

A Methodist School of Excellence

2023-2024 PARENT HANDBOOK



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Dear Parents,

On behalf of the Preschool staff, I would like to welcome you to our school family. We are pleased that you have chosen to entrust your child's early learning experience to us. We feel that our program is unique and offers many opportunities for each child as they grow and develop during these important preschool years. It is our hope that as parents you will volunteer in our program as much as your time and interest allow.

This handbook has information about our school and explains our policies and procedures. You will also find a calendar for the school year on the last page of the handbook. A class directory will be given to you in a separate document. Please read the handbook thoroughly and refer to it first to answer questions that you may have during this year. Your child's teacher will provide you with a handbook acknowledgement form. We ask that you sign and return that form when you have finished reading this handbook.

Thank you for selecting us to be part of your child's life. We look forward to an exciting year and are eager to make each day a happy one for your child.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tasha Moore".

Tasha Moore, M.Ed.
Director of Preschool

1 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

School Philosophy

Our Preschool is an educational outreach program of Decatur First United Methodist Church (DFUMC) to the children and parents of the church and the surrounding community. We welcome children of all races, faiths, and nationalities.

Our goal is to help each child develop a wholesome self-concept, an eagerness for learning, an appropriate value system for social growth, and the ability to think and work independently in a loving, Christian setting. Children learn through hands-on activities in which they are allowed to mature and develop at their own pace. The curriculum is based on developmentally appropriate, success-oriented learning experiences. We focus on all areas of a child's development: cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual. We believe that we are partners with parents working toward a shared goal of fulfilling each child's potential. Our purpose is to create an atmosphere in which children will not only experience the joy of learning but will also look forward to coming to school each day, developing a lifelong love of learning.

Program Goals

Based on our philosophy, the broad goals of our program are to:

- Provide a positive introduction to an educational environment.
- Provide age-appropriate experiences that will foster the physical, social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and creative growth in each child.
- Instill in each child a positive self-concept and feeling of self-worth.
- Provide for each child's physical well-being.
- Provide a Christian atmosphere in the classroom to promote respect and love for one another
- Help each child develop self-discipline by learning to be responsible for his/her actions.
- Help each child develop the ability to problem solve and make decisions through active involvement in the learning process.
- Provide opportunities for social interaction with peers.
- Provide opportunities to develop large and small motor skills and coordination.
- Provide success-oriented experiences which encourage a lifelong love of learning.
- Work with parents, as partners, in reaching our goals.

Classes

Our school offers classes for children ages 1-year-old to 4 years old. Ages for each class are based on the child's age on September 1, 2022. For students who turn 2 during the year, there may be an option for the children to transition to more days per week, depending on the availability of space in those classrooms.

The 1-year-old class options are 2 days/week (M/W or T/TH). There is a maximum 1:4 teacher- student ratio in the 1-year-old classes. Per state guidelines children under the age of 2 years of age may attend a maximum of 2 days per week. For students who turn 2 during

the year, there may be an option for the children to transition to more days per week, depending on the availability of space in those classrooms.

The 2-year-old class options are 2 days/week (T/Th), 3 days/week (M/W/F), or 5 days/week (M-F). There is a maximum 1:6 teacher-student ratio in the 2-year-old classes.

The 3-year-old class options are 3 days/week (M/W/F), 4 days/week (M-TH), or 5 days/week (M-F). There is a maximum 1:7 teacher-student ratio in the 3-year-old classes.

The 4-year-old class attends 5 days/week (M-F). There is a maximum 1:8 teacher-student ratio in the 4-year-old classes.

Operating Hours

All preschool classes are from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Classes will begin Monday, August 14th through Friday, May 17th.

Registration Process

Registration for the following school year begins in mid-January with notification to current families. You may register your child as soon as you receive notice that registration is open. Registration will be open to current students, siblings of current students, and church members exclusively through January 16th.

Registration will open to the community on January 29th. To qualify for church member priority, you must be a member of DFUMC for at least 6 months, before January 1st. All registration is done online at www.deaturfirstpreschool.org and acceptances are done on a first-come, first-served basis.

Although tours of the school are available throughout the year, the registration and open house schedules for anyone not currently enrolled in our school are as follows:

January 16, 2024: In-house enrollment begins

January 29, 2024: Registration opens for community members

2 Application Fee, Deposit and Activity Fees for 2023-2024

Registration & Monthly Tuition Rates

Class/Age	Registration Fee	Monthly Tuition	Sibling Registration** (10% discount applied)
1 Yr-2 day (M/W or T/TH)	\$384	\$384	\$345.60
1 Yr. – 3 day *	\$0/\$432(new)	\$432	\$388.80
2 Yr. – 2 day (M/W or T/TH)	\$368	\$368	\$331.20
2 Yr. – 3 day (M/W/F)	\$460	\$460	\$414
2 Yr. – 5 day (M-F)	\$564	\$564	\$457.60
3 Yr. – 3 day (M/W/F)	\$484	\$484	\$435.60
3 Yr. – 4 day (M/T/W/TH)	\$528	\$528	\$475.20
3 Yr. – 5 day (M-F)	\$594	\$594	\$534.60
4 Yr. – 5 day (M-F)	\$622	\$622	\$559.44

*1 year-3 day classes are offered to children currently enrolled as they turn 2 years, starting 1/1/2024, as space is available. New students are only accepted if space is available for 3 day/1s beginning 1/1/2024.

