



Memorial Drive
Presbyterian Church

www.tls.mdpc.org

Parent Handbook

THE LITTLE SCHOOL AT MDPC
11612 MEMORIAL DRIVE
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77024
(713) 490-9267
WWW.TLS.MDPC.ORG

LICENSED BY TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PROTECTIVE AND
REGULATORY SERVICES

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Little School at MDPC is an extension of the Christian Education ministry of the church. Fully realizing that the early years of life are the most important for laying the foundations of faith, social, emotional and cognitive development, the school:

- Provides each child with acceptance, respect and love in a Christian environment by caring adults
- Provides a place where children can learn about their uniqueness as children of God, develop new relationships and learn about their expanding world and
- Provides an environment in which each child is free to explore, experiment and make decisions.

From 1996 to 2006 The Little School at MDPC was accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, part of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. However, recently the Academy has rewritten the criteria and we are uncomfortable with some of the new guidelines. Therefore, we have dropped this accreditation for now and are waiting to see how some of the issues will be handled. We are also studying some other options for accreditation. In the meantime, we continue to adhere to the old NAEYC standards under which we were last accredited in which a high quality program was defined as "one that meets the needs of and promotes the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of the children and adults - parents, staff and administrators - who are involved in the program. Each day of a child's life is viewed as leading toward the growth and development of a healthy, intelligent and contributing member of society."

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

We believe that every child is unique and each child should be allowed to grow at his or her own rate. We plan a balance of self-directed and teacher-directed activities that aid each child in growing physically, socially, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually. Our staff serves as positive role models for the children; they provide care that is supportive, nurturing, warm and responsive to each child's individual needs. We strive to create an environment in which each child develops a good self-image and a sense of self-worth. We present a planned program geared to what we believe is developmentally sound and educationally beneficial. No one is more needed in a child's life than the person he/she loves the most. You have the greatest power over his/her effort, growth, and destiny.

We help each child grow physically by using developmentally appropriate toys in the classroom; by planning both gross motor and fine motor activities, and by including outside or gym time in each daily plan.

We promote social skills by planning group activities that involve interaction and sharing, by modeling appropriate behavior, by praising good behavior and by redirecting inappropriate behavior.

We build each child's self-esteem by using positive reinforcement to shape behavior and skills, by showing our acceptance of diversity and creativity in the classroom, and by encouraging each child to develop his/her God-given gifts.

We encourage each child to grow spiritually by saying grace before snacks and meals, by singing Christian songs, by reading Christian books and by celebrating Christian holidays during the school year.

We develop each child's intellectual abilities by singing simple songs, by acting out stories and songs, by reading aloud and talking about what was read, and by asking open-ended questions, which helps the child to develop his/her thinking processes.

STATE LICENSING

The Little School at MDPC is licensed by the State of Texas' Department of Protective and Regulatory Services to provide care for 135 children daily who are 3 months through 3 years. As a licensed facility, we operate using the Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers as a basic guideline for setting policy and procedures. A copy of the Minimum Standards is available through the school office and online at www.dfps.state.tx.us. Parents are welcome to review the State Minimum standards, and the center's most recent Licensing inspection report at anytime. The report is posted outside of the THE LITTLE SCHOOL AT MDPC office, and the Standards can be obtained by asking the office staff.

The address of the local Licensing office is PO Box 16017, Houston, Texas, 77222-6017 and the phone number of our licensing representative is 713-940-5283. The child abuse hotline is 1-800-252-5400. You may also report suspected abuse or neglect at www.txabusehotline.org.

ELIGIBILITY AND ADMISSION

Educational child care is available to any family in the church or community without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin or ancestry.

At The Little School, enrollment is ongoing. This means that new families may submit registration applications throughout the school year. The Little School at MDPC will only accept online registrations through the MDPC website. A registration fee is to be paid at the time of online registration. Families with children **currently enrolled** will register online beginning in **February** for the following school year.

Families who **do not currently** have a child at the school may begin their online registration in **September** for the following school year. Once placement for currently enrolled children and their siblings has been completed in February, new family applications will be placed, in the order that they were received, as follows:

Current Families and their Siblings



Currently enrolled, MDPC members



Currently enrolled, NON - MDPC members

New Families



Children of MDPC members



Children who have had siblings at the school in the past (Legacy)



Children who are new to the school

When placement is completed and classes are filled, remaining applications will be placed on a waiting list in the same priority as above. Families will be notified as soon as a space becomes available. Any applications received after the placement date will be placed on a first come, first serve basis.

Although each child is admitted by chronological age, every effort will be made to meet the emotional, social, intellectual and physical needs of the individual child on a developmental basis. We reserve the right to assess each child's developmental needs before and during enrollment to confirm the proper placement of each child. Proper placement allows us the opportunity to give maximum consideration for each child's individual needs. The majority of the classrooms have a six month age spread allowing for developmentally appropriate teaching.

Once the child has been placed in the school, the enrollment application will be reviewed for completeness, the monthly tuition fee will be identified, and a confirmation letter will be sent. The parents and child are encouraged to tour the center and to spend time in the classroom and meet the prospective teachers. Tours are offered by appointment only while the classes are in session.

