

PARENT HANDBOOK



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www.godsgarden.com

REVISED and AMENDED August 2020



August 17, 2020

Dear Families,

Attached you will find an updated version of our Parent Handbook. Some changes have been made to the program, policies and procedures at God's Garden Preschool. This handbook supersedes earlier handbooks that have been provided to parents as well as any statements made by employees of God's Garden Preschool. Please set aside time to read the materials outlined in the new handbook so you will become familiar with the early childhood program, policies and procedures at God's Garden Preschool.

Please return the Parent Handbook Acknowledgement by Friday, August 21st, 2020.

If at any time we can be of assistance to you or your family, please feel free to contact us by telephone, in person or schedule an appointment. We look forward to hearing from you and hope that you will become active in the program. It is our goal to build a positive relationship with each God's Garden family.

Warm Regards,

Michelle Rhodes

Michelle Rhodes, *PhD*

Director

God's Garden Preschool

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For the latest news, "Like" us on Facebook!

We Participate in Quality First

Quality First – a signature program of First Things First – partners with child care and preschool providers to improve the quality of early learning for kids birth to 5. Quality First funds quality improvements that research proves help children thrive, such as training for teachers to expand their expertise in working with young children and coaching to help providers create learning environments that nurture the emotional, social and academic development of every child.

Currently more than 900 childcare centers, homes and preschool programs in communities across Arizona participate in Quality First. All of these programs are licensed and regulated but participating in Quality First is voluntary. These programs are committed to quality improvement, going beyond regulatory requirements to help the infants, toddlers and preschoolers in their care be ready for success in school and beyond.

First Things First supports childcare and preschool programs enrolled in Quality First with:

- Coaching to build on what's great about a program and identify opportunities to improve
- Funding for the purchase of educational materials, equipment and other resources
- Financial support for teachers and caregivers to gain expertise in early childhood and how to nurture the development of young children
- Specialized assistance from a team of experts in child health, mental health and supporting children with special needs
 - **Quality First Coach** provides periodic visits or as needed to provide professional development and guidance of staff to implement developmentally appropriate best practice in settings and relationships
 - **Child Care Health Consultant** conducts periodic visits or as needed to provide health and safety technical assistance, education and resources. The CCHC can observe, advise, provide professional development, refer to community services and provide technical assistance to our staff.
 - **Smart Support Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant:** provides periodic visits or as needed to provide professional development and guidance of staff to insure the social-emotional needs of students, parents and staff are being addressed and met.



Quality early learning settings

help children develop crucial skills like motivation, self-control, focus and self-esteem

Quality Child Care Helps Kids Thrive

Why Quality Matters

- 90% of a child's brain develops before age 5. The positive, nurturing relationships young kids have with adults — from parents to childcare and early learning professionals — shape their learning now and throughout their lives.
- Parents are their child's first and best teachers, and a large number of children in Arizona spend their day learning from other adults, whether in regulated early childhood settings — such as childcare centers, home-based programs or preschools — or informal childcare with family, friends or neighbors.
- No matter the setting, quality matters for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Quality early learning settings help children develop skills — like emotional regulation, motivation, self-control, focus and self-esteem — that are crucial to their success now and once they enter school.



GOD'S GARDEN CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

God's Garden Preschool and Child Development Center offers Preschool Programs and Pre-Kindergarten classes for children ages 2-5. The Preschool Programs operate between the hours of 7:45a.m.-1:45p.m. with extended care until 2:45p.m.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The values and beliefs of Christianity permeate God's Garden daily in a variety of ways. Primarily, the school environment reflects the Christian faith as adults model a love of God by teaching values such as self-esteem, hope, faith, caring and sharing, forgiveness, honesty, responsibility, thankfulness, patience, love, joy, and fairness. In addition, basic Bible teachings such as creation, Noah's Ark, the birth of Jesus, the birth of Moses, Easter, prayer, love, trust, and hope are used to support and extend the various thematic units. Prayer is said to start and end the day, as well as before snack and meal times. Finally, chapel is led bi-monthly by our director, pastor, teachers, or volunteers from Horizon Church. The Horizon Church oversees the planning of the chapel curriculum. Parents are invited to participate.

MISSION

God's Garden Preschool partners with parents to grow the heart, mind, and spirit of the whole child in a Christ-centered environment.

CORE VALUES

Our program is unique because we provide a loving, nurturing, Christian community environment, in which we work to get to know our students and families through our Four Core Values:

Christ-Centered - We believe that God loves children and we want them to know his love. We will care for them in the same way he does. We will help children develop a love of God through:

- Daily interactions with teachers and staff
- Bi-monthly Chapel Service
- Integration of monthly Chapel Themes into the curriculum
- Daily Prayer

Our goal is to serve all families in our community – including those who may believe differently than us. Our commitment to faith means that your child will be cared for and taught to love and respect other people.

Child-Centered - We believe children are active learners, thus we provide a child-centered, discovery-based learning environment, in which your child will grow and thrive. We will help your child develop a love of learning by actively engaging him in the classroom. Our curriculum is created by the teachers who know your child best and therefore is the most meaningful. By engaging with teachers and other children, your child will develop long-lasting, intimate, loving relationships, as well as, kindergarten readiness skills such as higher order thinking, critical thinking, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution, which are all necessary for growing the following:

- **Heart** – relationships with others
- **Mind** – love of learning
- **Spirit** – moral and spiritual formation

Parent-Minded - We know that you, as a parent, know your child best. You are the primary influence on your child's life and we are here to support you. We do this in the following three ways:

1. **Partner with you.**
 - a. This means dialog. We are here to engage in back and forth communication with you.
 - b. Safe place to share your concerns about your child or us. We can work together to address any concerns you may have and problem solve possible solutions.
 - c. Work together to make sure your child is growing. We will set reasonable developmentally appropriate goals for your child. We will also give you ideas for things you can work on at home, while we pursue them at school and provide you with regular updates through parent-teacher conferences as well as informal meetings.
2. **Resource you.**

- a. We want you to be equipped with the latest research and other information that will enable you to be better parents. This information will be provided to you via Parent 101 Meetings and Seminars, STEM Night, Weekly Lesson Plans, Monthly Newsletters, Facebook Posts, Live Events, Printed Flyers, Emails, and more.
- b. Ongoing communication about what is happening in the classroom so you can leverage it at home. Two voices saying the same thing is more powerful than two voices saying different things.

3. **Connect with you.**

- a. Nobody should have to parent alone. We want to connect with you and other moms and dads in our community.
- b. Open door Policy – drop by to visit, observe, or volunteer anytime
- c. In the classroom – family involvement activities
- d. Family Engagement Nights - Ice Cream Social, Art Show, Christmas Program, etc.

Community Oriented - God's Garden is part of a larger community. We want our students and families to be engaged with the world around them; to understand the opportunities they have to bless and serve others around them, so they grow up realizing that life is about the larger whole, rather than only themselves. Therefore, we engage in a variety of service projects throughout the year, including: Transportation Day, Food Drives, Love Up, Winged Hope, etc. There are many ways for you to get involved.

CURRICULUM

God's Garden utilizes a child-centered, discovery based curriculum. Our Program incorporates the High/Scope Preschool Curriculum, which focuses on active learning through play. Adult-child interaction is an integral component of the High/Scope Curriculum. In the High/Scope curriculum, children and adults share control and teachers follow the children's lead. Children learn best when pursuing their own interests and goals, therefore, students are encouraged to make choices about materials and activities for much of the day. Within this environment, they explore and discover, ask and answer questions, solve problems, and interact with classmates and adults. As a natural outcome, they engage in "Key Experiences" (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation). These key experiences are grouped into the following 10 categories and provide the basis for the God's Garden preschool skill objectives and assessment: Creative Representation, Language, Literacy & Reasoning, Initiative and Social Relations, Movement, Music, Classification, Seriation, Number, Space, and Time. Curriculum and lesson plans are shared with families weekly via email.

CLASSROOMS

God's Garden offers Preschool classes to 2-year-olds and 3-year-olds and Pre-Kindergarten classes to 4- and 5-year-olds. The number of classes offered varies by year due to the needs of the community.

TODDLER PROGRAM

Our toddler program is for 2- and 3-year-olds. Our teachers provide a warm, loving, and safe environment where the little ones feel comfortable to explore and create independently and at each one's own pace. Our toddlers learn about God's love, friendship, sharing, and independence. Through child-centered play and modeling by the teachers, they learn important skills such as verbal and non-verbal communication, creative representation, and problem-solving. Numbers, colors, and shapes are introduced and explored through fun songs, games, art, and stories.