**Siblings both enrolled for the 2023-2024 will receive a 10% discount on registration fees only

REGISTRATION FEE POLICY:

Registration fees are due in full at the time of registration to complete the enrollment process. All registration fees are non-refundable and non-transferrable to other children in the family or to another school year. The registration fee covers the administrative cost of the program, including all enrichment activities. This is a one-time fee for each school year.

All registration fees must be made on-line, we will no longer accept checks or money orders.

Sibling Discount: The sibling discount will be applied for registration fees only to all families enrolling two or more children in the preschool program at the same time. The sibling discount will be applied to all children who are enrolled at the same time. For siblings who are enrolled separately (different times of the school year), the discount will be applied to the newly enrolled student but will not be retro-active the student is not enrolled at time of registration.

FIRST MONTH'S TUITION PAYMENT POLICY:

The 1st month's tuition payment will be applied to the first month your child begins school. The school year starts in August 2022. Payments must be made on-line or via auto draft (see below).

Existing Preschool Families and Church Members: As a benefit to families enrolled in the 2023-2024 (must be enrolled as of 12/31/2022) and church members, there is a deferrable of payment of the 1st month's tuition.

These payments will be auto drafted on June 1, 2023. Notice must be provided in writing to the Preschool Director no later than April 1, 2023, if you wish to drop from the program and not be charged for the 1st month tuition.

New Preschool Families: All new registrations are required to pay the 1st month tuition with the registration fee in full to complete the enrollment process and secure your child's spot.

Registrations after August 2023: For students enrolling after August 2023, the 1st month tuition is due in full at the time of registration. If a student begins mid-month, tuition may be pro-rate to half a monthly payment but may not be pro-rated on a weekly or daily basis. Any pro-rated tuition rate will only apply to the 1st month of enrollment and must be approved in advance of registration by the Preschool Director.

MONTHLY TUITION & AUTO DRAFT POLICY:

All monthly tuition payments are due in full on the first day of each month, regardless of the number of days your child attends. Tuition payments are non-refundable and non-transferrable from student to student or from one school year to another school year.

Withdrawal from the Preschool program requires a 30-day written notice and you will be responsible for all payments due within these 30 days, which may include a full month of tuition.

Auto Draft Policy: We will continue the auto draft policy implement for the 2023-2024 school year for all monthly tuition payments. We will no longer accept checks or money orders for tuition payments. Each family must complete an auto-draft authorization form for each school year.

Monthly tuition is drafted on the 1st day of each month. Families with multiple children may request a payment plan for drafts to be made on the 15th of the prior month and the 1st of the month, so that monthly tuition payments are paid in full by the 1st of the month. If you need to set up a payment plan for auto-drafts, please contact Melanie Murphy, Director of Accounting (mmurphy@decaturfirst.org).

Rejection/Return of Auto Drafts: Should your auto-draft be rejected for any reason, a late fee of \$25 may be applied to your account and you will be asked to submit another form of payment. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis for application of a late fee.

Please notify Melanie Murphy, Director of Account (mmurphy@decaturfirst.org) if you have any change in payment method which may impact the auto-draft process, prior to the 1st of the month to ensure that payment is not rejected.

Should your payment be rejected for 2 consecutive months, your child may be withdrawn from the program.

FINANCIAL AID/SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM:

We offer a scholarship program for each school year with funds limited for that year's program. Applications are only available for families who are currently enrolled. For existing families and church members, this means that the registration must be paid in full. For new families, the registration fee and 1st month tuition must be paid in full, both of which are non-refundable.

Financial aid offered through our scholarship program is only available for partial monthly tuition payments and will require a monthly payment by families. The scholarship awards are granted by the Scholarship Committee, separate from Preschool administration

The initial application deadline for the 2023-2024 school year is March 1, 2023. The Scholarship Committee will meet in mid-March with decisions being sent by March 31, 2023, so that the 1st month tuition auto-draft may be adjusted for existing families who are on the deferral payment schedule.

Please note your interest in financial aid on the enrollment application or contact Melanie Murphy, Director of Account (mmurphy@decaturfirst.org) to get more information and an application.

Decatur First Preschool: Financial Policy Compliance Form (2023-2024)

Child 1 Name: _____ Child 1 Class: _____

Child 2 Name: _____ Child 2 Class: _____

Child 3 Name: _____ Child 3 Class: _____

Parent 1 Mother Father Legal Guardian
Name: _____ Email: _____@_____ Phone: () _____ - _____

Parent 2 Mother Father Legal Guardian
Name: _____ Email: _____@_____ Phone: () _____ - _____

Family Account Billing Address (this must match credit/debit card or bank account):

_____, GA _____

I understand that Decatur First Preschool has an auto-draft policy for monthly tuition payments, and I hereby agree to enrollment in the auto-draft policy. I understand and agree that I may be charged a late fee if the auto-payment is rejected or if I fail in any way to make the monthly tuition payment. I understand and agree that if I should fail to make the monthly payment that my child(ren) may be dis-enrolled for lack of payment.