When a child is placed or enrolled in a class, the staff will make every attempt to arrange for your child to visit the school before his/her first day. This visit is to allow the child to see his/her new teacher in the context of his/her own classroom and to get acquainted to his/her new surroundings. The classroom visit is not used as a basis of selection in any way, but serves the child well in working through an adjustment period in his/her new school. You may visit the campus to observe your own child and/or program activities at any time. Mentioning that you are there to the office staff would be appreciated.

A child with **special needs** will be evaluated by parents, consultants, and staff to see if the school can be beneficial to him/her. The Director will recommend to the Parent Advisory Committee action to be taken on each request for the enrollment of a special needs child, if necessary. We will make any necessary modifications for each child with special needs enrolled in the school.

Conferences in regard to your child's progress can be arranged upon request. You will be referred to persons who provide special services if we feel that your child needs further evaluation of his/her school performance.

Funds are available for families needing financial assistance. MDPC asks that scholarships be reserved for families with an annual income of \$50,000 or less, unless special circumstances apply. Please contact The Little School at MDPC Director for further information. Tax records may be requested during the scholarship evaluation process.

AGE GROUPINGS

Our classes are usually based on the child's age as of September 1st for the academic school year of September through May. Placement is determined by the director and is further based on parental input, teacher input, and the director's assessment of the child's developmental level. Parent requests for placement may be made but final placement will be determined by the school's director. The age groupings in the classrooms are primarily set in six month age ranges as this has been determined to be the most developmentally appropriate.

Groupings are somewhat flexible, however, and a child may be moved from one group to another to meet special needs. Children will intermingle on the playground, during special activities and for whole-school events.

STAFF

The Little School at MDPC has adopted a policy of hiring which requires all full-time/part-time lead teachers and teacher assistants to fulfill the requirements of the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services Minimum Standards for working with young children. The staff has been carefully chosen, not only on the basis of their educational background and experience, but also for their

personalities and for the warmth, love and concern they exhibit towards children. Background checks, fingerprint examinations and references are obtained on all staff members.

All staff members are knowledgeable early childhood educators, and participate in a continuous program of in-service education and studies for professional advancement in order to remain alert to the ever-changing needs of today's families and to the findings of current research. All staff members are required to obtain at least 24 clock hours of training within the field of early childhood education (including SIDS, Shaken Baby and Child Abuse and Neglect training) annually in addition to CPR and First Aid.

The Little School at MDPC is an equal opportunity employer and demonstrates no discrimination with regards to race, color, creed or national origin.

PROGRAMS

The Little School at MDPC opens at 9:15 AM and closes at 2:30 PM, Monday through Friday. A child can enroll for one to five days a week and pick any combination of days according to the space available for each session. There are two sessions each year, a 9-month Fall/Spring session, which runs from September through May, and a 7 or 8 week summer session in June and July.

We offer an early bird and extended day session each day for an additional charge. The early bird room is open from 8:30 - 9:15 AM and extended day is available from 2:30 - 3:30 PM, 2:30 - 4:00 PM or 2:30 - 5:00 PM. Families may sign up by the semester, month or individual day dependent upon availability.

Substitution Days

No make-up days or daily refunds will be made if your child is absent on his/her scheduled day or if The Little School is cancelled due to weather problems outside of the control of the school or church. A substitute may be found for your child by using the class list provided early in the semester. (For example, a Friday only child may substitute for a Monday only child.) The arrangement and payment of daily fees are strictly between the parents and do not involve the office. Please copy the Director on the e-mail so that the office is aware of which children will be in attendance.

Guest Days

If your child attends The Little School and there is an opening in his/her room on a day he/she normally does not attend, you may check with the office to make arrangements for him/her to attend that one day. When your child attends as a guest, you will pay a fee in the school office. Guest days and substitution days are not the same thing. Substitutions are arrangements made between parents in the same classroom. Guest days are arrangements made in the school office.

ENROLLMENT AND FEE INFORMATION

In addition to the required enrollment forms listed below, the following fees and tuition must be submitted prior to the child entering the program;

1. An annual registration fee.
2. The May tuition for the fall/spring semester.
3. If enrolled for the summer, one half of the tuition for the summer session with is due by May 15th.

WE ARE UNABLE TO OFFER ANY DISCOUNTS ON THESE FEES AND, ONCE YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN ACCEPTED INTO THE PROGRAM, THESE FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE.

The Little School at MDPC is a non-profit program and tuition is based on the actual costs of operating the school divided by the number of students enrolled. Fees and tuition are set annually for the entire school year by The Little School at MDPC Parent Advisory Committee and are approved by the Session of Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church. Detailed registration information and fee schedules are available from the school Director and/or are available on the website. The annual fees are divided into nine monthly payments, due by the 10th day of the month. Payments will be considered late after the 12th day of the month and a \$20 late fee will be assessed. Payments are the same regardless of the number of school days in each month. A 3% discount will be given if full tuition is paid by August 15th prior to the start of the school year. Discounted tuition fees are offered to families that have 2 or more children in the program at a rate of 10% off of the child or children with the lowest rates. If you have a child enrolled at the Yellow School, you may take a 5% discount off of your tuition rate in both programs. Discounted fees are for monthly tuition only and do not include registration fees or activity fees. Only one of these discounts will be allowed per family. It is the family's responsibility to inform us of these discounts, we will not reimburse you for discounts not taken.