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Our preschool program is for 3- and 4-year-olds. It is designed to encourage development of social skills such as making friends, playing cooperatively, and communicating with peers and adults. Colors, shapes, numbers and letters are explored through games, songs and art. Free-choice time allows them to practice independence, decision-making, cooperation and problem-solving skills. Activity and art centers encourage imaginative play, exploration, creativity and development of fine motor skills. Daily 'jobs' are rotated to help the children build self-esteem and develop a sense of responsibility and control in the classroom.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

Our pre-kindergarten program is for 4- and 5-year-olds. The focus of our pre-kindergarten program is preparation for kindergarten. Our program is child-centered and focuses on reinforcing social skills such as cooperation, making choices, problem-solving, taking turns in a group, conflict resolution, and making friends.

Four-year-olds are ready for letter and number recognition, writing of letters and numbers, phonemic awareness, sorting and classifying. These skills and concepts are learned through a combination of free choice time and small/large group activities. Free choice time encourages independent thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, initiative, imagination, and creativity. Both large group activities (circle time) and small group activities (projects) help to refine skills such as following directions, fine motor skills, and verbal communication. Our teachers help children explore topics through discovery and investigation. Furthermore, our teachers work to promote problem solving and critical thinking skills by engaging in conversations during play.

SAMPLE DAILY PROGRAM SCHEDULE

8:45AM – Arrival, Greeting, and Morning Table Activities	9:15AM – Outdoor Play
9:00AM – Welcome Circle, Planning, Daily Jobs, Music & Story	9:45AM – Small Group Activity (Math, Science, or Art)
	10:15AM – Snack Time
	10:30AM – Free Choice Play, Core Centers (Work Time)
	11:30AM – Closing Circle, Review of Day, Music & Movement
	11:45PM – Departure, Goodbye Greetings

KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

Aligned with State Standards, our signature kindergarten program prepares children for success in school by focusing on math, science, language and literacy, and social emotional development via our HighScope Child-Centered, Discovery-based, Christian Curriculum. Children are provided with an opportunity to engage in our core centers (i.e., Kitchen, Blocks, Writing, Dramatic play) through play, daily, which is rarely seen in kindergarten anymore. Our program is comprehensive and recognizes that all children are unique individuals who learn differently. Differentiated instruction is used to identify where each child is at developmentally and then works to help each child build individual skills throughout the school year. It is a highly individualized process that recognizes each child's unique strengths and needs. With the teacher's guidance, our students gain skills by exploring topics through discovery and investigation, just like in our preschool programs, because learning is most meaningful when children are active participants in their learning. Finally, our teachers work to promote social emotional development by engaging in a lot of conversations with children during individual work, group work, and free-choice play because it lays the foundation for success in school and in life.

CORE CENTERS

The space and materials at God's Garden are carefully selected and organized to promote active learning. Supplies are frequently rotated and are arranged to allow for independent access and clean-up. The classrooms are divided into the following activity-specific core learning centers: Fine Motor, Art, Music/Movement, Blocks, Sensory Table, Dramatic Play, Nature/Science, Math, Writing, Reading, and Toys.

CLASS SIZE

Teacher-child ratios are closely aligned to the recommendations from National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Ratios for 2-year-olds are 1:5 with a maximum of 10 children, ratios for 3-year-olds are 1:8 with a maximum of 16 children. Ratios for 4- and 5-year-old are 1:9 with a maximum of 18 children. A Degree/qualified lead teacher plus at least one teaching assistant will instruct each class.

AGE REQUIREMENTS

Children must be two, three or four by August 31 in order to be eligible for their prospective 2's or 3's Preschool class, 4's Pre-K class, and Kindergarten Class. Some flexibility is shown up to September 30 or later for special situations. Children do not transition or "move-up" a class when they have a birthday mid-year. Instead, they transition in August at the start of the new school year with their classmates.

TRANSITION PLAN

God's Garden is committed to implementing continuity of care within our program. We strive to keep the number of transitions experienced from home to school, classroom to classroom, and school to Kindergarten at a minimum. Limiting transitions helps children develop deep connections and build strong trusting relationships with adults. Children can transition immediately into our program upon enrollment after they have completed a site tour and classroom visit, and/or Meet the Teacher New Student Orientation.

Site Tour and Classroom Visits are completed before registration for the upcoming school year, which begins in March of each year. New families are invited to tour the school, visit the classrooms, meet the teachers and the director, and ask questions about our program. If a student enrolls mid-year, site tours and classroom visits are scheduled as needed.

Children transition between classrooms within God's Garden once each year in August, at the start of the new school year and remain there for the entire school year. This process allows us to meet the developmental needs and chronological age of each child enrolled in the program. Our goal is to assist parents and staff in their efforts to ease the transition process of children to God's Garden, within our program and to Kindergarten. For children transitioning to Kindergarten, we inform families of kindergarten informational sessions at local schools and encourage parents to tour their programs. The director shares a list of local schools, public and private, upon request. Kindergarten readiness information is shared with families prior to kindergarten enrollment in a variety of ways. Students can remain at God's Garden for an additional year of preschool if recommended or requested by the family.

ENROLLMENT AND REGISTRATION

Registration for the regular academic school year begins in March each year. Current families attending Horizon Presbyterian Church and God's Garden are given priority in selecting class placements. Open registration for the general public begins directly following. Enrollment is accepted on an ongoing basis if room permits. Summer Registration is due in April and must be paid in advance to enroll in Summer Camps. No Drop-ins will be allowed.

TUITION

Tuition is to be paid monthly August through May for regular academic school year. Tuition rates are available on the website or in the front office. A non-refundable, annual registration and supply fee for preschool is required. Tuition is due on the first of each month and considered late if received after the 5th. God's Garden accepts the following forms of payment: personal checks, cashier's checks, money orders, online bill pay, or by credit card via paypal on our website (please note a 3% charge will be

added to your account for credit card payments). Please make checks out to God's Garden. The monthly tuition rate is calculated over the entire school year. Some months have fewer class meeting days than other months, but the monthly tuition rate remains the same. Tuition is NOT prorated for vacations, holidays, or absences. Moneys for days missed or vacations cannot be refunded. Fees and tuition are not refundable under any circumstance.

There is a \$15 charge for late tuition received after the fifth day of the month and/or returned checks, in addition to any charges from banks. If tuition is 30 days late, please contact the Director to set up a payment plan or your child will be dis-enrolled. Children dis-enrolled due to nonpayment and absence from the program for two consecutive weeks may result in the child or children being placed on the waiting list, if space is not available for the child.

Summer Tuition is to be paid weekly June through August for part-time preschool. A non-refundable, registration fee for summer preschool is required. Moneys for days missed or vacations cannot be refunded. Registration fees and paid tuition are not refundable under any circumstance.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The Preschool Programs operate between the hours of 8:45a.m.-1:45p.m. with the opportunity to enroll in additional enrichment classes and extended care (Stay and Play) before school from 7:45-8:45a.m. and after school until 2:45p.m. The regular academic school year operates from August through May with the opportunity to enroll in the Summer Program in June and July.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

God's Garden preschool classes follow the Kyrene School District Calendar for all school holidays and breaks. God's Garden will be closed for the following holidays: Labor Day, Fall Break, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day and the Friday following Thanksgiving, Christmas Break, Martin Luther King Day, President's Day, Spring Break, Good Friday. *There is also no school during Teacher Staff Development Days and Parent-Teacher Conferences

MEET THE TEACHER

Meet the Teacher New Student Orientation is held yearly, the week before school begins, to introduce children and their parents to their new classroom and meet their new teachers.

CURRICULUM NIGHT

Curriculum Night is an opportunity to learn about the curriculum in your child's classroom. Parents will get see children's work, ask questions, and learn about what your child has been doing and learning at school. Children are encouraged to attend - childcare will not be provided.

ENRICHMENT CLASSES

God's Garden offers a variety of enrichment classes held after school hours for 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds. Children must be potty-trained to attend. These classes are fee-based and depend upon adequate registration and teacher availability. Registration is for one eight-week segment; payment is due upon sign up. These classes are capped at 15 total children. Early registration is recommended because space is limited. Please see the director for further information and registration forms.

EXTENDED CARE

Stay and Play offers before and after school extended care for children between 2.5- and 5-years-old. Stay and Play is currently open before school (**AM Stay and Play**) from 7:45a.m. to 8:45a.m. and after school (**PM Stay and Play**) from 11:45a.m. until 2:45p.m. During Stay and Play, children engage in child-centered, free-choice play both in the classroom and outside. Children must be potty-trained to attend. Children must also bring their own lunch to attend PM Stay and Play. This program is flexible, and can be reserved ahead of time, or simply the day of (if space permits). Please note, however, that space is limited, so early sign-ups are recommended! Payment is charged daily. There is a late fee for children picked up after 3:00PM. \$15 fee will be assessed for every 5 minutes late.

SUMMER PROGRAM

God's Garden offers Summer Camps to children between the ages of 2- to 8-years-old. Children do not have to attend God's Garden during the regular academic year to enroll in our Summer Camps. Summer Camps are held weekly in June and July and are Theme-based. Themes may include Discover Science, It's a Pirate's Life for me, Explore Nature and Great Outdoors, Dinosaurs, Ocean, Community Helpers, Up in Space, etc. Registration is due in advance. Space is limited.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

A 30-day paid, written notice is required to withdraw your child. However, if you choose to withdraw your child within the first two weeks of enrollment, the 30 day paid notification policy will be waived. After the start of the third week of enrollment, the 30-day paid withdrawal notification policy will be enforced. All withdrawals must be submitted via the Withdrawal Form to the Director.