I acknowledge receipt of the Decatur First Preschool financial policies and I hereby accept responsibility for payment of the registration fee and all monthly payments for my child(ren) enrolled in the Decatur First Preschool.

Please check the box below if you are an existing preschool or church family.

My family is an existing family and/or church members on the deferred 1st month tuition payment plan, I have completed an auto-draft authorization for that payment to be made on June 1, 2023.

_____/_____/_____
Signature

Printed Name

Decatur First Preschool: Financial Agreement for Scholarship Award (2023-2024)

Decatur First Preschool is happy to inform you that your scholarship application has been approved by the Preschool Scholarship Team. In an effort to help as many families as possible through our financial aid scholarship program, the scholarship award may not cover the full monthly tuition payment, which means that you may still be responsible for a portion of monthly tuition.

The scholarship award by child:

Child 1 Name: _____ Scholarship Award: \$_____ /month
Child 2 Name: _____ Scholarship Award: \$_____ /month
Child 3 Name: _____ Scholarship Award: \$_____ /month

The full monthly tuition rate by child:

Child 1 Name: _____ Tuition Payment: \$_____ /month
Child 2 Name: _____ Tuition Payment: \$_____ /month
Child 3 Name: _____ Tuition Payment: \$_____ /month

This scholarship award will cover 100% of the monthly tuition noted above

The portion you are responsible for paying each month by child:

Child 1 Name: _____ My portion of tuition: \$_____ /month
Child 2 Name: _____ My portion of tuition: \$_____ /month
Child 3 Name: _____ My portion of tuition: \$_____ /month

I understand and agree that I am responsible for the portion of my child(ren)'s monthly tuition payment that is not covered by the scholarship award, as noted above. That payment amount is outline below and is payable through auto-deduction or money order as outlined in the Preschool Financial policies. This payment is due by the 1st of each month and a late fee of \$25 if my portion of the monthly tuition is not paid by the 7th day of the month.

I further understand that this tuition scholarship is established based on the number of days that I initially enrolled my child(ren). Should you desire to add additional days for your child(ren) to attend, this will be an added tuition expense monthly at your responsibility and will not be covered by the scholarship award.

_____/_____/_____
Printed Name Date

Signature

Recurring Auto-Draft Payment Authorization Form (2023-2024)

I authorize Decatur First Preschool to charge/debit my account on a recurring basis indicated below on the 1st day of each month for payment of my child's monthly tuition payment. I understand that this authorization will remain in effect for the full school year, through May 2024, unless I cancel in writing upon my child's withdrawal from the preschool program.

I agree that no prior notification will be provided for each scheduled payment. Charges will appear under the name of Decatur First United Methodist Church, as Decatur First Preschool is a ministry department of the church. A receipt will be emailed to you and the charge will appear on your bank or credit card statement.

If the above noted payment date falls on a weekend or holiday, I understand that the payment may be executed on the next business day.

If the recurring auto draft is rejected for any reason, I understand that Decatur First Preschool may at its discretion attempt to process the charge again within 5 business days. I agree to an additional \$25 charge for each attempt returned NSF which will be initiated as a separate transaction from the authorized recurring payment.

Please complete the below information

Billing Address _____ Phone # _____

City, State, Zip _____ Email _____

Please use my current payment method on file (payment method must be in Realm)

Checking/Savings Account

<input type="checkbox"/> Checking	<input type="checkbox"/> Savings
Name on Acct	_____
Bank Name	_____
Account Number	_____
Bank Routing #	_____
Bank City/ State	_____

Credit Card

<input type="checkbox"/> Visa	<input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard
<input type="checkbox"/> Amex	<input type="checkbox"/> Discover
Cardholder Name	_____
Account Number	_____
Exp. Date	_____
CVV (3/4-digit number on back of card)	_____

Signature _____

Date / /

Print Name _____

Should you need to change your payment method, you will need to complete a new Auto-Draft Authorization form OR update your payment method in Realm at least 15 days prior to the next withdrawal date. Please contact Melanie Murphy, Director of Accounting (mmurphy@decaturfirst.org) for changes to be made to recurring auto-draft.

1st month Tuition Payment Authorization Form (2023-2024)

For all current preschool and church families, we offer a deferral of the 1st month's tuition payment, this will be auto drafted separately from other monthly payments.

I authorize Decatur First Preschool to charge/debit my account for the 1st month's tuition payment on June 1, 2023. I understand that if I wish to drop from the program after registering, this must be done in writing by May 1, 2023, in order stop this scheduled transaction. I understand that this is a one-time payment that will be applied to the 1st month's tuition or forfeited in my child withdrawn after this payment is made per the Preschool Financial Policies.