No credit will be given in any programs for absences, emergency closures, family vacations, or partially attended months due to illness. Any changes in enrollment procedures will be communicated via the website and the enrollment packet.

Please keep in mind the following policies regarding financial arrangements:

1. In the case of withdrawal, two weeks' written notice must be on file and is required before any tuition will be considered for a refund. Registration fees are never refunded. No credit on tuition is given for regularly scheduled school holidays and vacation periods. The preschool calendar follows as closely as possible the Spring Branch School District calendar, the same vacation, and holiday periods; the last day of spring programming is noted on the calendar.
2. A tuition fee will not be modified for absences due to short-term illness.
3. Checks must be made payable to **THE LITTLE SCHOOL AT MDPC**. You may bring your tuition payment to the school office or bring it during pick-up and drop-off times. You may choose to mail your payments to: The Little School at MDPC - 11612 Memorial Drive, Houston, Texas 77024. These need to be sent with enough time to reach the school by the 10th day of each month.
4. Our teachers and teacher assistants do not accept payments. Please do not give your tuition check to them. Your account may be paid by check, cash or money order.
5. A parent who does not pick up their child by the scheduled pick-up time will be assessed an administrative late fee of \$5.00 and the parents will be charged an additional fee of \$5.00 for each additional 5 minutes. Unless the parent contacts the center and special arrangements are made, these fees will not be waived. Any children who have not been picked up by the pick-up time will be taken to THE LITTLE SCHOOL AT MDPC office to wait for their parents.

REQUIRED ENROLLMENT PAPERWORK

At the time of enrollment, you must have the following forms on file in our office:

1. **ENROLLMENT INFORMATION** - identifies both parents/guardians of the child, contact phone numbers of those listed and to whom your child may be released. Please be sure you or your child's guardian is listed and anyone else who may be authorized to pick up your child. This form must be completed and signed prior to the child's admission into the program.

This form also contains permission to participate in water activities, and participation in special events. All children must have the signed permission on file in the office **PRIOR** to attending these events. If we do not have this form on file, your child may not attend even with your verbal consent. You will still be notified of any water activity day, scheduled to take place at least 48 hours in advance of the activity; these events are listed on the calendars given out by the teachers.

2. **HEALTH REQUIREMENT FORM** - your child's health is a matter of major importance to all of us. We provided you with a health form that must be signed by your child's physician. The physician must have examined your child within the past year. We also require that your child have certain immunizations, which we keep on file in the office. THE LITTLE SCHOOL AT MDPC must receive updated immunization records on an annual basis and/or as immunizations are administered to your child.

The medical report must be in our files prior to your child's first day of school. Effective September 2016, all children enrolled in The Little School must have all immunizations required by the Texas Department of State Health Services. Should you have any concerns or questions about this policy, please contact the Director.

You will need to make changes on your child's release information anytime you make a change in pick-up for your child. **It is imperative that all pertinent information be updated as necessary to ensure the safety of your child!**

DAILY PROCEDURES AND ABSENCES

Each child must be accompanied by the parent to the child's assigned room. **IT IS MANDATORY FOR THE PARENT TO SIGN IN AND SIGN OUT ON A DAILY BASIS**, while the child is greeted and given a health check by the teacher. You should complete all the information requested each day your child attends school. It is very beneficial for the child to witness the positive communication between these two caring adults in his/her life.

Allow yourself a few extra minutes on the first day of school. If your child is experiencing separation anxiety, you will want to remain in the classroom for a few minutes. You should offer assurance that you will return that afternoon and encourage your child to play with the other children. The teachers can assist you in the most effective way to leave the room. In our experience, once the child becomes involved in an activity, the anxiety of separation is lessened and the child becomes eager and willing to enter the classroom. Consider leaving your child for shorter lengths of time initially if separation seems very stressful.

The teacher is able to help and support the parent and child if events or problems are communicated. It is helpful to hand the teacher a note or communicate through a phone call about any issues which are, you feel, particularly stressful for the child. A follow-up appointment or a phone call can be helpful if you have more than just a few minutes of information to deliver. The teaching staff has made it a policy to schedule from 9:15-9:30 AM each morning to receive the children, exchange any pertinent information about the child, and help all of the children transition into the class.

It is imperative that we have accurate emergency contact information in the event that a medical emergency arises, we are able to contact you in a timely manner. Please update all information as needed and leave emergency numbers on the daily sign-in sheet.

The staff in each classroom will post a schedule of the daily instructional program for the parents to view. Your child's environment will include age appropriate activities in:

**RELIGIOUS BASED EDUCATION
MUSIC EXPERIENCES/MOVEMENTS
LITERATURE AND STORYTELLING
CREATIVE ACTIVITIES
INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP PHYSICAL ACTIVITY - INDOOR AND OUTDOOR
SOCIO-DRAMATIC PLAY
MATH AND SCIENCE ACTIVITIES
LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT
NUTRITION EDUCATION**

Each schedule is designed to enhance the group physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually.

