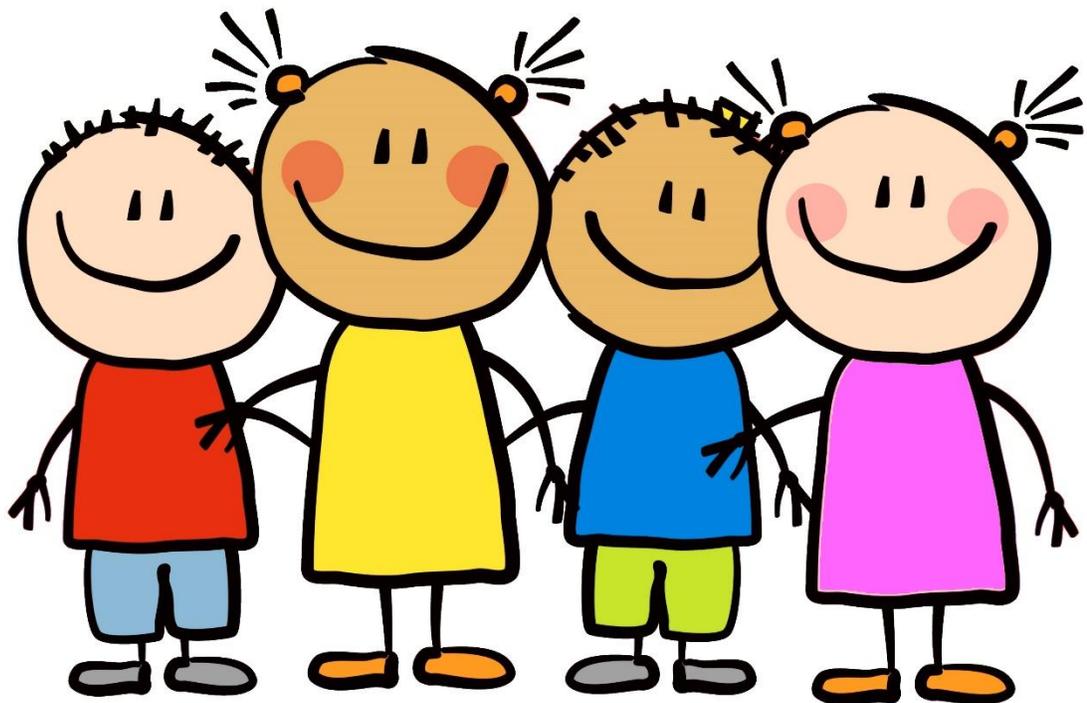


# EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

First United Methodist Church of Oviedo

2022-2023 Parent Handbook



Early Childhood Center (ECC)  
263 King Street  
Oviedo, Florida 32765  
Director: Anne Masterson (amasterson@fumco.net)  
407-365-3702

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Early Childhood Center (ECC) at the First United Methodist Church of Oviedo for the 2022-2023 school year. We're so glad to have you as a part of our family! We're looking forward to a wonderful year working together as a team in the best interest of your children.

The purpose of this handbook is to give you an understanding of our program. It contains our philosophy, goals, policies and procedures with which I hope you become familiar. It also includes our school year calendar with days off and major events listed.

Please take time to read the handbook and make sure you save it to refer to during the school year. If you have any questions about the contents of this handbook, please contact us.

Let us invite you to visit our website [fumcoecc.com](http://fumcoecc.com) for more information about our preschool, and to 'Like' our Facebook page Early Childhood Center - Fumco.

Blessings,

Anne Masterson  
Director  
407-365-3702  
[amasterson@fumco.net](mailto:amasterson@fumco.net)



# WHO WE ARE

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the Early Childhood Center is to provide meaningful preschool learning experiences in a Christian environment as an outreach ministry to the community.