DISMISSAL PROCEDURE

We reserve the right to end a child's enrollment for violations of policies, procedures, and rules of the school or those of the Arizona Department of Health Services. Causes for dismissal may include but are not limited to: failure to pay tuition, uncooperative or disruptive behavior of the student or the parent.

There are different types of preschool/child care programs because family/child needs differ. If we determine that our center is not meeting your child's needs, we will recommend withdrawing your child and assist in helping you find appropriate placement elsewhere.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

There may be an occasion when a parent has a complaint about a situation. Most problems result from simple misunderstandings and lack of communication. We suggest that you speak with the teacher if such an occasion arises. Any further questions or concerns should be brought up to the director of the center. If any person is not satisfied with the resolution, they may submit their grievance in writing to the Board of Directors.

CHANGE IN STATUS

Parents must notify the school immediately, in writing, of any change in work status, telephone number, address, marital status, custody status, etc. Any custody papers regarding who your child may be released to need to be copied and on file at the school.

TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

The teacher's role is to support growth and learning by engaging in an ongoing cycle of observing children, guiding their learning, and assessing their progress. Our teachers motivate and nurture the children, build on their prior knowledge and strengths, and support their learning in an intentional way by using a variety of strategies to increase their knowledge, skills and understandings in a Christian environment.

TEACHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Majority of Lead Teachers must have a Bachelor's degree or higher in early childhood education or related field.
- Majority of Assistant Teachers must have a CDA Credential or higher.
- All teaching staff must have a minimum of a high school diploma or GED.
- Teacher training days may be scheduled during the year.

All teachers **must** complete the following professional development annually:

- 18 hours of annual training in accident/emergency procedures, recognition of illness, nutrition, child abuse detection, reporting, and prevention, safety, program administration, infant and child growth and development, observation and assessment, developmentally appropriate practice, child guidance and discipline to meet Arizona Department of Health Services Childcare Licensing Requirements.
- at least 3 hours of training on physical activity, nutrition, sun safety, breast-feeding, family-style meals, oral health and tobacco to meet Empower Program requirements (can be included in the 18 hours required by Licensing).

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Actual arrival and departure times must be recorded every day by the parent or person designated to bring/pick up the child in the Sign In/Sign Out Book. Parents must notify the school of all absences. Parents are responsible for accurately filling out required forms (Registration Form, Parent-Participation Agreement, Emergency Form, and Immunization Record) and keeping them updated. Anything of educational interest pertaining to the unit of study to be shared with the class is welcome. Please check with the teacher in the class. Assistance is needed with parties, special events, and fund-raisers. Parents are invited to share hobbies, work experiences, special interests, and talents. Please make prior arrangements with the teacher. Fund raising help is handled by Board of Directors. A Parent Information Center is maintained on bulletin board or specified place in each classroom. There is Parent representation on the Board of Directors and on the Parents Committee.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

“The parent is the child's first teacher.”

Providing quality education and care for your child requires close cooperation of families and God's Garden Staff. We feel a strong partnership with the parents is very important. After all, parents are the most important person in your child's life! Together, as significant adults in your child's life, we promise to work with you to become the bridge between home and school. We would like you to be an active partner in our program. God's Garden has an open door policy. We welcome and encourage you to visit and/or volunteer at any time. To strengthen the bridge between

home and school, we highly encourage parents to communicate daily with teachers about their child's progress, development, special events, or any changes in your child's life. We also welcome the opportunity to communicate with you about any concerns that you may have. We encourage parents to become involved in the program by regularly communicating with your child's teacher, attending parent/child activity nights, special events and other volunteer activities, and by joining the Parents Committee and/or Board of Directors.

PARENT COMMITMENT

Parents are required to complete 5 hours of volunteering at God's Garden each school year. These hours may be completed in the classroom, by planning and assisting with special events, volunteering at Transportation Day, serving on the Board of Directors, serving on the Parents Committee, serving as a Classroom Parent Representative, or helping with any other special event. We will be offering a Mandatory Parent 101 Meeting in August and January to inform parents about all the ways to get involved at God's Garden throughout the year. Meetings will be held right after drop off.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

God's Garden Preschool is governed by Horizon Church Board of Directors, known as Session. The Board is comprised of Horizon church members. The Board of Directors oversees the continuing operation of God's Garden Preschool. The Board plans, develops and establishes policy, and assess the performance of the school. The Board is also responsible for promoting Christian education in the community. The Board encourages personal faith in Christ and the building of Christian character.

PARENTS COMMITTEE

The Parents Committee serves as a forum for parents to raise questions, share ideas, organize school events, and fundraise for the school. Events include Harvest Festival, Ice Cream Social, STEM Night, Art Show, Bike Safety Days, Water Days, Parents Night Out, Teacher Appreciation, and our highly anticipated annual "Transportation Day".

CLASSROOM PARENT REPRESENTATIVES

Each classroom at God's Garden is looking for at least one parent to serve as a Classroom Parent Representative. The Classroom Parent Representative is responsible for organizing classroom parties and classroom collections for Teacher Gifts, fundraising, recruiting volunteers to help with special events, including Transportation Day, assisting with planning and implementation of Teacher Appreciation Week, collecting items for Transportation Day Classroom Raffle Baskets, and volunteering at school events.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences are an important component of family involvement. Family involvement in early education can lead to positive benefits for children, such as increased school attendance, higher academic performance, and improved attitudes about school. Parent-teacher conferences provide opportunities not only for parents to learn about their children's progress in school, but also for teachers to gain insights into their students' home and community lives. Parent perspectives on student strengths and needs, learning styles, and learning opportunities outside of school can help teachers shape their instructional methods in the classroom. Parent-teacher conferences at God's Garden are held twice per year in the Fall (October/November) and early Spring (March/April). Parents can request additional parent-teacher conferences at any time.

ASSESSMENT AND DOCUMENTATION

Assessment is ongoing and is conducted in order to learn about a child's current knowledge and understandings, skills, interests, and dispositions. Naturalistic assessment, including observations and portfolios, and anecdotal records and other forms of documentation will be used in our classrooms along with a Developmental Checklist (i.e., HighScope COR) and a Summary of Developmental Progress to monitor each child's progress over the school year. Including multiple forms of assessment and documentation in the classroom provides a comprehensive, in-depth picture of the learning progress of an individual child. Students will be assessed multiple times throughout the school year to assess their individual growth and progress. Assessments will be shared with parents during Parent-Teacher Conferences. However, parents are welcome to ask about their student's progress at any time throughout the school year. Portfolios will be sent home with families on the child's last day of attendance.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In accordance with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), God's Garden Preschool accepts children who have been identified as having a disability and/or a medical condition. Prior to any student with a disability being enrolled into the program, an updated IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) or IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) must be on file at the center in order to meet the child's developmental needs. At times, additional services for additional services that will assist parents in referring children to local agencies for additional services that we may not be able to provide at God's Garden Preschool. If you have concerns about your child's development, please reach out to your child's teacher or the director for guidance. We are here to support you.

SCREENING AND REFERRAL POLICY

In order to insure all children receive the best education and care possible, God's Garden Preschool routinely screens children for special needs, disabilities, and/or developmental delays. Classroom teachers will work to identify and/or monitor any possible developmental concerns or delays with daily behavior logs, anecdotal records, children's work samples, developmental checklists, and classroom screening tools (i.e., ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE). God's Garden Preschool will also assist parents in referring children with suspected disabilities to a developmental pediatrician and/or local agencies, including, but not limited to AZEIP (Arizona Early Intervention Program), Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), Pillar Child Development, Desert Valley Pediatric Therapy, Mariposa Therapy Services, Aspen Behavioral Consulting, or Kyrene School District.

SCHOOL/HOME COMMUNICATIONS

Frequent and clear communication between school and home is vital. We send home monthly newsletters and weekly lesson plans in addition to a variety of flyers and announcements as needed. These items will inform you of the learning activities that are taking place. Other forms of frequent communication are established by teachers based on the needs of individual children. It is essential that you check and read through all communications offered to you through your parent mailbox and email. Vital information is sent home this way as it is impossible for the teacher to personally communicate everything to each individual parent. It is one of our goals to have close communications with parents. We also recognize that because of your interest in the welfare of your child, you will, on occasion, wish to confer with the teacher or director. Conferences may be arranged upon request. Parent conferences are regularly offered to discuss your child's adjustment and progress. Parents are free to view their child's file. If parents have questions or concerns, please speak first to the child's teacher and then to the director if needed.

