



SOUTH GATE PRESCHOOL

SOUTH GATE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

PARENT INFORMATION HANDBOOK

**an outreach of South Gate
United Methodist Church**

**** COVID POLICIES start on page 15****

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

South Gate Preschool is one of the many ministries supported by the South Gate United Methodist Church for the community of Lincoln, Nebraska. The Preschool has been in existence since 1991 and is licensed by the State of Nebraska. We provide a quality early childhood program to meet the needs of the very young child.

PHILOSOPHY OF LEARNING

South Gate Preschool is a ministry of South Gate United Methodist Church and is committed to fostering equal opportunities in learning and education for all children regardless of race, sex, religion and national origin. We provide a culture that protects both children and adults. All children will be treated with gentleness, honesty and respect and are encouraged to treat others in this manner.

Our program is designed to enrich each child's life spiritually, physically, socially, intellectually and emotionally. We believe that children learn best through play. This builds confidence, encourages creativity and a love for school while they learn about a variety of things in an age appropriate way. We weave Christian concepts, activities, and songs into our teaching. During the Christian holidays we will be incorporating the significance of these special events. There is an atmosphere of acceptance in which individual needs of each child are considered and in which the child can grow and flourish under the guidance of qualified teachers.

South Gate Preschool

Email: preschool@southgateumc.org

Phone number: 402-489-7302

GENERAL INFORMATION

South Gate Preschool, 3500 Pioneers Blvd., Lincoln, NE 68506

Located at South Gate United Methodist Church

402-489-7302

Hours 8:45 AM – 11:30 AM, Monday – Friday

Mary Tisdale-Director and Preschool Teacher

ENROLLMENT/REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Enrollment is open to all children ages 18 months through 5 years old. Enrollment will be granted without discrimination in regard to sex, race, color, religion, or beliefs. The proper paperwork must be completed and submitted before enrollment is accepted. Medical reports and emergency contact information must be current at all times.

To enroll, you must: complete forms, provide up-to-date immunization records and pay the enrollment fee in advance.

The South Gate Preschool schedule runs from Labor Day to the last day of LPS in May. We will follow LPS's elementary calendar for holidays and teacher plan days.

Enrollment for the school year begins the preceding early January for current children in our program. Open enrollment to the community begins in mid – January.

TUITION

Tuition is due the first week of each month. The preschool sessions have a set monthly tuition. There is a \$20.00 late charge for tuition not received by the 10th of the month.

Please make checks payable to South Gate Preschool. Hand it to the teacher or drop it in the box located just outside the preschool rooms. Due to the financial commitments of the Preschool, we are not able to reimburse families for those days missed while preschool is in session, or for those days preschool is canceled due to inclement weather.

AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE

Children will be released only to those persons listed on the Authorization Consent Form. Adults must be prepared to show a picture I.D. (Driver's License). The Director/Lead Teacher should be notified in advance, in writing, if you would like to add someone else to your child's Authorization Consent Form. In the event an unauthorized person comes to pick up your child we will not release them until we contact a parent or other authorized adult and receive approval.

CHILD/PARENT SEPARATION

Separation can be stressful for both the parent and the child, especially in the beginning of the school year. Please help us to make this time less stressful by adhering to the following guidelines.

- Give your child a goodbye kiss and explain that it is time for you to leave and you will return later.
- As difficult as it may be for the parent or child make your goodbye short and sweet, even if your child is crying. The longer the goodbye, the longer the child will cry.
- South Gate Teachers are trained to handle these difficult, but normal occurrences. They will comfort your child and involve him/her in an activity. Ninety percent of the time, your child will have stopped crying before you leave the parking lot of the preschool.
- DO NOT linger around after you have said goodbye, this can confuse your child and prolong the crying.

ATTENDANCE

Parents should notify South Gate if a child will not be attending or will be late on a particular day. Please call prior to the beginning of the class or leave a message in the communication book if you know beforehand.

APPROPRIATE CLOTHING

We ask that children wear comfortable, washable clothing which will allow them to take part in activities. We discourage the wearing of flip-flops or backless sandals. This includes having appropriate outerwear when the weather turns cold. All outerwear needs to be marked with your child's name.

BACKPACKS

Please send a backpack with your child each day. Check the contents of your child's backpack after each session for important notes and information as well as to see what your child has made for you. To help identify the backpacks, each child will receive a nametag from South Gate preschool for that attach to their backpack at the open house. Should your child get a new backpack, please transfer the name tag so that we can easily identify it for your child.

FACEBOOK

I encourage your family to follow us on Facebook for updated information and happenings. We love to take photos and post all the fun things we are doing at Preschool, please see our closed Facebook group for up-to-date pictures of the children. Please invite grandparents, family and friends to follow us, too! A great family activity would be to look at our Facebook page together and have your child tell you about what they are doing.