Charges will appear under the name of Decatur First United Methodist Church, as Decatur First Preschool is a ministry department of the church. A receipt will be emailed to you and the charge will appear on your bank or credit card statement.

If the auto draft payment is rejected for any reason, I understand that Decatur First Preschool may at its discretion attempt to process the charge again within 5 business days. I agree to an additional \$25 charge for each attempt returned NSF which will be initiated as a separate transaction from the authorized recurring payment.

Please complete the below information

Billing Address _____ Phone # _____

City, State, Zip _____ Email _____

Please use my current payment method on file (payment method must be in Realm)

Checking/Savings Account

Checking Savings

Name on Acct _____

Bank Name _____

Account Number _____

Bank Routing # _____

Bank City/ State _____

Credit Card

Visa MasterCard

Amex Discover

Cardholder Name _____

Account Number _____

Exp. Date _____

CVV (3/4-digit number on back of card) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Print Name _____

Should you need to change your payment method, you will need to complete a new Auto-Draft Authorization form OR update your payment method in Realm at least 15 days prior June 1, 2023.

Charitable Contributions to Preschool

All tuition and other fees paid to the Decatur First Preschool are not tax-deductible, because a service is being provided in exchange for payment.

Any charitable contribution made to support the Scholarship Fund for the Preschool is tax-deductible. Any charitable contribution made as part of a fundraising campaign for the Preschool is also tax-deductible. All charitable contributions must be made through the church directly and not through ProCare. If paying by check, you may follow the same procedures outlined on page 8. If paying electronically, please visit the church's website www.decaturfirfirst.org and follow instructions for online giving. Statements are sent by the church on a quarterly and annual basis, which will indicate tax-deductible contributions made for tax purposes.

The tax ID number for Decatur First United Methodist Church is 58-1514459. The Preschool does not have a separate tax ID number as it is a ministry program of the church.

3 Preschool Team

Decatur First Preschool is a ministry program of Decatur First United Methodist Church (DFUMC). As such, Preschool governance and operational structures are embedded within the church. DFUMC has oversight of daily and financial operations for the Preschool program. All teachers, staff, and Directors of the Preschool are employees of DFUMC. Day-to-day operations of the Preschool are the responsibility of the Preschool Director who has full direct supervision of all teachers and staff. The Preschool Director reports to the Executive Director of Finance and Operations. The Senior Pastor has ultimate responsibility for all operations within the church.

The Preschool Team is an advisory team for the Preschool within the governance structure of the Church. The Preschool Team is designed to assist with strategic planning and program development of the Preschool. The Preschool Team is made up of church members and parents of Preschool students. The Preschool Team must maintain the majority of church members but may include non-members. The Chair of the Preschool Team must be a church member. All members of the Preschool Team are appointed by the Nominations Committee of DFUMC, with members serving a 2-year term, and all terms begin in January of each year.

The Preschool Team

Becky Vaughn, Chairperson

Mary Coleman

Kari Fisher

Matthew Mazzone

John Ridgeway

Shannon Kelly

Madeline Mulkey

MaryGrace Edwards

Catherine Breed

Tracy Frost

rebeccaevaughan@gmail.com

marycoleman1015@gmail.com

karifisherdesigns@gmail.com

matthewjmazzone@gmail.com

ridgey72@gmail.com

skelly823@gmail.com

madeline.mulkey@gmail.com

marygrace.milam@gmail.com

cbreed@decaturfirst.org

frostgirls3@gmail.com

4 SCHEDULE

First Days at School

Preschool drop-off/pick-up, including sign-in and health checks, will occur outside the building and the children will be escorted into the building by staff. You will pick-up and drop-off at the same entrance and exit you use during your classroom visit. Parents and authorized guests are allowed to enter the building and pick-up their child if they have a carpool number. If not, a floater or office administrator will retrieve your child.

The first day of school is Monday, August 14, 2023.

All 1-year-old and 2-year-old classes will attend a short day on their first day of school. These classes attend school 9am-11:30am on their first day to help them acclimate to their new routine.

The 3-year-old and 4-year-old classes attend 9am-1pm beginning with their first day.

Lunch

All children bring their own lunch. The child's name should be on the lunch box, thermos, and any other containers used for food. Glass bottles or containers should not be sent to school. Drinks should be clear, non-colored beverages such as apple juice, lemonade, or water. Sodas should not be sent. Utensils needed for yogurt, soup, applesauce etc. should be sent by the parent. Lunches should not require refrigeration or heating.

Snacks

All parents must provide snacks for your child daily. Decatur First Preschool will no longer provide snacks.

You will receive a list of suggested healthy snacks to send. Because of the growing number of children with peanut allergies, we ask that you not send peanuts or peanut butter as a snack. Please do not send fruit roll-ups, popcorn or whole grapes since they pose a choking hazard. Candy and junk foods are not considered healthy snacks and will be sent back home. You may send grapes if they are cut in small pieces.

If your child has a severe food allergy or multiple food allergies, please send a supply of safe snacks that can be kept at school for your child, including safe birthday celebration snacks.