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE POLICY

It is our hope that the climate of the classroom will promote love and respect for one another. Positive child guidance will be used in the classroom to teach children democratic life skills including respecting others and one's self, working together in groups, solving problems using words, expressing strong emotions in acceptable ways, and making ethical and intelligent decisions. Our goal is to work with all children to help them develop self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, and cooperation. In addition, our goal is to encourage the children to become creative, independent, responsible, and socially capable adults. This involves learning to make responsible choices and accepting the consequences of such choices during early childhood development.

The following examples of positive child guidance will be used in our classrooms:

- At all times a child is treated with love and affection. Warm hugs, encouraging words and praise are ways we let children know we love them.
- Positive reinforcement and redirection are used to eliminate potential difficulties.
- We listen to children because they are important.
- The environment is designed as a place for children.
- Children will be encouraged to be creative, independent, and responsible members of the community.
- Teachers engage in clear supportive communication and conversations with children.
- Teachers expect behavior that is appropriate for the developmental level of the children in the classroom.
- Teachers model appropriate behavior, coping skills, and conflict resolution to help children learn how to behave appropriately in our society.
- Teachers help children engage in conflict resolution strategies. Children learn how to work together with other children.
- Teachers expand understanding and encourage children to think critically.
- Teachers provide children with opportunities to develop the classroom community through participation in decision making about classroom rules, plans, and activities.
- Teachers anticipate and take steps to prevent potential behavior problems.
- Teachers help children learn to appropriately express their feelings and let them know that they are heard and understood. Teachers help children talk about their own and others' emotions. They provide opportunities for children to explore a wide range of feelings, and different ways that those feelings can be expressed.
- Teachers utilize a safe space or calm down area to help children learn to regulate their emotions. Teachers also engage in co-regulation techniques to help children learn to self soothe and navigate strong emotions.

SCHEDULE FOR ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Classes begin promptly at 8:45am. Children should arrive no more than five minutes before the session begins. It is important that the teachers have time to prepare the classroom and needed material before each session. Please sign your child in and out with full first and last names and make sure that an adult is aware of his/her presence before you leave. Each child must be signed in and out by a parent or person who is authorized by the parent as listed on the registration form. **Full signatures are required by the Arizona Department of Health Services** (no initials, please). A child will be released only to his parents or to persons authorized by the parent. In the event that it is necessary for someone other than a parent to pick up the child, written documentation is needed. Any person other than a parent must show a picture ID before the child is released. At dismissal, your child should remain inside the building until he/she is called for by his/her parent or other authorized adult.

LATE PICK-UP POLICY

A child picked up 15 minutes or more after the end of class session is considered a late pick-up. Occurrence of a late pick-up will result in a verbal reminder and the child will be placed in our extended care program until the parent arrives. Parents will be responsible for paying any Stay and Play fees.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

The State of Arizona requires that your child be immunized. An immunization record and health form must be on file with our office by the first day of school and kept current. It is extremely important that these sheets are kept current, so please notify us through an updated copy of the doctor's record each time your child receives a new immunization.

MEDICATION

We cannot administer medication of any kind without written authorization on the Parent Medication Consent Form. All prescription medication must be in the name of the child receiving the medicine. All medication must be in the original container. Also, the first dose of a new medication needs to be given at home where you can check for and monitor any reactions. A written doctor's authorization may be required at the discretion of the Center. **DO NOT LEAVE MEDICATIONS IN YOUR CHILD'S CUBBY OR TOTE.** Parents are responsible for delivering medicine to and picking it up from the Director. If your child has a severe allergy requiring an Epi Pen, please let the Front Desk and your child's teacher know right away.

ILLNESSES

Sick children should be kept home to prevent spreading germs to their classmates and teachers. Young children who have not built up immunity are very susceptible to sickness and disease. High fevers, rashes, sharp stomach pains, ear infections, severe congestion, etc., should be checked by your doctor. If you are unsure as to what illness guidelines we follow, please ask your teacher or the director. Children need to be fever free and symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school. If antibiotics are required, your child needs to be on them for 24 hours before returning to school. Also, the first dose of a new medication needs to be given at home where you can monitor any reactions.

If your child becomes ill while at school, you will be notified and parents are expected to pick up an ill child **WITHIN ONE HOUR** after notification.

If your child has contracted a communicable disease, please contact the school so other parents may be notified. If your child is exposed to a communicable disease by

one of his/her classmates, you will be notified and told to be on the lookout for specific symptoms.

Communicable Diseases include: chicken pox, diarrhea, nausea with or without vomiting, influenza, whooping cough, rubella, salmonellosis, scabies, shigellosis, smallpox, streptococcal Group A infection, measles, mumps, lice, and pink eye or conjunctivitis.

Communicable diseases have specific exclusion dates which have been established by the Arizona Department of Health Services. These exclusion dates must be complied with prior to re-admission to school. If you have any questions, contact our director. Children who are experiencing diarrhea and/or vomiting, must be free of symptoms for 24 hours before they can return to school.

We appreciate knowing about hurts, bruises and/or emotional upsets that occur away from school. You may be asked to sign a slip describing an injury that happened away from school. Keep us informed on significant home events. This allows us to deal sensitively with all situations. If an accident occurs at the center you will be informed. You will be notified in writing, either by letter or posting notice in a visible location, when their child/children have been exposed to a communicable disease. **Parents are required to notify the center in the event that a child will not attend due to illness or personal reason.**

PANDEMIC EMERGENCY

In the case of a pandemic emergency such as COVID-19, we will follow additional safety precautions in the classroom to prevent the spread of a pandemic virus.

The director will complete arrival health checks daily. Students and staff will be screened upon arrival daily for cough, fever, and shortness of breath. Daily Temperature Checks will be taken before students and staff can enter the building. If a staff member or student has experienced fever, cough, or shortness of breath the staff member or student may not return to God's Garden for at least 72 hours **and** must be free of symptoms without fever reducing medication before they can return. If a staff member or student has been diagnosed with a pandemic virus (such as COVID-19), then parents must let us know right away. Diagnosed staff members or students may not participate in our program for 14 days and must be free of symptoms without fever reducing medication before returning.

If students have traveled out of Arizona in the last 2 weeks, they may not participate in our program for at least 14 days and must be symptom free without fever reducing medications before they return.

Parents and visitors must wear masks while on school property. Children are not required to wear masks. Masks pose a safety hazard to young children. We will do our best to minimize contact between children in the classrooms, however, students

will be given opportunities for social interaction throughout the day. Teachers will be provided with clear face masks or face shields to wear while on GG property and in the classrooms.

We will be monitoring students for fever, cough, and shortness of breath daily to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Students will be sent home immediately if they develop a fever of 100.4°, a cough, or shortness of breath, while in our care.

If a student in any of our classrooms has been diagnosed with COVID-19, we will notify parents immediately and the classroom will be closed for 14 days. During this time, all students and staff are encouraged to be tested for COVID-19 and the child's classroom will be cleaned. Parents will be asked to self-monitor their children for symptoms (cough, fever, shortness of breath) while at home and should not return until 14 days have passed, and the child is free of symptoms. If the child starts to show symptoms within the 14 days, he/she should be tested for COVID-19 prior to returning. During a classroom closure, our preschool classroom(s) will switch to online virtual programming. Students will be offered daily virtual circle times, story times, and lessons/activities that can be conducted at home where it is safe.

If multiple students in a classroom have been diagnosed with COVID-19, we will close the classroom indefinitely and will switch to online virtual programming until cases of the pandemic virus (like COVID-19) have been resolved.

In cases in which a sibling of the student in the child's classroom that has been diagnosed with COVID-19 also attends God's Garden, this student will be asked to stay home for at least 14 days and self-monitor for symptoms (cough, fever, shortness of breath). The sibling must be tested for COVID-19 if symptoms are present or develop at any time. If the sibling tests positive, we will also close the sibling's classroom for 14 days and switch to online virtual programming.

If a staff member in one of our classrooms has been diagnosed with COVID-19, we will notify parents immediately and the classroom will be closed for 14 days. During this time, all students and staff are encouraged to be tested for COVID-19 and the classroom will be cleaned. The staff member who was diagnosed with COVID-19 will not be able to return to work until 14 days have passed and he/she is free of symptoms. Parents will be asked to self-monitor their children for symptoms (cough, fever, shortness of breath) while at home and should not return until 14 days have passed, and the child is free of symptoms. If a child starts to show symptoms within 14 days, he/she should be tested for COVID-19 prior to returning. During this time, the child's preschool class will switch to online virtual programming. Students will be offered daily virtual circle times, story times, and lessons/activities that can be conducted at home where it is safe.

Because the Director has daily contact with all students, families, and staff – if she has been diagnosed with COVID-19, then all classrooms will be closed for at least

14 days and will switch to online virtual programming at that time. Once the director is free of symptoms, the school will reopen. Communication with families from the teachers, school, and leadership will occur weekly. Families will be notified as soon as possible with a date for reopening.

