTER IN PLACE

Little Seedlings classes will shelter in place by finding a safe location indoors and staying there until you are given an "all clear" or told to evacuate. We may be asked to shelter in place because of a tornado; chemical, radiological, or other hazard; or an active shooter in the vicinity of the school. If Little Seedlings is required to shelter in place, parents will be notified thru the REMIND System.

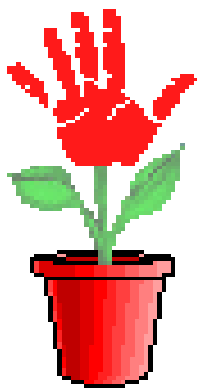
LOCKDOWN

- A lockdown situation will be in effect in an event which is deemed unsafe for people to leave or enter the building.
- Fire Doors will be closed and students will remain in their classroom with the doors locked, barriers in place over the door windows.
- Window blinds will be closed in the classroom.
- If it becomes necessary to avoid windows, students will be moved to the hallway area between the fire doors.
- Signs will be posted at Little Seedlings/First Saints Community Church that the building is in lockdown.
- Parents will be contacted by the Remind System, followed up with a phone call as necessary until Little Seedlings staff have made contact with all parents.

MISSING OR ABDUCTED CHILD

In the event of a *missing child*, the Lead Teacher will search for the child in the immediate area, while another staff member calls the Director to help with the search.

- If the child cannot be located in a reasonable amount of time, the Director will notify the **St. Mary's County Sheriff's Department – 301-475-8008** and the child's parents.
- In the event of an abducted child, the Lead Teacher must immediately contact the Director, the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Department, and the child's parents.



The staff of Little Seedlings Christian Preschool and Kindergarten wishes to thank you for letting us be a part of your child's educational experience. You are your child's first and most important teacher. We are grateful to you for choosing us to guide your child through this early stage of their lifelong journey.