The parent is responsible for notifying the office at 713-490-9267, if the child is to be absent, late, or on vacation as this is important for the teacher to know.

WHAT TO BRING WITH YOUR CHILD

Clothing:

A complete change of play clothes (including socks) labeled with a plastic bag for soiled or wet clothes. Diapers for younger children: at least 4 each day labeled.

Food:

Infants - Bring what your child is eating at home. Glass baby jars are fine. Include bibs, bottles and utensils. Remember that all bottles must have lids and be labeled. Parents have the right to breastfeed and/or provide breast milk for their child while in care.

A. All Others - According to the "Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers" issued by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, a growing child needs the following amounts of food to meet just one-half of his/her daily need:

- 1) 1/4 oz. of milk or 2 ounces of cheese; and
- 2) 2 slices of bread or 1 cup of cereal; and
- 3) 3/4 c. of vegetables and fruit (especially Vitamin C-rich fruits); and
- 4) 3 tablespoons of meat, fish or poultry (cooked), or 1 egg or 3/8 cup cooked dried beans or peas.

Since your child has a very busy time playing at The Little School at MDPC, please try to include most if not all of these food groups in his/her lunch. Remember that if you include perishable foods like dairy products in a lunch, you should also put one or two coolant cubes in the box to keep the foods cold. We do not have refrigerators large enough to store lunch boxes in the classrooms. We do not microwave food for the children.

THE LITTLE SCHOOL AT MDPC IS A PEANUT/TREE NUT-FREE ENVIRONMENT. DUE TO THE INCREASED OCCURRENCES OF FOOD ALLERGIES WITH THESE FOOD PRODUCTS, ALL OF OUR CLASSROOMS HAVE BEEN DESIGNATED PEANUT/TREE NUT FREE. PLEASE DO NOT SEND FOODS OR SNACKS WITH THESE PRODUCTS.

Snacks:

Snack time is scheduled mid-morning for all children. The snack time food should be considered a small "hold-over" until the noon meal is served. The school will provide snacks for the children in the younger classes. The 2 and 2-1/2 year old classes will have sign up sheets for the parents to bring in the snacks. Water will be provided in the classrooms throughout the day.

Nap Mats:

Nap mats are required for all children no longer sleeping in cribs at The Little School. The mat may have a quilt or sheet cover on top as long as the cover is regularly washed so that the mat stays clean. (A child-size sleeping bag may be used instead of a mat.) The mat must be taken home with the child at the end of each school day. MDPC is not responsible for mats left in the classrooms.

DEPARTURE

Please remember that the school day ends promptly at 2:30 PM, unless your child is signed up for Extended Day. You are welcome to pick up your child between 2-2:25 PM. You are required to write your name in full on the daily sign-in sheet indicating that your child has been picked up.

Make every effort to be punctual; it is a frightening experience for your child to feel forgotten. If there is a problem, please telephone the school Director. Your phone call will go a long way to prepare our staff and calm your child.

Any child not picked up by the scheduled time is considered late. He/she will be taken to the office. When you come to pick up your child, you will be charged a Late Fee as follows:

\$5 for the first 5 MINUTES per child

\$5 for each additional 5 MINUTES

A parent may authorize another person to pick up his/her child by either:

1. Listing the authorized person on the Enrollment Information, or
2. Bringing in a written, dated, permission slip to the child's teacher authorizing the child's release to someone else on the day of the release.

NO CHILD WILL BE RELEASED TO AN UNAUTHORIZED PERSON EVEN IF THE PERSON IS KNOWN TO THE CHILD. WRITTEN PERMISSION IS MANDATORY. WE WILL ASK FOR IDENTIFICATION SUCH AS A TEXAS DRIVER'S LICENSE. THIS WILL BE PHOTOCOPIED AND KEPT ON FILE. NO CHILD MAY BE PICKED UP BY ANYONE UNDER THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN (18).

Please notify the school immediately if you are going to be detained; this will not excuse you from being assessed late charges. Just leave a message on the answering machine indicating the time you will be able to pick up your child and proper paperwork (a late notice) can be filled out upon your arrival; do not forget that proper late fees will be assessed. The children's office is very busy at drop off and pick up times and we are not always able to answer the call directly, but we will be sure to respond to the answering machine at the earliest opportunity.

If a parent calls to authorize the emergency release of a child, we will verify that the caller is actually the parent by asking information which is relevant to your child. If there is still some doubt, we will ask to call you back and continue to ask you information pertinent to your child.

We are legally unable to refuse visitation or the privilege of picking up a child to a parent UNLESS WE HAVE A CERTIFICATE OF CUSTODY from the legal parent or guardian with physical custody. It is the parent's responsibility to furnish a CURRENT CERTIFIED COPY OF THE COURT DIVORCE DECREE FOR YOUR CHILD'S FILE. The decree must be specific as to who has legal custody, visitation rights, and care for the child(ren) in the event of holidays, and if any specific arrangements are to be made in payment of the family monthly tuition.

ILLNESS

The Little School at MDPC will keep accurate emergency information for each child. These records include your authorization of who should be called in case of your child's illness if you cannot be reached. It is the parent's responsibility to keep these records current if addresses, telephone numbers or other relevant information changes.