Wednesday Worship

Wednesday Worship is held every other Wednesday in the sanctuary beginning in October for children in the 3 and 4-year-old classes. The program begins at 9:30 am and ends at 9:45 am. Wednesday Worship consists of singing two or three religious songs led by the music teachers. The children then pray the Lord's Prayer led by the Director. Different members of our church staff conduct a short children's worship experience, and birthdays from the past week are celebrated. Parents are always welcome and encouraged to attend.

5 Enrichment Program (Rainbow Room)

We offer an enrichment program that is included in your tuition. The Rainbow Room program is composed of Music, Science, Art, Spanish, and Sign Language classes for all the students enrolled into our program.

Music

Our music teacher Singing, rhythm, instruments and creative movement develop music appreciation as well as dramatic interpretation. All children will attend music weekly.

Science

Our teachers use hands-on activities and experiences to promote critical thinking and exploration. Our science units expose children at an early age to the amazing and fun world of science. This is a rotating class. Our 1- and 2-year-old classes will visit monthly. Our 3- and 4-year-old classes will visit weekly.

Art

Art allows our friends to master skills in a fun and creative way. Our teacher will use various art media to help our friends practice grasping, holding, and utilizing tools in much the same way they would while writing. This is a rotating class. Our 1- and 2-year-old classes will visit monthly. Our 3- and 4-year-old classes will visit weekly.

Sign Language

Sign Language is offered weekly for all children enrolled in the 1-year-old and 2-year-old classes. Our infants and toddlers learn basic commands through song and finger play.

Spanish

Spanish is offered weekly for all children enrolled in the 3-year-old and 4-year-old classes. Spanish instruction is taught by a native Spanish speaker using a variety of games, songs, books, and other techniques.

Special Events

We have a lot of parent events scheduled for this year. Please save the date! Remember- some activities may be changed due to inclement weather. Special events can be found on the last page of the parent handbook.

A special Thanksgiving Chapel Program is held the Wednesday before Thanksgiving at 11:30 am in the sanctuary. The children in the 3-year-old and 4-year-old classes sing a combination of secular and religious seasonal songs. The children also bring donated canned goods for DEAM. All parents and other family members are invited to attend this program. Children will return to their classrooms at the end of the service and will be dismissed from their classrooms at that time.

During November and December, we will host a Music and Movement class for infants and toddlers. Parents and special guests are invited to carol with us. This event will be held in the Fellowship Hall for the 1-year-old and 2-year-old old on the last Monday and Thursday before Christmas break. Students will return to class after the event.

At Christmas there is a Family Sing-along in the Fellowship Hall for the 3-year-old and 4-year-old classes at 11:00am on the Friday before Christmas break followed by simple refreshments in the classroom. Students will be dismissed from their classrooms at the end of the classroom parties.

6 GENERAL INFORMATION

Arrival

Your child's day is from 9am until 1pm. The purpose of a quality early education program is to begin school readiness. It is very important for your child to be on time in order to enjoy all the activities planned for the first hour of school.

The doors will be open from 8:50 am-9:10am for morning drop-off. If you come to school after 9:10am, please ring the bell at the Preschool doors, and we will let you in. All doors to the school are locked after 9:10am and during school hours. Parents and visitors should enter only through the Preschool doors.

Every other Wednesday, we have Wednesday Worship in the sanctuary beginning at 9:15am, so the four-year-old classes will be empty. If your child is in the 4-year-old classes and arrives after 9:10am, please walk your child to the sanctuary to join his/her class or remain with your child in his/her classroom until the classes return.

Dismissal

If you pick up your child prior to dismissal time, then please come to the office first to sign out your child. The Preschool doors will open at 12:50pm for dismissal. In the afternoon, most of our teachers have other commitments. We will have to charge a late fee due to the consistent and excessive tardiness during drop-off and pick-up. You will be charged \$1.00 for the first 10 minutes and \$5.00 per minute thereafter. You will see this reflected on your next auto-draft.

Release of Your Child to A Different Person

IF YOUR CHILD IS TO GO HOME WITH ANYONE OTHER THAN HIS/HER APPROVED ADULTS, WE MUST HAVE A WRITTEN NOTE.

Delayed Arrival/Dismissal during Severe Weather

In the event of severe weather (i.e., tornado warning or lightning) during arrival or dismissal, please follow this policy. If weather is severe enough to impede the safety of our teachers and children, then children and teachers will stay inside the building and arrival, or dismissal will be delayed until conditions are considered safe.

Child Safety Dismissal Policy

The staff will not release a child to any adult who smells of alcohol or appears impaired by drugs or alcohol. Another adult on the child's emergency list will be called to pick up the child.

Parking

When parking in the church lot, please park in the lower lot closest to the educational building, if necessary, additional parking is available on the first row of parking on the Commerce Drive side of the parking lot. Parking spots available for Preschool parking will be identified, please make note there are reserved spots for Emory Healthcare and those may NOT be used by the Preschool.