All parents must drop-off and pick-up students at the front of the school during a pandemic like COVID-19. No parents or outside visitors will be allowed in the classrooms unless they are empty. Only one parent is allowed at drop-off and pick-up to minimize contact with others. Parents are encouraged to wear masks. Parents will be encouraged to wait in the car until the front door is open and there is a minimal amount of people waiting to pick up/drop off children. They will also be asked to follow social distancing guidelines by maintaining 6 feet apart from others. In order to maintain social distancing guidelines, drop off and pick up times for our classes will be staggered.

To decrease contact between students, only one class will be allowed on the playground at a time. The equipment will be sanitized in between each classroom use and at the end of each school day. The playground will be closed to student and family use before and after school.

Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting efforts will increase. Toys, materials, tables, doorknobs, light switches, and outdoor equipment will be cleaned with bleach daily. Handwashing will also increase. Students will wash hands at least 3 times per day, including upon arrival, before and after snack, after playing outdoors, after touching one's face, and before leaving for the day. Hand sanitizer will be made available daily in all classrooms, in the hallways, and at the front of the school.

Online virtual classes will be offered in lieu of in person preschool classes if the CDC, Maricopa County, or the Governor recommend school closures at any time in the future, or if we have multiple confirmed cases of the pandemic virus (i.e., COVID-19) at God's Garden Preschool. In such an instance, students will be offered daily virtual circle times, story times, and lessons/activities that can be conducted at home where it is safe. ***Please note** - Online virtual classes will not begin until students have attended school in person and established a school family. This means online virtual classes will not be made available with a delayed school start or before students start back in person.

DAILY ARRIVAL HEALTH CHECK PROCEDURE

- As each child arrives at the school or in the classroom, the director, child's teachers, or other trained staff members will warmly greet each child using first name (i.e.: - "Hi Emma").
- Staff will talk with parents about any health and safety information needed to care for their child. ("When did he last eat? How did she sleep last night?").

- Staff will look at the child to determine if the child has signs or symptoms of illness (i.e., Does the child look well? Does she feel warm to the touch? Are his eyes swollen or have drainage?).
- If there are visible signs of illness or injury, the child will need further evaluation by the front desk staff before the parent leaves to determine if he/she is fit to stay.

EXCLUSION IS RECOMMENDED WHEN:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities as determined by staff.
- The ill child requires more care than the staff can give, which may result in compromising care for other children.
- The ill child poses a risk of spreading harmful diseases to others.
- The child is determined to have a communicable disease.
- The child-care provider, not the child’s family, makes the final determination about whether the ill child can receive care in the childcare program if the child becomes ill during the day.

The ill child will be separated from the group and cared for in the front office. Parent/guardian or emergency contact will be notified by the front office to pick up child within one hour.

INSURANCE

God’s Garden meets the state standards for liability insurance. Parents are expected to maintain other forms of insurance on their child.

LICENSING

God’s Garden Child Development Center is licensed and regulated by the Arizona Department of Health Services located at 150 N. 18th Avenue, Suite 400, Phoenix, 85007-3244, phone 602-3642539, website www.azdhs.gov. Inspection reports are available upon request from the Center’s Director.

PESTICIDE APPLICATION

A notice will be posted at least 48 hours in advance of pesticide application.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROCEDURES

God’s Garden Preschool has created an Emergency Response Plan to prepare for medical emergencies, severe thunderstorms/weather incidents, lock down and hide emergencies, fire emergencies, and evacuation emergencies that may occur while your children are in our care. If an emergency occurs during preschool hours, parents

should not drive to the school unless it is safe to do so and/or you have been contacted by the center director or assistant director to pick up your child. It may be difficult to get through to the center via telephone during an emergency because of damage to phone lines, etc. Tune in to news media for emergency instructions. The safety of our students and staff is our first priority. Parents will be notified with instructions by phone or email as soon as possible.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Medical emergencies refer to any possible life threatening situations arising from health conditions, as well as unintentional injuries or accidents. In case of a medical emergency, help will be provided by calling 911. The parent or person designated on the Emergency Information and Immunization Record Card will be contacted as soon as possible. A staff member who is first aid and/or CPR certified will be with the children at all times.

FIRE EMERGENCY AND DRILLS

In keeping with state law, our school is inspected periodically by the Fire Marshall and is fully equipped with the necessary chemical extinguishers required by law, as well as a fire monitoring system. Fire evacuation drills are practiced once a month as required by the state. In the event of a fire, alarms notify the building of the emergency or the Director or designated staff alerts staff there is a fire by use of cell phones, walkie-talkies, or runners. All children are evacuated from the building and taken to designated safe area – south edge of the back parking lot (see attached map). Teachers must take attendance sheet and emergency bags. The Director or designated staff will contact 911 with details about the fire, including location and severity.

SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS/WEATHER INCIDENTS

In the event of lightning, severe thunderstorms, monsoons, or excessive heat, all students are to remain indoors. Children will participate in Indoor Recess/Play for at least 30 minutes in lieu of Outdoor Play.

LOCK DOWN AND HIDE EMERGENCY AND DRILLS

In the event of a threat of violence or serious incident that could jeopardize the safety of students and staff (i.e., intruders, shootings or threats involving weapons, hostage or kidnapping incidents, fugitives or suspects being pursued by law enforcement near the center, gang violence, or civil disturbance), a Lock Down and Hide will occur. During a Lock Down and Hide, the staff will close and lock their doors, draw their blinds, and cover windows on any doors. The staff will move children to the safest place possible in their classrooms (bathroom or closet).

EVACUATION EMERGENCY

An Off-Site Evacuation will occur in the event of a complete area evacuation due to a hazardous or toxic spill, explosion or gas leak, or Bomb threat. Children will be moved to the cul-de-sac across the street from God's Garden Preschool. The cross streets are E. Liberty Lane and S. 14th Street. Parents should not call or drive to the evacuation location until we have notified you that it is safe to do so.

MISSING OR ABDUCTED CHILD

In the event of a missing or abducted child, child's teacher or Director will thoroughly search the entire Center premises indoor and out. If the child is not found, the Director must be notified right away. The Director will check to see if a parent/guardian has picked the child up. If the child is not located, the site is now in Lock Down Mode and all exits are monitored.

The child's teacher, the Director, or designated individual will call the authorities with complete details about the child, including name, age, high, birthdate, hair color, eye color, what the child was wearing that day, the time they went missing, and if an abduction is suspected. The child's teacher or the Director will also report if any suspicious vehicles or people were reported in the area.

The Director will notify the child's parent/guardian. The search will continue as police are in route. An Amber Alert will be activated.

CARSEAT SAFETY

God's Garden preschool reminds all parents and/or guardians that in maintaining state law, a person shall not operate a motor vehicle on the highways in this state while transporting a child who is under five years of age unless that child is properly secured in a child restraint system. Each passenger who is at least five years of age, who is under eight years of age and who is not more than four feet nine inches tall is to be restrained in a child restraint system.

NEVER LEAVE A CHILD ALONE IN A CAR

God's Garden Preschool also reminds all parents and/or guardians to avoid heatstroke-related injury and death by never leaving a child alone in a car, not even for a minute, even if the car is running with the air conditioning on. Keep your car locked when you're not inside it so children don't get in on their own.

FIELD TRIPS

All field trips are "in house".

TRANSPORTATION

God's Garden does not provide transportation of any kind. God's Garden is not responsible for car pools established among parents. Any carpool drivers must be listed on your child's registration form and are responsible for signing in and out.

SNACK POLICY

Snacks are provided by the parents on a rotation basis. Classrooms are required by ADHS Licensing to supply at least 2 healthy snack components daily. Snack Menus are posted weekly and include but are not limited to string cheese, yogurt, goldfish crackers, cereal, graham crackers, veggie sticks, pretzels, fresh fruit and vegetables and 100% juice. Water is offered as a first choice for thirst daily. 100% Fruit juice is offered only at snack times, no more than twice per week. Snacks are served family-style. Staff are required to sit, participate, and interact with children during snack time. Please sign up to donate snacks if you can. Our classrooms are NOT Peanut-free, unless needed. Please be sure to list any food allergies on your child's medical information card so accommodations will be made.

CHOKING PREVENTION POLICY

Food for toddlers, under age 3, should be cut into pieces one-half inch or smaller to prevent choking (grapes, strawberries). A grape cutter or strawberry cutter may be used to cut these foods. If a food is small enough to fit entirely into a child's mouth, then it should **NOT** be accessible to children or it can be cut into pieces one-half inch or smaller to prevent choking. If a material, toy, or object is small enough to fit entirely into a child's mouth, then it should **NOT** be accessible to the children in the classroom. A choking tube may be used to determine if objects are a choking hazard to children in our care.

The following foods will not be offered to children under 4 years of age while in our care: Hot dogs or other meat sticks, Chunks of meat or cheese, Raw carrot rounds, Whole grapes, Whole strawberries, Hard, gooey, or sticky candy, Nuts and seeds, Raw peas, Hard pretzels, Chips, Peanuts, Popcorn, Rice cakes, Chunks of peanut butter, Marshmallows, Other raw vegetables, and Chewing gum.