If your child is sick or injured, The Little School at MDPC will:

1. **Assess the nature of the illness,**
2. **Notify the parent(s),**
3. **Contact the authorized alternate on the emergency list (if parents cannot be reached),**
4. **Contact the child's physician, if noted or requested, and,**
5. **If the child is not picked up within one (1) hour of parent notification, the staff may transport the child to Memorial City Medical Center Emergency Room. The parent will be responsible for any charges incurred.**

In such emergency cases, the parent will be notified immediately and will be asked to meet the staff member accompanying the child at the Emergency Room. If your child has been exposed to a contagious disease, please notify the center. The staff will be able to observe your child for any symptoms just as you do at home.

Close communication can also help prevent contagion to other children. We will notify you if your child has been exposed to a contagious disease or illness which may have an effect on your family. Our staff is trained to observe symptoms as well as to use illness prevention techniques. We will make every effort to protect the health of all of our children. State licensing requires that The Little School at MDPC at MDPC use the Communicable Disease Chart as a guide to determine length of illness, readmission criteria, and treatment which is necessary in order to reduce the chance of contamination to the children.

It is of vital concern to the State of Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services that your child's medical records be kept up-to-date. When your infant through preschooler receives booster shots or has a change in medical information, this must be communicated to the school through a "shot record" or with dates supplied by you to be added to the records. Any child who has medical records which are out of date can be excluded from attending classes by the State of Texas, licensing division--this will be enforced by the school as well.

A sick child belongs at home where he/she is more comfortable. Please notify the school at (713)490-9267 or e-mail the Director at calexander@mdpc.org if your child is going to be absent or detained. We DO NOT dispense medicine. Please do not put medicine in the children's bags as a matter of safety.

Please review the **illness guidelines** shown below so that we may provide a healthy environment for all of our LITTLE SCHOOL AT MDPC children:

The child must be kept at home under the following circumstances:

1. Fever of 100.4 degrees or higher:

Children with fever must be excluded from school until they have been fever free for 24 hours, or we have clearance signed by a physician indicating it is not a communicable disease.

2. Diarrhea:

Children with two or more diarrhea episodes in a twenty-four hour period will be excluded from school until the child has been free from diarrhea for a 24-hour period, or we have clearance signed by a physician indicating it is not a communicable disease.

3. Other symptoms which indicate that a child belongs at home are:

- *vomiting within the previous 24-hour period
- *a heavy, non-clear nasal discharge
- *a constant cough or sore throat
- *fussy, cranky and generally not himself/herself
- *a skin rash
- *symptoms of a possible communicable disease

Following an illness, a child may return when:

- * 24 hours have elapsed since the last diarrhea stool, vomiting or fever.
- * in infants and toddlers, it is determined the symptoms are related to teething and the child is not running a fever.
- * it is determined by your doctor the nasal discharge is due to allergies and no infection is present.
- * he/she has been exposed to a communicable disease, but the school has been notified so the incubation period can be discussed, and it can be determined on what days he/she should stay at home.
- * a physician clears the child if the infection was contagious or thought to be contagious when discharged from school. The pediatrician must furnish written clearance for the child to return to school.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

In case of severe weather (i.e. hurricane, tornado, high water, high winds, etc.), please listen to radio and/or television reports. We will automatically cancel school if SBISD cancels or if the television or radio declares roads impassable. If an emergency situation exists at The Little School at MDPC (for example, no heat, electricity, etc.), each teacher will then contact her parents.

Each family may refer to the school calendar for school closings so you can prepare to schedule time off from work to be with your child, or to schedule someone in your home should you not be able to make arrangements to take time off from work.

COMMUNICATION AND CALENDAR

Your communication with the staff at The Little School at MDPC is vital to the success of your child in our program. The following forms of communication have been set up as a system to keep you informed of school events and calendar events:

- DAILY SUNSHINE REPORTS - the staff fills in the information on these sheets and places it in your child's diaper bag before they go home.
- MONTHLY CALENDARS will keep you informed of the curriculum in the classroom.
- MONTHLY NEWSLETTERS will keep you informed of the events in the school and parenting tips.
- BULLETIN BOARDS
- PROGRESS REPORTS AND CONFERENCES
- FLYERS AND E-MAILS will be sent to parents with important event information and/or reminders. Any e-mails to THE LITTLE SCHOOL AT MDPC should be directed to Candice Alexander at calexander@mdpc.org.

REMEMBER: Your child's emotional well-being is important to us. If there is a problem or special concern, we will be happy to work with you. Please let us know about unusual stresses or concerns in your child's life.

Occasionally difficulties or differences might occur. The following will briefly outline the procedure for grievances. First, every effort to listen to the parties (parent and teacher) involved would be made. Second, discussion of viewpoints to reach a workable solution. Third, unresolved conflicts should then be discussed with the director. If this is not satisfactory, communication with the Director of Children's Ministries would be suggested. Every effort will be made to come to a satisfactory solution within our program philosophy, licensing, and accreditation standards.