Late Pickup Fees

Dismissal is from 12:50-1:10 every day. There is a late fee of \$1.00 a minute for the first 10 minutes that you are late. After 10 minutes the fee increases to \$5.00 a minute. Each family is

permitted one late pickup per school year without penalty. All late pickup fees will be automatically posted to your Realm account and are due immediately. Habitual offenders will be dismissed from the program.

Booster Seat Law

Under Georgia law children under age eight are required to be in a car seat or booster seat appropriate for their height and weight and used according to the manufacturer's instructions. The law also requires children under the age of eight to ride in the rear seat. For further information go to: www.gahighwaysafety.org/newbooster.html.

How Parents Can Help Their Child

We look forward to working with you and your child throughout the school year. You can help us in the following important ways to make your child's preschool education experiences most effective:

1. See that your child gets enough sleep every night.
2. Get your child up early enough so that he/she does not have to rush off to school.
3. Watch your child closely and keep him/her home if not feeling well. Report any communicable disease to the school.
4. Notify the teacher if your child has taken any medication that day, especially cough medicine.
5. Help your child look forward to each new day and come to school in a happy frame of mind.
6. Keep us informed of special problems, stresses, or unusual circumstances at home which may affect your child at school.

7 HEALTH POLICIES

Each child must have on file by the first day of school a state approved immunization form. All children must have immunization form #3231. Children five years and older must have ear, eye, and dental form #3300. These forms are available through the local health department or the child's pediatrician.

Exemptions for immunizations maybe made for medical necessity only and must be documented with a letter from your pediatrician.

Children who are prescribed an epi-pen and/or inhaler must keep an epi-pen and/or inhaler at school.

Children should not be sent to school if any of the following symptoms are evident: fever of 100 degrees or more, sore throat, body aches, green or yellow discharge from nose, bronchial or deep chest cough, undiagnosed rash, red eyes or discharge from eyes, diarrhea, vomiting or stomachache within 24 hours prior to school. Children need to be both fever free and free of these symptoms for 24 hours.

A child's health must allow him/her to participate fully in all group activities, including outside play. If you do not feel that your child is well enough to play outside at school, please keep him/her at home.

If there is a question concerning a child's health and participation in the program, consult with the Director.

Please notify us of a communicable disease at once so that we may notify other parents.

Illness at School

If your child becomes ill while at school, the parents or emergency contact persons will be called to pick the child up immediately. If a parent or emergency contact cannot be reached, the child will be isolated in the Director's office under supervision until someone can be reached who can pick up the child.

Minor Injuries

Minor injuries such as skinned knees, scrapes or bumps are treated at school with soap and water and T.L.C. The area will also be bandaged if necessary. The parent will receive an Ouch Report in the child's backpack.

Allergies

Please let your child's teacher know of any allergies that your child may have, especially food allergies. All the teachers have a copy of allergies of all children in our program posted in their classroom. If your child has a severe allergy requiring an epi-pen, you must advise the school in writing of your child's symptoms and detailed instructions for administering any medication. If the child is having an allergic reaction, treatment will be administered, 911 called and the parents notified. Any medication will be kept in the classroom (in plain view in a box marked with a red cross) with written parental consent forms and explicit instructions. The staff does not administer medication unless there is a life-threatening situation.

Sunscreen/Insect Spray

Our staff will not apply sunscreen or insect spray on your child at school. If you would like, please apply sunscreen or insect spray on your child at home prior to arrival at school.

We do take precautions at school to prevent mosquitoes from hatching by not allowing standing water. Our playground has shady areas under the trees where children can be out of the sun's direct rays.

Toilet Training

All 3-year-olds entering our program must be potty-trained. An extra change of clothes is also requested. Children are encouraged to manage their clothing and to clean themselves on their own as much as possible when they are toilet training. In accordance with Safe Sanctuary policy, adult assistance will occur with the doors open and in full view of the other children and other adults.

Special Needs Policy

If it is determined that a child is having difficulty adjusting to school, is frustrated with the learning environment, or is a disruption for the other children, then the director will be called to observe. A conference will be scheduled with the teacher and director to meet with the parents and discuss the observations. It may be necessary to make modifications within the classroom environment. A written plan for daily communication between parents and child may be developed.

If needed, the parent will be asked to contact the City Schools of Decatur, DeKalb County Schools, Atlanta Public Schools, or a private professional for a screening. A resource list will be made available to the parents for this purpose. Staff from local school systems or a private professional may come to observe, make suggestions and conference with the parents, and when necessary, the teacher and/or Director. When appropriate, if an IEP (Individualized Educational Program) is recommended for the child, the school will assess whether it can be implemented using the school's existing resources.

It is strongly suggested that any diagnosis by a special needs professional be shared by the parents with the child's teacher and the Director, as it is in the best interest of the child that we work together as a team and share information.

Every attempt will be made to accommodate a child with special needs in our program. Teachers will work in collaboration with the support personnel who have diagnosed a child's special needs and who actively provide support services for the child. The appropriate services need to be sought in a time frame agreed upon by the parent, teacher, and Director. If no services are sought after the agreed upon time frame, then the child will be asked to leave the program.