## PHILOSOPHY

The Early Childhood Center is grounded in Christian beliefs and the teachings of the Bible. We strive to provide a secure, nurturing, and stimulating environment for preschool children that will spark their curiosity, foster a sense of independence, and encourage their natural desire for knowledge in a non-threatening, low-risk environment. We believe in the development of the whole child (social, emotional, spiritual, cognitive, and physical). We believe children learn and develop best through meaningful and purposeful play experiences and interaction with the world around them.

## GOALS

Based on our understanding of young children and their developmental needs, we endeavor to:

1. Develop an awareness of God, His creations, His love for us, and basic Christian principles in an atmosphere that is loving, caring, understanding, and accepting of each child.
2. Encourage positive social interaction; sharing, cooperating, helping, and communicating with others.
3. Stimulate cognitive development through challenging and developmentally appropriate activities in the areas of math, language, and science that encourage participation, exploration, and experimentation.
4. Provide a wide variety of activities to develop both the large and small muscles of the body and increase skills, balance, and coordination.
5. Foster creativity in art, language, music, and thinking.
6. Provide a language-rich environment, exposing children to the written and spoken word and encouraging their own storytelling and writing.
7. Teach respect for others and world God created for us.
8. Maintain small class size that allows teachers to spend time with each child - observing and guiding their development, and encouraging the development of friendships among the children and a sense of belonging within their class.
9. Provide parents opportunities for communication and fellowship with other parents and staff members who have the interest and needs of the children as their common concern.

# HEALTH & SAFETY

## IMMUNIZATIONS & HEALTH FORMS



According to DCF each child **MUST** have an up-to-date certificate of health exam and a Florida Certificate of Immunization on file within 30 days of enrollment. Per DCF children without a current Immunization record on file are not allowed to attend school until the school has the required documentation. These forms are available from the Health Department or your pediatrician's office. DCF will also accept immunization religious exemption certificates.

## MEDICATIONS

ECC staff will not administer any medications to children enrolled in our program except in cases of life-threatening allergic reactions, illnesses, or conditions. It is the parent's responsibility to inform the director and child's teacher at the time of enrollment of such situations. Parents must provide ECC with an emergency kit prescribed for that child, fill out an authorization form allowing staff to administer the medication(s), and instruct ECC staff on the proper use of the emergency kit.

## ACCIDENTS

Accidents requiring any type of first aid will be documented on an accident report form. Parents sign the report which is placed in the child's file, and are given a copy to keep. Minor scrapes, bruises, and bug bites will be treated with soap and water, cold compress, a Band-Aid, and hugs. We do not apply first-aid creams, ointments, or other first aid medications at school.

## ILLNESSES & MEDICAL CONDITIONS

For the well-being of children and staff, we **MUST** insist you keep your child home if:

- \* He/she has had a **fever within the last 24 hours**
- \* He/she has had **diarrhea or vomiting within the last 24 hours**
- \* He/she has been on **prescribed medication for contagious illness less than 24 hours**
- \* He/she has **excessive nasal discharge and/or is coughing or sneezing excessively.**
- \* He/she has a contagious rash or illness (*pink eye, chicken pox, head lice, etc.*).

If a child becomes ill during the school day, parents will be called to pick up him/her as soon as possible.



If your child is sick or will not be at school for some other reason, we would greatly appreciate a call. If he/she has a contagious illness (*chicken pox, pink eye, etc.*), please let us know **IMMEDIATELY** so we may alert other parents.

At the time of enrollment, parents should make their child's teacher and the director aware of any medical conditions the child has. These might include asthma, physical limitations, diseases, extreme allergic reaction to insects, plants, foods, etc.

## COVID - 19 POLICY

The current pandemic has required some changes at ECC. We will require masks for everyone during drop-off and pick-up times, screen children daily, intensify our cleaning protocols, and any other precautions directed by the Department of Health and the Department of Children and Families.