Other forms of communication in the school are phone calls to the school requesting that the teacher call you on her break, a note to the teacher at drop off or pick up, and by calling the school and requesting a call at a specific time.

The school calendar is communicated to all parents through the newsletter. The annual calendar which contains school openings, closings, all-school events, and holidays has been provided for you. The school does not follow the SBISD calendar directly but does try to observe the holiday closings scheduled by SBISD. The Little School at MDPC will not have the same in-service days as SBISD as it does not correlate to the seminars and workshops offered to private schools such as ours.

CHILDREN'S TOTE BAGS AND CUBBIES

You should check your child's school tote bag **daily** when picking up at the school or when your child arrives at home. Your child's tote is used as the staff's primary communication system for monthly newsletters, parent evenings, conferences, etc. Your child should also have a change of clothing in his/her tote in the event of an accident.

Should you have an article of interest or special community event you would like to share with other parents, please bring the notice or article by the office for approval. Nothing should be placed in the cubbies without prior approval of the school's administration.

P A R K I N G L O T S A F E T Y

All children must be walked into the building by a parent/guardian. Do not leave your engine running or leave children in parked cars. Please bring your purse in with you when you enter the building.

No parking is allowed in the fire lanes and we ask that parents please do not park in spaces designated as handicapped parking areas. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

P E R S O N A L B E L O N G I N G S / C L O T H I N G

All children should wear loose, comfortable clothing appropriate for active, involved experiences. Examples are shorts, pants and tops, and short dresses that do not create a tripping hazard. Each child will be indoors/outdoors and in or near potentially messy activities such as paint, and markers that may not wash out. **PLEASE AVOID ANY ARTICLE OF CLOTHING THAT IS NOT WASHABLE.** Play is our work and children must be dressed appropriately. During toilet training, children should wear clothing that is easily removable by the child. It makes it easier for them if they can remove and put on their own clothes during this period. Belts, overalls and all-in-one clothes should be avoided.

All clothing must be labeled with the child's name in clear print. A laundry marking pen or labels available at fabric shops are recommended. The school will not be responsible for items which may be lost or stolen.

Each child should have a change of clothing in his/her tote bag including socks and underwear. Please do not admonish your child to "stay clean", as this will put too much restriction on his/her choice of activities. We will try not to use anything that won't come off in the washing machine or bathtub in at least three washings; however, some of the primary paint colors have been known to stain clothing. Therefore, older clothing is the best choice. Smocks are worn in the classroom while children are painting or participating in messy activities but sometimes creativity takes a turn and is messy, resulting in stained clothing.

Tennis shoes are recommended at all times for safety reasons. No boots please, except on Rodeo Day. Also, please do not send your child in crocs as many children cannot play freely on the playground in this style of shoe due to the rubberized fall surface.

Occasionally your child may return home in borrowed clothing from our school and with his/her own soiled items in a plastic bag. Please launder and return the borrowed clothing for another child to use. Lost and found articles can be claimed in the administration office.

T O Y S / O B J E C T S F R O M H O M E

Except for transitional objects that are needed in the very opening days of school to help ease your child's transition from home to school, we ask that you leave your child's toys at home or in the car. Please make an effort to help your child leave them at home. Parents may choose to send a favorite "lovey", blanket, or pacifier to school as a comfort item. The staff will make every attempt to return these items to your child's bag when he/she has lost interest in this transition object and has settled into the daily routine. These items may or may not be necessary during the course of the year, but whatever the case, our staff will work with you to ensure the safety of these items at the end of each day. Some teachers have regularly scheduled "show and tell" time, and items brought for this purpose should be labeled with the child's name and put into the child's cubby until the proper time. Please make sure the child understands the items brought for show and tell will be shared.

CURRICULUM

The Little School at MDPC has written curriculum plans for each classroom that are based on knowledge of child development and learning, Christian values and education and assessment of individual needs and interests. The learning environment and activities for the children reflect our program's philosophy and goals. The teachers have clearly defined goals and objectives for the individual children that guide the curriculum planning. Teachers accurately assess the skills and progress of each child in the program through the use of observations, assessment tools, and activity records. Teachers identify children who experience difficulties in behavior or development, and develop a plan to help children acquire acceptable behavior or develop skills as needed.

Developmentally appropriate materials and equipment are available. Materials and equipment that project diverse racial, gender, and age attributes are selected and used. The teachers provide a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and experiences that are selected to engage children in active, meaningful learning and to achieve the following goals:

- a. foster positive self-identity and sense of emotional well-being
- b. develop social skills and knowledge
- c. encourage children to think, reason, question, and experiment (as used in mathematics, science, and social studies)
- d. encourage language (speaking, listening) and literacy development (emerging reading, writing awareness and skills)
- e. enhance physical development and skills
- f. encourage and demonstrate sound health, safety, and nutritional practices
- g. encourage creative expression, representation, and appreciation for the arts
- h. respect cultural diversity
- i. Christian values

The teachers provide materials and time for the children to select their own activities during the day. Children may choose from among several activities that the teacher has planned or the children initiate within a "learning center classroom environment".