Early intervention programs during the preschool years are highly effective in making positive changes in the child's readiness for learning and in the child's self-esteem.

Because our staff is not trained in special education and our student/teacher ratios are higher than special needs classes, our program may not be able to best serve every child.

If at any time the health, safety, or welfare of a child with special needs or other children are at risk, that child will be dismissed from our program. If the teacher is unable to teach the other children in the class due to the needs of a particular child, then the child will be asked to leave the program. If the school is unable to provide the supports recommended by a professional and/or IEP, the child will be asked to leave the program.

Children with special needs are enrolled at the discretion of The Preschool Director, The Executive Director or Finance and Operations and The Senior Pastor.

8 GENERAL SAFETY POLICIES

- Children are released only to adults authorized on the child's registration. A written note is required if a child is going home with an adult not on the authorized list.
- Any information from the parent should be written, dated and sent in backpack mail. Verbal messages cannot be accepted from a child. Phone messages to the director concerning change of individuals picking up the child should be for emergencies only.
- Children should wear clothing and shoes suitable for active movement, messy projects, and easy clean up. Clogs and cowboy boots are not acceptable for play. Crocs, similar plastic shoes, and flip flops are not recommended for preschool children. Tennis shoes are always appropriate.
- Children should not bring umbrellas to school due to safety concerns. A hooded rain coat is recommended for rainy days.

Clothing

Please send your child to school in simple, comfortable, practical and washable clothes. If your child is toilet training, they should come to school in pull-ups and clothes that allow for easy changing. An extra change of clothes is also requested. Hard sole cowboy boots and clogs should not be worn to school, as they present a safety hazard. Crocs, similar plastic shoes, and flip flops are not recommended for preschool children as they also present a safety hazard. Tennis shoes are always appropriate. Hooded raincoats should be worn to school on rainy days.

During the winter months, our building is comfortably warm, so the children do not need heavy undershirts or flannel shirts indoors. All children need warm, heavy, removable clothing on cold days since we do go outside even on cold days. A hat and mittens, not gloves, are needed. Please write your child's name on every piece of removable clothing so that we can return it to your child.

Discipline

Our staff strives to offer a safe and loving environment for every child. Discipline is a learning process, not a punishment to be imposed on the child. Positive reinforcement is used to encourage good behavior. If behavior problems arise, each staff member will handle the situation as positively as possible. Consequences for inappropriate behaviors are adjusted for each age level and personality and include redirection and showing children what appropriate behavior is in specific situations. Children may also be asked to sit quietly for time to reflect on their behavior.

If misbehavior continues, the teacher will discuss the problem with the director and the parents. A plan will be implemented to meet a child's behavioral needs. For example, a short daily checklist may be sent home to the parents to communicate progress. A follow-up conference may be requested with the parents. At no time will any form of corporal punishment be used. Likewise, it is not acceptable for a child to hit a staff member or another child. If the teacher is unable to teach the other children in the class due to the needs of a particular child, then the child may be asked to leave the program. If inappropriate behavior of any kind persists, a child may be asked to leave the program.

Biting Policy

Preschool children will occasionally bite in response to frustration, communication, anger, desire for a toy, attention, or in many cases, because they are teething. If your child bites another child, you will receive a note and a phone call from either the teacher or the director. We will talk to your child about “using their words” and other ways that they can communicate a problem. We will also firmly explain that he/she is not allowed to hurt their friends at school and read the book, “Teeth Are Not for Biting”. If your child bites a second time in one day, you will be called and asked to up your child from school and keep her/him home from school the following day. Parents of the child who was bitten will also be informed at time of pick up. After three biting incidents, your child will need to take a break from our program. The length of the break will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Director. After the “break” the child can come back and resume regular class. If biting continues, the “break” may need to be longer. This will be communicated to you by the Director. We want every child to have a fun and safe.

Communication, Conferences and Progress Reports

Our teachers make every effort to keep you informed of your child’s activities through newsletters, notes, calendars, and emails. Our staff encourages close communication between parents and teachers. Please communicate with your child’s teacher whenever you have a question, comment, or something that you would like to discuss. The ways to communicate are to call the school at 404-378-4541, x223, email the teacher or send your question in your child’s backpack mail. Our staff will make every effort to answer your questions in a timely manner. However, during school hours, teachers will not check or return emails while they are supervising their students. Please call the office for immediate concerns during school hours.

A weekly email is sent by the Director on Friday highlighting the important events of the week. You may always use our website at www.decaturfirfirst.org/preschool for calendar and event questions.

Children in the 1-year-old and 2-year-old classes have a Parent Teacher Conference in April. Children in the 3-year-old and 4-year-old classes will have parent-teacher conferences in October and again in late March. Our staff members are trained to recognize any problems which arise with children. We notify you immediately if we observe anything unusual and feel that there is a need for a conference.

Other conferences may be arranged anytime that the parent, teacher, or Director feels it would be beneficial. Please call the office at 404-378-4541,x225 or email info@decaturfirfirstpreschool.org if you would like to schedule a conference. All personal information or data regarding your child will be kept confidential.