If there is a suspected exposure or confirmed positive case, we will immediately contact the Department of Health and follow their advice. It will be IMPERATIVE that families notify us of a suspected exposure or positive case. Our commitment to you will be quick and clear communication when any COVID event happens.

## MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In the unlikely event of a life-threatening situation or a serious injury, ECC will call 911 BEFORE calling the parents or other authorized emergency contacts. If immediate emergency care is deemed unnecessary, we will first attempt to call the parents or other persons on the emergency form. If transportation to a medical facility is required, it will be provided by authorized medical personnel only and the child will be accompanied by one of the ECC staff if parents are not present.



## CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Staff members are LEGALLY OBLIGATED by Florida Statute 415 to report suspected child abuse or neglect. If a parent suspects child abuse or neglect at school, they should IMMEDIATELY notify the director. Further information is included in the pamphlet Know Your Child Care Center supplied to each parent when their child enrolls at ECC.



## STORM POLICY & EMERGENCY DRILLS

When there is a threat of a severe storm or tornado, all children are brought to a safe place within their building or into the main hallway outside their classroom and seated along the walls. They remain there until the storm has passed. Parents are advised to stay home until the threat is over since you and your children will be safer. ECC has a battery operated weather alert radio and flashlights in case of power failure.

The preschool conducts monthly emergency drills to familiarize children with the sound of the alarm and the procedures to follow in the event of a real emergency. These will include fire drills, tornado drill, and lock-down.

In the event of an emergency school closing (fire, power outage, etc.) parents will be notified by phone to come for their children and informed of any special dismissal procedures.

# POLICIES & PROCEDURES

## DROP-OFF & PICK-UP PROCEDURES - DURING COVID-19

2's & 3's (except Ms. Kris) will be dropped off 1 child at a time per classroom inside the black fence at the back door of the classroom. The child's temperature will be taken prior to entering the fenced area. The parent and child will then proceed to the back door of the classroom where they will be met by the child's teacher. Parents and students must be in masks during this process.

Ms. Kris's 3's, VPK and K will be dropped off at the glass doors or black gate of Building 2. The child's temperature will be taken prior to entering the building. Upon entrance the child will proceed to their classroom with the guidance of the assistant teachers. The classroom teachers will be waiting at the classroom door to greet the children. Parents and students must be in masks during this process. The child's mask will be put in their cubbies until dismissal. Please write your child's name on the mask.

With the exception of the 2's, all children will be dismissed in carline. The classes will be spread out along the sidewalk in carline. The child's classroom teacher will be the only person loading the child in their car. **ALL STUDENTS MUST BE PICKED UP IN THE CARLINE.** No walk-ups will be allowed and the playgrounds will be locked before and after school to avoid mixing of children.

## DROP-OFF & PICK-UP PROCEDURES - AFTER COVID-19

ALL children are walked to their classrooms in the morning. Teachers open their classroom doors at 8:55am to greet the children.

Parents are asked to have their children at school on time and to make their goodbyes as brief as possible. Late arrivals can be very disruptive once morning activities have begun.

Parents will be given a dismissal card with their child's and teacher's names on it. Any person picking up a child from school **MUST** have this card with them **EVERY** time. If that person does not have the card, they **MUST** present some form of photo I.D. before the child will be released. This includes parents!

For the safety of each child, persons unfamiliar to the ECC staff will be asked to show some form of photo ID along with the rainbow card before releasing a child. If your child will be leaving school with someone you have not listed on the contact sheet, you **MUST** notify the teacher and/or office in advance in writing (Note, Text, or Email), otherwise the child will not be released.

The 2's must be picked up at 1:00 from their classrooms or area designated by the teacher. Parents **MUST** have their rainbow dismissal card.

All 3 and 4 year old's and Kindergarten will be dismissed from the carline area at the covered circle driveway at the back of Building 1. The rainbow card **MUST** be visible on your dashboard or held up so staff can see it. There is also an area for walk-ups along the sidewalk.