Our Facebook address is www.facebook.com/southgatepreschool .

Closed Facebook group for Photos: South Gate Preschool Photo Group

Email Communication

Our monthly newsletters, and other information will be sent out via email. We will utilize the email on the enrollment form, as the family's email. Please watch this email for updates about the Preschool. If you have another immediate family member you would like to receive the newsletter please let us know so we can add them to the contact list. Also, if your email changes through the year please let us know so we may update it.

DISCIPLINE

The emphasis of our discipline policy is to assist a child in learning to develop inner control of his/her own behavior balanced with self-esteem and courtesy towards others. In order to achieve this purpose, we will use the following guidelines:

1. Make the child aware of behavioral expectations. Our staff is trained and spends a lot of time teaching the children proper and acceptable behaviors. They talk to children about best behavior responses and choices. Staff role models positive behavior.
2. We allow the child to accept the consequences of his/her behavior. This is done through the use of the positive reinforcement and discussion. The child may be given his own space to think through the situation and calm themselves before re-entering play.
3. The use of corporal punishment, restraining or denial of food is never used as a means of discipline.

We have wonderful successes with our children as they grow and develop in our classes. We find that if the child is interested and occupied, he/she rarely acts out. But not all children are ready for structured activities and a daily routine with other children. If we find that a child is having trouble adjusting to this environment, we will confer with the parents about adjustments and other strategies to make the day run more smoothly. As a team, the home and center, will agree on what kind of environment might be in the best interest of the child. Every attempt will be made to help the child fit in, but if it becomes apparent that the child is not ready for this kind of environment, we reserve the right to ask the parent to find other childcare. A child might have to be dismissed sooner if he/she is jeopardizing the safety of anyone.

If we feel the program is not meeting the needs of the child or if the child is not fitting into the group, we will contact the parents and try to work out the problem. If after two conferences and follow up periods, it is apparent that the child is not going to fit into the group, we reserve the right to give the parent a two-week notice of termination of services.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

We welcome questions, suggestions, and inquiries from parents. If you have any issue you would like to discuss, please approach your child's teacher first. If that teacher is unavailable, or you would prefer to approach the Director, please contact Mary Tisdale. If you would like to speak with someone else, you may contact the pastor of South Gate United Methodist Church. Her name is Rev. Amy Slater and she can be reached at 402-489-1641.

NON-SCHOOL DAYS

South Gate Preschool will be following the Lincoln Public School calendar for elementary students for non-school days and holidays. A copy of the calendar will be provided prior to the beginning of the school year.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In order to communicate as quickly and efficiently as possible, South Gate Preschool will close whenever the Lincoln Public Schools are closed due to inclement weather. Please listen to the radio or television for this information. South Gate Preschool will **NOT** be listed on the radio, just listen for Lincoln Public Schools closing.

PETS

We are asking that you **do not** bring any pets (cats, dogs, rabbits, etc.) into the building. If you bring your pet with you, please leave them in the car while dropping off or picking up your child. Some of our teachers and children are allergic to different types of animals and being around these animals for even a short period of time can cause difficulties. Also, with so many children in the building, animals can become very overwhelmed which could lead to an accident or someone getting hurt.

COMMUNICATION

We want communication to be two-way. A monthly calendar, newsletter, bulletin boards and Facebook will keep you informed of all planned preschool activities. A monthly email will be sent out to each family with a newsletter (All classes). Please feel free to contact your teachers or the director with any joys or concerns about your child.

HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

Holidays are a fun and exciting time for everyone. We are often asked about our guidelines for celebrating holiday parties (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, etc.). We have given great thought to our policy to find the balance that works best for all.

For many of the children, when you say "celebration", they think of parties at Lost in Fun, the Zoo, the Children's Museum that often are filled with balloons, gift bags and more. We have taken our celebration of the holidays with the children a different direction. One of our favorite sayings is "keep things simple." One thing we need to teach our children is how to have fun without spending money and receiving gifts. We feel that this is an important concept for the children to learn. To achieve this, we will be concentrating on what the holiday means and traditions of the day with games and songs to celebrate.

NO CANDY POLICY:

We are asking families not to bring goodie bags or treats for their children's classmates for the different holidays or Birthdays. There are several reasons for this policy:

- We have several children that have allergies (peanut/milk) or health problems in which eating the wrong food could make them very sick.
- Many parents do not want their child eating sweets. Having goodie bags going home makes this a battle for parents.

- The cost of making up a “goodie bag” for every student in a class can get expensive. For some families, this cost can be difficult to budget. We do not want any of the children to feel bad because they didn’t bring a “goodie bag”.
- The only EXCEPTION will be for Valentine’s Day. For Valentine’s Day you will be able to tape one small piece of wrapped candy to their Valentine card. You will receive instructions for Valentine’s Day in early February.