Routine tasks are incorporated into the program as a means of furthering children's learning, self-help, and social skills. Routines such as diapering, toileting, eating, dressing, and sleeping are handled in a relaxed, reassuring, and individualized manner based on developmental needs. Our teachers plan with families to make toileting, feeding, and the development of other self-regulation skills a positive experience for children.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Our children live in a society that requires self-discipline, consideration of others, respect for property, as well as respect for themselves. Teachers support children's emotional development, assisting children to be comfortable, relaxed, happy, and involved in play and other activities. The staff help children deal with anger, sadness, and frustration by comforting, identifying, and reflecting feelings, and helping children use various strategies to express emotions and solve social problems. Children are encouraged to verbalize feelings and ideas.

By setting clear, consistent, and reasonable limits on your child's behavior, we give him/her the security of knowing exactly what is expected--life becomes predictable. Within these limits, the child will be encouraged to make choices and successful decisions. The staff uses children's mistakes as learning opportunities, describing the situation and encouraging children's evaluation of the problem rather than imposing the solution. A child's growing self-esteem flourishes as he/she experiences success with a variety of tasks and is safe to learn from natural mistakes. We do not expect perfection from any adult or child.

As the children grow in an age-appropriate environment, the teachers will set reasonable limits and/or will stop and re-direct unacceptable behavior without humiliation or physical punishment. More importantly, the teachers will model, reinforce and nurture the positive actions we all value. Often it is possible for an experienced teacher to re-direct or anticipate a child's behavior before a negative action occurs thus resulting in prevention.

Often parents ask us if we use "time out" as a form of discipline. If you mean that a child is told to sit in a chair or specific area alone to "think about" what he/she has done, the answer is "no, we do not". A young child does not "think" about wrong actions, and it is our responsibility to teach the child the words he/she should or could use or the actions he/she could or should take when frustrated. In other words, we intervene in a situation to allow the child to vent his/her feelings safely and to regain control, while giving the child the words to use to solve his/her problems. Usually the child stays with the group and solves the problem, letting other children hear and see the solution. If at all possible, the staff will "re-create" the frustrating play situation and stay with the child to offer assistance and words in a positive way thus allowing for success and practice. Just as adults need practice to perfect a new sport or trade, children require this same need.

Occasionally, a child will lose control of his/her physical actions, voice, and language to the extent that he/she must be removed from the group for the child to regain control and to safeguard the secure feeling of the other children. Removal is not a punishment. As soon as the child is quiet, the teacher will plan with him/her what the child will do when he/she returns to the group.

This version of time out is a solution to a problem because it teaches the child what to do. Our responsibility is to model the words and actions a child can use all of his/her life to solve problems.

Our goal is a secure, happy child, confident of his/her own ability and able to live and communicate with the people around him. We will frequently arrange conferences with parents to communicate our methods and to discuss how we can work consistently together for the child's optimal growth.

A telephone call from the center should not be considered a bad report or an emergency. Our role is to support your family by conferencing with parents for a variety of reasons. Often we need to communicate a situation and the resulting actions the staff took to work with your child, making it a successful situation. Sometimes we need to inform the parents about feelings the child has expressed; often we need to ask questions about a child's behavior at home in order to be realistic about his/her behavior at the center. All information is confidential and is used to help us nurture and teach your child.

BEHAVIORAL CONCERNS

During the course of a child's enrollment in the center, he/she may exhibit some behavioral concerns, which can manifest themselves in the form of spitting, head banging, biting, hitting and temper tantrums. While most of the behavioral actions do not inflict harm or reduce the safety of the children, some of these behaviors can cause concern, harm or frighten the other children in the classroom. For example, occasional and infrequent biting can be displayed by pre-verbal children who will bite instead of communicate when confronted with a friend who chooses not to share a toy. Other behaviors, such as temper tantrums, can often result when limitations are enforced in the classroom.

At the point when the behavior problems become frequent, severe, result in injury to the child or his/her classmates, reflect a change in the child's self esteem, or form a pattern, the school will then contact the parents for a conference. Parents must realize that when a classroom environment becomes unsafe or unpredictable for all of the children, the school must intervene and take the necessary steps to bring about safety. The parents and the school will consult to look for possible changes, which may have triggered this behavior and work as a team to search for possible solutions, if time permits.

Following the conference, the staff and parents will work together as a team to bring about the desired change in behavior. Should the efforts of both of these parties be unable to change the behavior during the allotted time, the school's administration will conference again with the child's parents and at that time will offer the following recommendations:

1. The parents may wish to seek outside intervention with a professional who may offer additional recommendations to both the center and the family (the school will offer names of those professionals who work with young children);
2. The parents may wish to reduce the amount of hours/days the child is in our school to receive outside intervention and target the behavior;
3. The parents may wish to withdraw their child on a temporary basis until the inappropriate behavior is under control (the child's place in the school would be kept open for a specified time);
4. The parents may wish to permanently withdraw their child from the facility and place their child in another setting more applicable to his/her needs.

This school reserves the right to and will request that a family withdraw their child if it is determined the parent cannot abide by our policies, or if we cannot adequately meet the needs of the child/family due to classroom size, teacher experience, budgetary limitations, or the inability to preserve the safety of the other children.