The following objects will not be made accessible to children under 3 years of age while in our care: Toys or objects with removable parts with a diameter less than 1 ¼ inches and a length between 1 inch and 2 ¼ inches, Balls and toys with spherical, ovoid (egg shaped), or elliptical parts that are smaller than 1 ¾ inches in diameter, Toys with sharp points and edges, Plastic bags, Styrofoam objects or pieces, Coins, Rubber or latex, balloons, Safety pins, Marbles, Small Magnets, Beads, Buttons, and Feathers, Foam blocks, books, objects or pieces, Latex gloves (adults may wear them), Bulletin board tacks, thumb tacks, and staples, Glitter, Cotton balls, Pom poms, and Googley eyes.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Your child's birthday is a very important day! School friends enjoy sharing the event. If you wish to provide a special treat, we ask that you notify the teacher in advance. If your child has a summer birthday, plan to celebrate his/her half-birthday. **State law requires that all baked goods be store-bought and packaged. Please make sure all treats are store-bought and nut free.**

BACKPACK

We recommend a tote bag or backpack for each child. Print your child's name on the outside of the bag so it is visible to the teacher and assistants. Inside please store a climate appropriate change of clothes and diapers and wipes for 2's.

CLOTHING

Please send your child in comfortable clothes that can get dirty. Even though we try to be careful and use washable paints, etc., many of our activities are messy. You can help your child to be self-sufficient and independent by selecting clothing he/she can manage with little help. Please plan to store an extra set of clothing at the beginning of the year for your child to be kept in the backpack. "Accidents" can happen, especially at this age, and a change of clothing would be helpful. Please place the clothes in a clearly labeled bag. Labeling each item of clothing, especially jackets, is very helpful.

TOYS FROM HOME

Except on designated Show & Tell Days we request that children NOT bring toys from home. Books may be brought in to share at story time. If a child insists on bringing something to the center, tell him/her that he/she must ask permission to do so from his/her teacher. We cannot be responsible for playthings brought from home.

BREASTFEEDING-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

At God's Garden, breast milk is encouraged, and mothers are provided a comfortable, private and sanitary place to nurse their infants (or express milk).

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND OUTDOOR PLAY

Physical activity and movement are integral to the growing child. Engaging in physical activity promotes gross motor skills (large motor movements like kicking, running, throwing, etc.). Every child will have the opportunity to participate in outdoor physical activity daily. God's Garden plans at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity. God's Garden limits screen time to 15 minutes or less per week for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds, with no screen time available for 2-year-olds.

PLAYGROUND SAFETY

Outdoor play is an important part of a child's physical development. Play in a safe outdoor environment promotes good health and reduces the risk of injury to children. Supervision is a key component to keeping children safe on the playground. Each morning assigned staff members will be responsible to check the playground before children can play. Staff members will ensure that the hazards are removed or made inaccessible or repaired immediately and will notify administration for follow-up. Administrative staff will be notified of any hazards that are found on the playground after the daily inspection and will act to correct the deficiencies. Administrative staff will be responsible to determine if any limitations in outdoor play needs to be considered.

Staff members have a first aid kit in each classroom and in the preschool director's office for use on the playground. The kit will be kept out of children's reach. Basic rules that all children and staff are informed of will be enforced to ensure safety on the playground. Staff will be positioned to actively supervise children while playing outdoors. All injuries occurring during outdoor play will be documented. Parents will be notified by telephone or in writing. The outdoor play area is enclosed by a fence to aid in supervision and protect children from intruders. Children will have access to drinking water while playing outdoors to prevent dehydration. Riding toys will be capable of being steered, sized appropriately for the child, have a low center of gravity, and be in good condition and free of sharp edges and protrusions.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL USE OF PLAYGROUND

Due to COVID-19, the playground will be closed to student and family use before and after school until further notice.

SUN SAFETY

Too much exposure to the sun can be dangerous. Overexposure to the sun is the leading cause of skin cancer, premature aging, and cataracts. Children can be easily sunburned during outdoor play. Children are especially susceptible to the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation, which is a primary indicator for developing skin cancer later in life. God's Garden is committed to your child's health and protecting them from the sun's rays during outdoor play activities. Parents are encouraged to apply sunscreen prior to arriving at our facility daily. Please provide a hat, sunglasses, and/or long sleeved clothing for your child to wear when outdoors.

ORAL HEALTH

Tooth decay starts early, progresses quickly, and can be very painful. Thirty-seven percent of Arizona children ages 2-4 have tooth decay in their baby teeth. Tooth decay can cause health problems and can affect learning, speech, and eating, even though it is almost entirely preventable. Students are encouraged to participate in regular daily tooth brushing with appropriate fluoride toothpaste because it is highly effective in preventing tooth decay. Good oral hygiene practices should be established early in life and become an integral part of normal daily hygiene.

SMOKE-FREE CAMPUS

God's Garden is committed to providing a smoke-free environment for children and staff. Smoking and the use of tobacco products are prohibited on site. This applies to all employees, parents, visitors, contractors, subcontractors, volunteers, and other guests in the child care buildings, grounds, or properties. God's Garden is committed to supporting the efforts of the Arizona Smokers' Helpline (ASHLine) to help staff and parents quit tobacco. In Arizona, 1.2 million residents use tobacco. Tobacco is known to cause many kinds of cancer and chronic illnesses. Quitting tobacco will lessen the risks of lung, throat and mouth cancers and decrease the risk for other chronic diseases. If you or a loved one need help with quitting smoking, please contact ASHLine at 1-800-55-66-222 to speak with a "quit coach".

TELEPHONE CALLS

Please feel free to call God's Garden at any time. Keep in mind that the teachers are busy working with children and that the best times for them to speak with you are before or after school or during a scheduled appointment. You may leave a message with someone at the front desk, who will pass your message to your child's teacher.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO CALL THE CENTER WHEN:

- Your child or children are not attending school due to illness or sickness.
- You have any concerns regarding your child or children.
- You have an emergency that delays you from dropping your child off on time or picking your child or children up on time. Please keep in mind that a fee will be assessed for late pick up.

TOILET TRAINING

Independent toileting skills are required for those beginning classes for the 3-year-old class and older. The 3-year-old classroom is not licensed for diaper changing and our staffing plan does not allow for it. Children are required to be completely potty trained and wear underwear to school. Occasional accidents may occur. Parents are required to provide an extra set of clothing in the child's backpack for their convenience. Frequent accidents in the 3's and Pre-K classes will require parent conference and a success plan. In the Toddler (2's) Class, children are not required to be potty trained and daily diapering records are kept. A pull-up is considered a diaper and will be changed following our diapering procedure. Teachers in the Toddler (2's) Classroom communicate regularly with parents on the child's toilet training progress.

DIAPERING PROCEDURE

Parents are responsible for providing diapers, wipes and any rash ointment or cream in a ziplock bag, clearly labeled with child's first and last name, in the child's backpack. Teachers will conduct diaper changing only in designated area, which is positioned to allow for supervision of all children. Diaper changing table is sturdy, a convenient height (28"-32"), waterproof and in good repair (no cracks). Diaper changing supplies shall be stored in an area inaccessible to children. Diaper changing table will not be used to store any items and will be clear of all supplies. A sink is within reach of diaper changing table to allow for proper hand washing and a tightly covered, plastic lined, hands-free diaper pail is available in the diapering area. The child will be supervised by touch while on the changing table.

TOILET LEARNING POLICY

Learning to use the toilet is an important developmental milestone. **Parents and providers** must be partners and support each other during this process to make it as smooth and easy as possible. Plans about each child's toilet training needs are to be developed by the caregiver and parent together. Parents and Caregivers should do the following when helping children learn to use the toilet:

- Talk about signs that indicate the child is ready to begin toilet learning.
- Agree on how to work on the toilet learning process together.
- Use normal routines to establish regular toileting times to help make toileting a habit. Establish a regular schedule for using the toilet at home and childcare to offer consistency. Take children to the toilet before they relieve themselves so they can experience success with toileting.
- Encourage practice runs to the toilet whenever the child gives a signal (facial expressions, grunting, holding genitals, squirming).
- Teach proper hygiene habits. Show children how to wipe carefully from front to back, and to always wash their hands after using the toilet.
- Give the child opportunities to ask questions and watch for reactions that will show how the child perceives and feels about using the toilet.
- Use the same method of praise and reinforcement at home and in child care.
- Rewards such as food or candy aren't recommended. Verbal praise is best.
- Handle toileting accidents the same at home and in child care. Provide plenty of changes of clothing for the child in care so there is always clean clothing in the event of an accident.
- Taking children to the toilet when they indicate they have the need is important, watch for signs.