**ALL parents MUST show their dismissal card or a photo I.D.  
if you do not have your dismissal card.**

In the event that you are unavoidably delayed, please give us a call or make arrangements to have your child picked up by someone else. Parents should let the



school know what the alternate pick up arrangements are.

If parents must get a child from school at any time other than the regular dismissal time, they should come to the ECC office. Please let your child's teacher know ahead of time if your child will be leaving school early.

## ATTENDANCE

Per DCF requirements, parents MUST inform the child's teacher that their child will be arriving late or will be absent on a given day.

Children enrolled in VPK with excessive absences may be asked to withdraw from the program. Absences exceeding 20% are considered excessive.

## CONFERENCES



Each teacher will schedule parent conferences during the school year. Parents will be informed of the dates in the class and ECC newsletters. Parents may request additional meetings with their child's teacher or the ECC director at any time during the year. We are committed to maintaining open communication.

We will turn to you as soon as we recognize an area of concern or pattern of questionable behavior. By working together, we have an opportunity to do what is best for your child. You may request a conference by sending a note to your child's teacher or by calling the ECC office.

## CLOTHING

**Preschool is messy!** Please dress your child accordingly. Smocks are provided for painting and some water play and their use is encouraged. However, teachers won't insist on their use if it presents a barrier to either participation or enjoyment of any activity.

Simple, comfortable clothing also allows your child to master the basic skill of dressing himself. This mastery leads to feelings of self-worth and accomplishment. Complicated snaps, laces, and buckles hinder this development. Also, for toileting purposes children MUST wear clothes they can manage independently. Safe shoes (sneakers, rubber-soled shoes, etc.) are **REQUIRED** for playground use. Children are outside running and climbing daily. For your child's safety, please do not send your child in flip flops.



## CONFIDENTIALITY

We are professionals and conduct ourselves accordingly. We will NOT discuss personal matters, other children, families, or staff members with parents or among ourselves. If at any time during the year you have a concern, PLEASE take it immediately to the teacher or director. It is all too easy for rumors to get started and blown out of proportion, when the situation can be resolved between **ONLY** those parties directly involved.

Student files are confidential and are only accessible to parents and staff. Any correspondence regarding a child, as well as evaluations and documentation of parent teacher conferences are kept in the files.

## DISCIPLINE

Our discipline policy is very simple - we do not punish; we guide and teach children to make appropriate choices so their behavior is socially acceptable. There are many ways to do this:

1. Based on our knowledge of child development, we set developmentally appropriate goals for children's behavior.
2. Based on our knowledge, whenever possible we anticipate problems and redirect the child's attention.
3. We encourage children to express themselves verbally or to "use their words." Example: "Tell Johnny you don't like it." When needed, we give them the words: Example: "Say, I don't like it when you pushed me."
4. Whether praising or correcting, we focus on the deed, not the doer. We say: "I like the way you helped clean up!" instead of, "Good boy;" or "It's not okay to hit" instead of, "You're a bad girl for hitting."
5. We do not have time-out chairs in rooms, nor do we use the term at ECC. We believe time-out in a group setting is more humiliating than helpful. If a teacher feels a child should be removed from a situation, it is done to help the child break a pattern of inappropriate behavior and/or regain composure. Children may be redirected by a teacher or may be asked to sit with them for a brief time. We will not subject any child to humiliation, ridicule, threats, or any form of physical punishment.

## UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR/ENROLLMENT TERMINATION POLICY

Many behaviors and/or struggles children may experience are viewed as necessary phases of a child's development as they learn what acceptable and unacceptable behavior is and develop their social skills. Children display and will occasionally be exposed to aggressive behavior. The staff uses various techniques to limit and correct such behavior. However, parents must understand that with children in group settings the exposure to aggressive behavior is greater than at home.

If a child is having more difficulty than usual with discipline in the classroom, the behaviors will be discussed with the parents. Since the children are only in the preschool a few hours a day, support from parents of our discipline at school and with the child's behavior at home is expected.