CHAPEL

Chapel is held approximately once a week in the Chapel. Faith development and Chapel are an important part of our regular preschool curriculum. During chapel we explore ways we know God; we interpret Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter and birthdays from a Christian perspective, and sing songs about Jesus and other Biblical teachings.

Because we believe each person is a child of God and worthy of love, acceptance, and support, we provide many experiences to build a good self-image in children. Our teachers reflect a firm faith and have learned to share that faith with our young preschool children in our daily curriculum and teachings.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

On your child's birthday, your child's teacher will highlight this day with a special celebration within the classroom. Your child will be our VIP (Very Important Person) of the day. In recognition of each child as a unique and special individual we will celebrate birthdays within the classroom using some of the following methods:

- Your child will be asked to bring in an item from when they were a baby—a special toys, photo, outfit, etc.
- Your child will be encouraged to bring their favorite book, record or tape to share at group time.
- The children will gather in a special birthday circle and your child will blow out the special birthday candle while all their friends sing "Happy Birthday".

Your child's teacher will give you specific guidelines for birthday celebrations. We cannot hold birthday parties at the school and this type of event should be planned to take place in your home where the celebration can be planned with your child. Please be sure and call your child's teacher prior to making a purchase for your child to bring to school for his birthday.

PARENT RESOURCES

The administration has information on community happenings for children, parenting workshops, etc. These parent education sessions will discuss topics of interest to parents and will be communicated through our monthly newsletter, flyers and e-mails. Your attendance at these educational events is showing support for the continuance of these workshops. The Minimum Standards of The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services is located in the school office but is also available online at dfps.state.tx.us. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to stop in the school office.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church has a large support staff that can be called on for assistance as needed or requested. If a parent is in need of any type of professional service, consult with the Director for a referral.

VOLUNTEERS

In compliance with licensing and accreditation standards, no volunteers will have access to the children's programs without school screening and orientation sessions with the administrative staff. Volunteers will work with the children only under the supervision of another staff member. The orientation sessions will train the parents in handling small groups of children, the licensing laws by which the school operates, discipline of children, release of children, and basic safety and first aid procedures.

As a licensed early childhood facility, we recognize that parent participation is vital to the growth and the development of the children. Children learn to trust in many different ways; many times seeing a parent active on the campus is one way in which the child can learn trust. This is your school. We need and urge your voluntary assistance in board planning, programs, sharing, hobbies, fundraising, recruiting future students, and making educational games. We always need extra parents to assist us in making our school the best.

PARENT BOARD MEMBERS

The Little School at MDPC has an organization of very important parents who are in charge of:

- Providing assistance with setting the school's policies and procedures,
- Assisting with school events,
- Providing assistance to the school's administration with parent events throughout the year,
- Remembering the staff in a special way with small treats, special snacks/lunches, and an end-of-the-year breakfast in their honor,
- Providing insightful information regarding school decisions.

The Parent Advisory Committee meets monthly at MDPC to discuss policies, plan events, listen to other parent concerns and to assist The Little School at MDPC Director in providing quality care for the children enrolled.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- House Bill 2086 states that licensed childcare programs are to notify parents about the new gang-free zone designation. A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where certain gang-related activity is prohibited and is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. Specific locations where certain gang related criminal activity is now prohibited include, but is not limited to, public schools, playgrounds, video arcade facilities, and day care centers. Certain gang-related activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of our program is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty.
- Certification is performed annually that all bulletins and notices issued by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission regarding unsafe children's products have been reviewed. I also certify that there are no unsafe children's products in the center of home except for the following: A product that is an antique or collectible children's product and is not used by, or accessible to any child, an unsafe children's product that is being retrofitted to make it safe and the product is not used by, or accessible to any child.
- If needed, areas within the church are available for breastfeeding. Ask a staff member for the location of these areas.
- An Emergency Preparedness Plan is available in the school office with detailed information for proper procedure in the event of emergency or natural disaster.
- Parents are always welcome to visit The Little School at MDPC during our hours of operation without prior approval. Due to the security doors, you will need to come to the school office first so that we may grant access through the doors.
- Firearms are prohibited (concealed or open carry) within our program unless the individual is a law enforcement official who is trained and certified to carry a firearm on duty.
- Preventing and Responding to Abuse and Neglect of Children
All employees are required to have annual training in preventing and responses to abuse and neglect of children which shall include:
 - warning signs of possible abuse and/or neglect
 - how to report a suspected incidence of abuse and/or neglect
 - awareness of prevention techniques for parents and employees
 - actions that a parent of a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect should take to obtain assistance and intervention
 - information for parents about appropriate community organizations, therapists, etc.
- Staff health records must include results of a pre-employment TB test and emergency information. Effective June 2014, The Little School has adopted a policy regarding vaccine preventable diseases. This policy requires employees to have a flu shot annually as well as a booster for Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis every 10 years, beginning with the 2015 school year (August 2015). Until that time, it is recommended but not required. It is also recommended that adults over the age of 60 have a Shingles and pneumococcal vaccine. This policy has been developed as a response to the increase of certain diseases world-wide and is intended to keep our teachers healthy. It is the employee's responsibility to have these immunizations (insurance should cover your costs) performed.