SIGNS THAT A CHILD IS READY TO USE THE TOILET

The right time for toilet learning will be different for every child and should not occur prior to 24 months of age. It is important to look for signs that the child is ready. The following signs indicate a child may be ready to use the toilet:

- Can cooperate with adults and follow instructions
- Can stay dry for at least two hours at a time during the day or be dry after naps
- Can understand words about the toileting process
- Has regular and predictable bowel movements
- Can express the need to eliminate – either verbally, through facial expressions, or by posture
- Can get to and from the bathroom area unassisted
- Can help pull diapers/pants up and down

IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At God's Garden, social and emotional development is of the utmost importance. Healthy social and emotional development creates a strong foundation for success in school and beyond. Children with strong social and emotional skills at early ages are more likely to get a college degree, obtain and hold a job, and have less problems with the police than children who do not have strong social and emotional skills.

Research demonstrates that of those children who are not successful in school, many have social-emotional difficulties (i.e., aggression, bullying, substance abuse, obesity, violence, etc.) that prevent them from achieving school success. A focus on social and emotional development during the early years can prevent these difficulties later in life. Positive social-emotional growth builds the communication skills necessary for learning throughout a child's life. Some social-emotional skills that support school readiness are: emotional vocabulary and intelligence, self-regulation, self-control, sharing, negotiation, intentionality, attention, cooperation, collaboration, communication, social awareness, taking-turns, empathy, coping, helping others, persistence, concentration, confidence, conflict resolution, problem solving, self-esteem, motivation, curiosity, resiliency, responsibility, and leadership.

At God's Garden, our teachers provide children with a foundation in positive social and emotional development by teaching children to build and maintain healthy relationships, to communicate needs and with others, to develop emotional intelligence (ability to identify emotions and to use emotions to guide thinking and actions), and to develop the ability to engage in the regulation of emotions, which is known as self-regulation. Teachers help children recognize, understand, and label emotions through the use of books, signs, conversations, and direct experiences. The more words we give children to describe emotions the better; this will allow children to pinpoint emotions more accurately, to communicate more effectively, and to identify appropriate regulation strategies.

Teachers model expressing their own emotions and share personal stories so children can see it firsthand. This provides children with different strategies to express their own emotions. Teachers also help children learn to self-calm by co-regulating their emotions. Soothing touch and the sound of soft voices are cues that help children learn to develop self-calming skills. As children get older, they begin to use self-regulation skills without prompting or assistance.

Children are provided with opportunities to interact with others, including teachers and peers, in a variety of activities (free-choice play, large group, small group centers, outdoor play, snack time, etc.). Children develop confidence, curiosity, and cooperativeness by interacting with other children and adults. They also learn problem-solving, conflict resolution, collaboration, concentration, negotiation, intentionality, persistence, attention, self-control, communication, and leadership by interacting with other children. Social-emotional skills help children persist on challenging tasks, seek help when they need it, and be thoughtful in their actions. These skills are directly related to a child's readiness for kindergarten and beyond and set the stage for learning academically.

Teachers make connections with children in their classrooms. When connections are made, children learn that that are safe and can trust you and others. Teachers work to build strong, trusting relationships by getting to know each child. They will ask children to bring in pictures, toys, and favorite objects from home to share with the class. They engage in show-n-tell, star student, and secret reader, all of which, promote a link between the home and the school community.

Teachers also model empathy, which helps children learn to organize themselves, cope with disappointment, and get their emotions under control. When adults empathize with a child, he/she realizes that they care about their ideas and feelings. This validates the child and helps him or her recognize and accept his or her feelings, which is necessary for resolving them. Acceptance of emotions teaches children that an emotional life is manageable.

Teachers set consistent schedules, routines, rituals, and transitions in the classroom to create a sense of stability and security. Using consistent routines helps children learn to trust adults and anticipate what is coming next. Our teachers use verbal, visual, and auditory cues to help children learn routines. They set expectations early in the school year by teaching children about the centers in our classrooms and how to use them, and what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior. They also use warnings and prompts. Songs, bells, whistles, job boards, picture schedules, first-then boards, cue cards, turn-taking cards, reminder charts, feeling charts, and timers are all used to help children learn to anticipate and follow routines. Keeping consistent routines at home will help children learn to build trusting relationships with parents. It also helps children feel well rested and ready for learning.

Teachers also offer 2 positive choices - a choice between two predetermined events or objects (i.e., you can clean up the blocks or trains). It takes away the option for a child to say "no" and helps a child comply with an adult's wishes. Offering choices builds self-esteem and willpower. It also helps children develop a sense of autonomy, assert themselves, and feel empowered.

All classrooms utilize a Calm Down Area or Safe Space. The Calm Down Area, also known as a **SAFE SPACE**, is a place in the classroom where the children can go when they are upset, want to be alone, or have a problem. It is a space to deal with strong emotions, calm down, engage in emotional regulation, and feel safe and understood. It is a place where children can go to safely experience emotional upset or distress. It teaches children to safely deal with strong emotions through active calming – breathing, talking through it, soothing, etc. It is **NOT** to be used as a form of **TIME OUT**. Time out is a form of punishment, which is rooted in using external force to govern behavior. The motivation behind a Calm Down Area is to encourage children to make good choices, empathize with others, and develop internal control.

The calm down area is located in a cozy, small spot of the classroom, like a corner. It includes something soft to sit or lay on (i.e., mat, couch, bean bag, etc.), a variety of soft materials (i.e., stuffed animals & pillows), posters and pictures of emotions, problem solving posters (breathing exercises), books about dealing with emotions, and calm down tools (sensory bottles, mirrors, bubbles, balls, playdough, etc). It may also include stress balls, puppets, tents, tissues, lotion, plants, etc. Teachers will show children where the area is, what they can find there, and how to use it (model it for them). They will help children build an emotional vocabulary by teaching them about a variety of emotions and what to do with these emotions. Teachers will also model how to breathe to calm down (i.e., Take 5 deep breaths using the STAR) and the different ways to solve problems (i.e., talking it out, letting it go, saying how they feel, blowing bubbles, blowing a pinwheel, reading a book, drawing, ask for help, etc.). Furthermore, teachers will read books about having strong emotions, discuss with the students how to work through these emotions, and talk about acceptable behaviors (i.e., it is not okay to bite, hit, scratch, or kick someone because you are mad) for the classroom and in life.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

We will make every effort to work with the parents of children having difficulties at God's Garden. We are here to serve and protect all of the children. Children displaying a challenging behavior which has been determined to be upsetting to the physical or emotional well being of another child may require teachers, families, and other professionals to work as a team to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child's inclusion and success.

The director may ask the parent(s) of any child who attends the center to meet for a conference. The problem will be defined. Goals will be established and the parent will be involved in creating approaches toward solving the problem. When needed, referrals may be made to other community resources.

When the previous attempts have been followed and no progress has been made towards solving the problem, the child may be referred to a more appropriate setting.

A child may be considered for immediate expulsion if the child causes serious injury to others or to himself/herself. Every effort will be made to link parents and children to community resources when applicable.

BITING AND OTHER AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS

Even though biting is a developmentally natural behavior; it is of great concern to staff and parents alike. Biting others may begin when an infant first discovers the effect of his new teeth, or as a form of communicating with other children for some toddlers, or as a form of expression for a preschooler who loses control and acts out his/her feelings. We will do everything possible to eliminate biting behaviors in the classroom including arranging consultation with experts in the field to advise teachers in intervention techniques.

As children move from biting to using their large muscles to express themselves, it is not uncommon for them to scratch and hit their friends at school. Teachers recognize that scratching and hitting are a natural progression in the learning process and that children, like adults, do get angry. Teachers encourage children to express their anger, to use their words, discuss problems, explore feelings and engage in conflict resolution techniques.

In cases of patterns of severe or excessive biting, scratching, or hitting by a child, the Teacher or Director will schedule a conference with the parent/guardian to address the issue. We will work with families to solve this problem on an individual basis with the best interests of the child, family, other children, and the center in mind. *If the injury results in broken skin, the parent of the injured child will be advised to seek medical attention as soon as possible.

SEPARATION ANXIETY

God's Garden understands that it takes time for young children to adjust to a new setting and separate from parents. A degree of crying is to be expected at first. However, if crying persists for twenty consecutive minutes or more on any given day, the parent may be called. If crying persists for more than three times in any given four week period, a conference will be held with the teacher, parent, and Director to discuss intervention techniques and a future plan for the child.

HELPING CHILDREN ADJUST TO SCHOOL

Starting Preschool is an adjustment for young children. Whether your child loves going to preschool and can't wait to get out the door, or cries daily when you drop her off, there is an adjustment period. Children need time to learn that preschool is safe, and they can trust their new environment and teachers. This takes time, patience, and consistency, both at home at and at school.

YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD ADJUST TO SCHOOL IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

1. Visit the school in advance so your child has an opportunity to meet the teachers and become familiar with the classroom while you are there. Being present while they explore the classroom for the first time helps them feel safe and secure in a new environment.
2. Tell your child what to expect and let them know when you will be back. Avoid sneaking out. Slipping away when your child is not looking tends to increase anxiety. Tell your child that you are leaving and will be back. Allow extra time to say Goodbye before leaving for the day.
3. Plan time to linger for the first few days. Children want to know they can trust you and that they are safe. Sticking around helps them feel secure. If your child is anxious, send a transitional object with them that reminds them of you or your home (i.e., photo, stuffed animal, or special note).
4. Be patient and consistent. Children typically adjust very well to preschool after a few weeks; they will even look forward to school and spending time with friends. Don't rush it. If your child seems anxious, try exposing him or her to mommy and me classes, play dates, and alternative ways to spending time with other children, before expecting him or her to spend large quantities of time in preschool.
5. Make going to school a pleasurable experience: foster enthusiasm for learning. Express interest in your child's interests and achievements in the school program.
6. Make your child feel secure and wanted at all times.
7. Explain to your child the necessity for fire drills and orderly, safe evacuation. A few practice sessions at home using your smoke detectors may be helpful.
8. Come to school when he or she invites you for special occasions.
9. Use the classroom lesson plan to listen to your child as he or she relates his or her daily school experiences and discuss them with him or her.
10. You can assist in language development by reading from books, comic strips, and newspapers. Go to the library with your child and check out books. If you show you are interested in reading, your child will be too.
11. Try to be as consistent as possible in your child's routines. For example, drop off and pick up at the same time of day whenever possible.
12. Set and follow consistent routines at home to help children with transitions. Children thrive in an environment that provides clear expectations. This helps children learn to count on you and others.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Many parents have wondered what is going to happen to their child at school. What will he/she learn? Will all his/her problems be solved? How will he/she act? You might expect all, some, or none of these things to be true in your child. They are all examples of normal behavior:

1. Your child may come home very tired and irritable or all keyed-up the first few weeks. Give him/her attention quickly and put him/her down for a nap.
2. Your normally lively, outgoing child may be very quiet at school. Don't push him/her. Let him/her absorb it all at his/her own pace.
3. Your child may pick up new language or behavior at school and some of it may be distasteful to you. Do not immediately blame it on the school. These things

may be learned in any play situation. Do not make an issue of it, but discuss it with your child and/or the teacher.

4. Your child may suddenly not want to go to school. Don't jump to hasty conclusions; look for the reason. Talk it over with him/her and the teacher.
5. Your child may suddenly want you to stay again in the middle of the term. He/she may be looking for extra support and security. Were you away? New baby? Feel free to meet his/her needs.
6. Your child may come home very unhappy one day. Console him/her; help him/her to measure up to an unhappy moment. A day at school is not always a completely happy situation; neither is life. Part of growing up is learning to accept frustrations.
7. Your child may come home covered with paint, but glowing about the wonderful time he/she had. Don't scold about the spills, but ENJOY his/her creativity. Please, dress him/her in clothes that can get messy. The paint washes off, the joy remains.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

All families want their children to be successful in school. At God's Garden, we prepare children for kindergarten and beyond. This means we teach children basic academic skills including - letters, numbers, shapes, and colors. We also teach children to follow rules, make good choices, solve conflicts, and to be respectful.

But Kindergarten Readiness means so much more than focusing on academics alone. At God's garden we not only prepare children for academics, but we also teach children emotional intelligence. Emotions play a big role in a young child's capacity to learn. Children with healthy emotional functioning develop emotional regulation, resiliency, self-control, and empathy. Emotional regulation and self-control are extremely important in predicting readiness for learning. Positive interactions are essential for success in school and beyond.

At God's Garden, children are provided with opportunities to develop social and emotional competence – which is at the root of kindergarten readiness. Without these skills, children won't be able to navigate through the demands of school. Children learn emotional regulation, self-esteem, and self-confidence by building relationships with other children and adults at God's Garden. They also learn resiliency, self-control, empathy, cooperation, taking turns, conflict resolution, problem-solving, and making friends.

Kindergarten students who are more inclined to exhibit “social competence” traits—such as sharing, cooperating, or helping other kids—are more likely to attain higher education and well-paying jobs. This is supported by a 20-year retrospective study funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and published in the July 2015 issue of the American Journal of Public Health.

Kindergarten Readiness also means that children are prepared to engage in higher order thinking. Higher Order Thinking involves the learning of complex judgmental skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution. It is beyond rote memorization and regurgitation of information.

Higher order thinking includes understanding facts, inferring from them, connecting them to other facts and concepts, categorizing them, manipulating them, putting them together in new ways, and applying them as we seek solutions to new problems. This also includes abstract concepts, schemas or mental representations, visualization, inferences, idea generation, insights, creativity, and analytical intelligence (i.e., making judgments, evaluating, comparing, contrasting, critiquing, explaining, and examining, etc.). These concepts are difficult to learn and to teach, but they are easier to learn if children are exposed to these concepts at early ages.

At God's Garden, teachers not only help children learn basic skills like letters, numbers, shapes, and colors, but they also engage children in conversations that promote higher order thinking. These conversations are critical to helping children learn to create innovative ideas and concepts that are necessary for success in school and beyond. They occur during episodes of free-choice play, small groups, large groups, circle time, and outdoor play. They begin at age 2 and continue until they complete Pre-K and move on to kindergarten.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO PREPARE CHILDREN FOR KINDERGARTEN?

Being actively involved in your child's learning is directly related to your child's success in school. So what can you do to prepare your child for school?

- Be your child's first teacher – learning occurs before school
- Encourage your child to explore
- Give your child time to process information
- Engage with your child
- Encourage your child to find solutions on his/her own
- Allow your child time to express emotions and work through them
- Model and teach emotional regulation and co-regulation
- Provide lots of opportunities for play
- Put away electronics and play with your child for at least 15 minutes each day!
- Talk to your child(ren) and often
- Ask lots of questions
- Sing to your child(ren)
- Read to your child(ren) and do it often
- Set and follow a consistent routine – children thrive on structure
- Build a meaningful relationship with your child(ren)
- Create a consistent bedtime routine; children need 12-14 hours of sleep nightly
- Read bedtime stories and discuss characters, what happened in the story, and sequencing of events
- Use puppets to aid in discussions about bedtime routines and challenging topics
- Help your child(ren) complete chores and/or tasks. Make it fun! Make it a game!
- Play games – card games, board games, and outdoor games build opportunities for taking turns, cooperating with others, and handling frustration and more!

- Include your child while you make meals – this is a great opportunity to build math skills like measurement
- Go on observation walks and look for letters, signs, colors, and shapes in the environment
- Play alphabet games while at the grocery store. Not only does this make shopping fun, but it helps children see that letters and words have meaning in the real world

REMINDERS

- Call the front office when your child is sick or will not be attending school for any reason.
- Provide us with an updated copy of your child's immunization record yearly (or sooner if something changes).
- Notify the Center if your child has head lice, bedbugs or other communicable diseases.
- Keep home, work, and emergency phone numbers current and up-to-date.
- Add relatives, friends, and neighbors onto the emergency pick up list.
- Share information about your child with teachers, especially major life events such as divorce, a death in the family, health issues, or a big move. These events can have a big effect on young children, even when you think they are coping well.
- Ask for help if you are having problems at work or at home. We support all members of the family!
- If parents have questions or concerns, please speak first to the child's teacher and then to the director if needed.
- Let us know as soon as possible if you will not need our services any longer.
- We have an OPEN-DOOR policy – please drop by and visit, observe, or volunteer in the classroom.
- Get involved! We love parent volunteers. We have plenty of ideas for how you can get involved and complete your volunteer hours this year.
- Tell us how we are doing. Please provide us with feedback.
- Refer a friend and earn \$50 in God's Garden Bucks.
- Like us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram.

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

Please contact us by email at godsgarden@horizonchurch.com or by phone at 480-460-0081 with questions or concerns.

Please feel assured that God's Garden Preschool staff will do everything possible to meet the needs of all of our students and families in our care. We follow ADHS State Licensing regulations and best practices in early childhood education. Every child counts!



PARENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Date: _____

I, _____, acknowledge receipt of the God's Garden Parent Handbook. I understand it is my responsibility to read and understand the contents of this document. This updated Parent Handbook supersedes earlier versions that have been provided to me by God's Garden as well as any statements made by employees of God's Garden.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Note to parents: If you should have any questions or require clarification in regards to the Parent Handbook please feel free to contact the Director at 480-460-0081 or directorgodsgarden@horizonchurch.com.



PARENT COMMITMENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Date: _____

I, _____, acknowledge that I am responsible for completing 5 hours of Volunteering at God's Garden Preschool during each school year. These hours may be completed in a variety of ways including, but not limited to:

- volunteering in the classroom
- planning and assisting with special events, including Transportation Day
- volunteering at Transportation Day
- serving on the Parents Committee or any subcommittees
- serving as a Classroom Parent Representative

Signature: _____ Date: _____