All aggressive and negative behaviors (may include, but are not limited to biting, hitting, spitting, throwing objects, screaming, etc.) that are disruptive to the classroom environment or harmful to other children, teachers, or to the child him/herself will be documented and signed by the parents. Situations that continue to include such behaviors will be evaluated by the director in considering the safety and well-being of all children.

We will make every effort to work with the parents of children having difficulties.

Children displaying continuous harmful, disruptive, and/or destructive behavior which is determined to be upsetting to the physical or emotional well-being of other children or adults may require the following actions:

1. First Consultation: The teacher will make the parent aware of the negative behavior in writing, informing the parent of actions taken in the classroom to encourage desired behavior. Follow up at home by the parents is expected.

2. Second Consultation: If the initial plan for helping the child fails, the parents will meet with the teacher and director. Another attempt will be made to identify the problem, outline new approaches to the problem, and discuss possible consequences if progress is not apparent. At this point we may suggest resources outside the Early Childhood Center, in an attempt to gain insight into the concerns. This will be put in writing.
3. Enrollment Termination: When the previous plans have been followed and there has been no substantial and consistent progress in the behavior, and the director feels that the Early Childhood Center cannot meet the child's need for guidance; the parents will be asked to withdraw the child from the program.

\*\*The Early Childhood Center may immediately terminate enrollment of a child whose behavior creates significant risk or harm to the health and safety of staff or other children without following the procedure outlined above.

## GUIDELINES FOR IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL

Certain behaviors may cause a significant risk of harm to the health and safety to other children, staff, or themselves. For example; (1) a physical assault, which results in serious bodily injury, (2) an attempted physical assault which, if completed, would result in serious bodily injury, (3) setting or attempting to set fires, (4) bringing weapons to the preschool, (5) substantial damage to real or personal property, etc.

In the event a child becomes out of control it may be necessary to restrain them in order to keep them from harming themselves, another child, or a teacher. If this is necessary it will occur in the following manner. A director/staff member will grasp the child's arms at the wrist and cross them across the front of his/her body while securing their feet between the adult's legs. This may need to occur while sitting in a chair or on the floor. The staff member will remain in this position until the child has calmed down. The staff member will let the child know that this is not acceptable behavior and they will be held in this manner until they can get control of themselves. The adult will remain calm, talking to the child in a calm voice while explaining to them that you will not allow them to hurt their self or anyone else.

The Early Childhood Center may immediately dismiss a child from the program whose behavior creates a significant risk of harm to the health and safety of staff or other children without following the guidance steps in the Unacceptable Behavior/Enrollment Termination Policy.

## FEES

The following is a summary of fees charged by ECC:

**Tuition:** Annual tuition is divided into ten equal payments due on the 1st day of each month August through May, and considered late after the 10th. The first month that tuition is late families will receive a notice with no late fee assessed. Every month thereafter when tuition is received after the 10th, a late fee of \$10 will be assessed. The late fee can be added to the tuition payment for that month or paid separately upon receipt of the late notice. Those wishing to do so, may pay more than one month at a time. Payments can be made by check, cash, bank draft, or online payment.

*(\*If you have temporary financial hardships, special arrangements for payment of tuition should be made with the director. Otherwise, after one month, non-payment of fees will result in withdrawal of your child from ECC. If payment is brought up to date and the child's space is still available, the child may return to school.)*

**Fee for Late Pick Up:** The second time a child is picked up late (after 1:10pm or 2:35 for extended day and Kindergarten) parents will be charged \$5 for every 5 minutes they are late. This is paid to the ECC office and given directly to the staff person waiting with your child.