Parent Grievance Procedure

There are times when misunderstandings, inadequate communication, or school related problems occur. If there is a problem, the parent should follow these guidelines: 1) Contact your child’s teacher first with any problems, concerns or complaints. 2) If the problem is not resolved, then the parent should contact the Director. 3) If you are not satisfied with the resolution, you

may contact The Executive Director of Finance and Operations 4) The resolution of the problem as decided by The Executive Director of Finance and Operations and/or Senior Pastor is final.

Calendars, Newsletters, Updates and Written Communication

A school calendar for the year is listed in this handbook. The teacher will email a monthly calendar with the events and activities in the classroom.

Current updates and reminders are emailed each Sunday by the Director. You can also see the calendar on our website, www.decaturfirst.org/preschool.

All notes, calendars and other communication will be sent in your child's backpack mail. Anything in your child's backpack mail is important and should be read carefully. We will not send party invitations in backpack mail. Please use the postal system for non-school notes.

Please be sure to send items in backpack mail. Items loose in the body of the backpack may not be checked and are easily lost.

Internal Communication Only

Backpack mail and parent contact information are for distribution of Preschool and DFUMC events ONLY. Please do not share our contact information with anyone outside the school, and please do not use our contact information or backpack mail to advertise events or services outside the school or church.

Things to Bring to School

Each child should bring a backpack or school bag with handles that is large enough to hold a lunch box and art projects, etc. Please write your child's name on his/her bag. A Ziploc bag will be put on the 1-year-old, 2-year-old and 3-year-old child's bag so that notes, newsletters and other communication may be sent home. 4-year-old classes use a folder in your child's bag which travels back and forth between school and home.

We encourage children to bring nature objects and articles pertinent to their classroom study. If your child has a special book they would like to share, please allow the teacher several days in which to work it into the daily plan or check with the teacher before sending it.

We welcome donations of dress-up clothes, hats, wigs, old jewelry, or accessories. Parents are also encouraged to save and send scrap materials that may be usable in art activities, including ribbons, fabric, buttons, material, etc. Other items that we save are oatmeal boxes, gallon bleach containers, plastic milk cartons, cardboard egg crates and baby food jars.

Things Not to Bring to School

No toys should be brought to school except for special share days designated by the teachers or for the letter bags for the 4-year-old classes. Toys are distracting and easily lost. Under no circumstances should guns, knives, whistles, balloons, or friction toys be brought to school. Candy, chewing gum, money and jewelry have no place in school. Please check your child's school bag and remove these items. Thank you for your cooperation.

Field Trips

Permission to go on all field trips is included in the new student forms for all classes. This year, we will have host in-house field trips. Parents will be informed of the date of each field trip. More details will be coming soon.

Birthdays

Parents are invited to come to school during their child's snack time to celebrate their child's birthday. Parents provide birthday snacks and special napkins. Balloons, favors and presents are not part of the school birthday celebration. If your child has a summer birthday, your teacher will schedule a "pretend birthday" to celebrate during the school year.

Parents' Group

We have an active Parents' Group which is a support group for our school. Every parent is encouraged to join. There are no dues; just come interact with other parents by attending Parent Workdays, Parent Coffees, or by joining a committee. The committees support our program by fundraising, helping with special projects, and in many other ways.

Volunteering is a fun way to meet other parents as well as the children in your child's classroom.

An important Parents' Meeting is held on your child's first day of school at 9:30am in the Fellowship Hall. There are sign-up sheets for the various committees.

We follow the Safe Sanctuaries policy of our church. All volunteers in the classrooms are required to undergo a background check.

9 SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND EVACUATION

Inclement Weather

Our school usually closes if both DeKalb County Schools and City Schools of Decatur are closed due to inclement weather. If only one system closes, the Preschool Director and the Executive Director of Finance and Operations will decide whether to close the school. Sometimes a school system is closed because of lack of heat or electricity in one school or because there is a problem with school buses starting. In instances like these, our school may be open. An email will be sent to all parents if the school is closed. All parents are encouraged to follow us on Remind for immediate updates.

Our school is registered with WAGA TV, FOX 5 Severe Weather Closing System. You may check their website for the listing of a closing for Decatur First United Methodist Preschool in the event of bad weather. If there is a widespread loss of electricity, we will use a phone tree system where the director will call all of the teachers, who will notify room parents, who in turn notify the parents in the class.

Evacuation

A plan has been developed and evacuation routes are posted in each classroom near the doorway.

Fire drills, tornado drills and safety drills are held regularly during the school year. In the event of a crisis, either the fire alarm will be activated, or the director will notify the classes.

Parents on the premises at the time of a drill must participate.

If for any reason it is necessary to evacuate the Preschool building and relocate children and staff, we will contact all parents by phone and/or by email so that they will know the change of location.

Loss of Electrical Power or Water

If there are building malfunctions including heat, light or water for an extended period of time, parents will be called to pick up the children. Should the electrical or water supply be interrupted for more than one day, school will be closed until water or electricity service is restored.