## communications

- \*Monthly class newsletter from the teachers
- \*Monthly school-wide email newsletter from the director
- \*Email notices about coming events
- \*Notices and flyers posted on hallway bulletin boards
- \*Notices, flyers, and notes sent home in child's backpack
- \*ECC website: [fumcoecc.com](http://fumcoecc.com)
- \*Facebook: Early Childhood Center - Fumco

We want you to be informed, so please check your emails and read each communication from the school!



## FIELD TRIPS & SPECIAL VISITORS

Field trips and special visitors are a way of enriching the curriculum and your child's preschool experience. On field trips children are transported by parent drivers. Car seats are required for all children.

Parents driving or going on field trips are responsible for the supervision of the children assigned to them during the entire field trip. Siblings are NOT permitted on these trips. Parents will be given a copy of our field trip guidelines. There may be a nominal fee for these events to defray the cost.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We depend on parent volunteers to help us in various ways. Each teacher will have a volunteer sign-up sheet at the open house. If you miss that opportunity to sign up, you can contact the ECC office or talk to your child's teacher about volunteering.

ECC has an open door policy. We welcome parents to visit, observe, volunteer, and be an active part of their child's preschool experience.

## BIRTHDAYS



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Parents may send in a special snack for their child's birthday. Parents should coordinate this with the teacher in advance. Please do NOT send candy, gum, party favors, presents, hats, or balloons. Party invitations may be sent through the school *ONLY* if everyone in the class is invited, otherwise parents will need to mail the invitations.



## LUNCH & SNACK

Children eat snack and lunch in their classroom every day. Parents send a small snack and lunch from home that does not need to be refrigerated. Teachers will inform parents in advance if they do not need to send a snack on a particular day.

## GUM, CANDY, TOYS

Gum is NOT allowed at school. Candy is allowed *ONLY* if it is being brought in as part of a class project or special event (Easter egg hunt, etc.).

Children should leave their own toys at home since they will be sad if their special toy is lost or broken. There will be exceptions, such as Show & Teach, but you will be informed as to when those days are. Even on special days, ECC does not allow weapons of any kind, and we strongly discourage such toys as action figures.

We recognize the importance of transitional objects (lovies) for some children. In the 2's and Young 3's especially, we expect to see blankets, lovies, etc. When needed, these objects help a child make the transition from home to school. Once the child is comfortable in the classroom, bringing the 'lovey' is discouraged.

## PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Everything (clothes, food containers, book bags and backpacks, etc.) should be labeled with the child's name!!! Unclaimed, unlabeled items will go into lost & found and donated to a charity once or twice a year, if not claimed.

## BACKPACK      »→ Please remember to check your child's backpack daily!

Each child **MUST** have a backpack with them every day. It should be large enough to hold a lunchbox. Teachers send home newsletters, fliers, children's work, and other important items almost daily. This is especially helpful for those who carpool or have a sitter pick up children.

# VOLUNTARY PRE-KINDERGARTEN

The Early Childhood Center offers the state-funded VPK program. All of our four year old classes use the Creative Curriculum, which is approved by the state and Seminole County. All classes follow the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards.

The state has some very specific record keeping guidelines that all providers and parents must follow. For the parents this would be the daily attendance records. I am asking that all parents of children enrolled in VPK do their part in a timely manner to keep all records accurate and up-to-date.

## PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES



\*Each day whoever brings the child to school MUST mark that day with an X in the small box on the child's daily attendance calendar in the notebook outside the child's classroom.

\*Each parent MUST make every effort to get their child to school on time.

\*At the end of each month the parent MUST sign the Monthly Attendance Calendar.

\*The State of Florida will not reimburse VPK Providers for any child missing the first day(s) of VPK attendance (August 16, 2021). Therefore, it is imperative that parents have their children at school on the first day of attendance.

\*It is also the parents' responsibility to make sure their child does not have excessive absences, as this will affect their success in mastering the skills as set forth in the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards.

\*Children enrolled in VPK with excessive absences may be asked to withdraw from the program. Absences exceeding 20% are considered excessive.