TOYS

We prefer that children do not bring toys from home except on special sharing days that are arranged in advance.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

As a parent, we ask that you follow these responsibilities in order to help us care for your child.

- Keep the center informed of changes in parent/guardian contact information as well as information on those identified as emergency contacts.
- Label all items that are brought from home including outerwear and extra clothes. Do not let your child bring toys from home. Please have your child leave personal items in the car or at home.
- Call the Preschool any time your child will be arriving late or will not be in attendance for any reason. If due to illness, let us know what the illness is so we can post signs to share with other families if necessary. (We do not use children’s names on postings)
- Talk to your child about their day. Post your child’s projects and art at home to celebrate their success.
- Use appropriate language and tone while at the preschool, with your child(ren), and the teachers.
- Do not pick up your child while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- South Gate Preschool is a cell phone free area. Please refrain from being on your cell phone while dropping off or picking up your child. Teachers need to be freely able to communicate as needed with you.
- Teach your child to be responsible for hanging up their own coat and backpack.

- Teach your child the parking lot rules. Example: hold a parent's hand, walking on the sidewalk not in the parking lot, looking both ways before entering the lot from the sidewalk. Parking lots can be a very dangerous place for children.

HEALTH POLICY

Please keep your child home if he/she has a fever or other symptoms of illness. It is much better for a child to miss a day of school than to expose others to sickness. Please notify the school **(402-489-7302)** if your child will be absent and if he/she has been diagnosed as having a communicable disease. If your preschooler becomes ill at school, you will be called immediately. Your child must be up-to-date on immunizations. Examples of health symptoms that require exclusion from Preschool include (but are not limited to):

- Fever; elevated temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Skin infection or rash of unknown cause
- Any infection where the child is knowingly contagious, including mucus in the eyes.
- Communicable diseases
- Any condition in which the child acts ill and is unable to participate in classroom activities and which compromises the health and safety of others.

South Gate Preschool will not dispense any medications to children.

IMMUNIZATION POLICY

South Gate Preschool requires that all children enrolled in our program be current on all recommended immunizations, prior to the first day of attendance.

SMOKING & DRUG POLICY

South Gate United Methodist Church/preschool is a smoke free and drug free campus.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

The safety of your child is of utmost importance to us. Our staff is trained in CPR and First Aid. The staff and children practice fire drills on a monthly basis and tornado drills prior to and during peak tornado season.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PLAN

In the event of an emergency, South Gate Preschool has outlined the following response plan. Please know that South Gate Preschool will make every attempt to notify you so it is vital that you keep your emergency contact information up-to-date. Keep this letter with you so that you will know how to contact us in the event of an emergency.

Evacuation/Relocation:

1. If the emergency is confined to immediate area at preschool (e.g. fire) and the children cannot stay on the preschool premises, the children will be taken to

Braeda Restaurant, 4031 South 33rd, 402-488-6767

2. The children will remain at this location while you or your emergency contact is notified of the situation. In the event the contact cannot be made via phone (cell service is unavailable), please meet at this location to reunite with your child following an emergency.
3. If the emergency is more widespread and encompasses a larger area such as the neighborhood due to an environmental threat (e.g. gas leak, flood, etc.) and the children cannot remain in the immediate area, they will be transported to the following location:

**Cathedral of the Risen Christ
3500 Sheridan Blvd**

The children will remain at this location while you or your emergency contact is notified of the situation. In the event that contact cannot be made by phone (cell service is unavailable), please meet at this location to reunite with your child following any emergency.

Notification:

1. Every effort will be made to contact you as soon as the children are safe. If we cannot reach you, we will contact your alternate emergency contact listed on your child's information sheet. Children will only be released to you or your alternate emergency contact during time of emergencies.

Please rest assured that South Gate Preschool will remain with and care for your child at all times during an emergency to ensure your child's safety. As always, please don't hesitate to contact the Preschool Director if you have any questions or concerns. 402-489-7302

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

DAILY SCHEDULE FOR 2 YEAR OLDS

8:45 - 9:45	Self-selected activities/Structured Learning
9:45 - 9:50	Diapers/Bathroom/Handwashing
9:50 - 10:00	Storytime
10:00 - 10:30	Large motor play outside or inside
10:30 - 10:45	Handwashing/ Snack
10:45 - 11:15	Self-selected activities
11:15 - 11:30	Clean up and music time/stories
11:30	Dismissal

DAILY SCHEDULE for 3, 4, AND 5 YEAR OLDS

8: 45 - 9:00	Arrival (handwashing) / Self-selected activities
9:00 - 9:15	Opening Circle time (Story ~ Music)
9:15 - 10:00	Center time (Self-selected activities)
10:00 - 10:15	Small group time (Story ~ Music)/ (Alphabet and numbers)
10:15 - 10:20	Bathroom/handwashing for snack
10:20 - 10:30	Snack
10:30 - 10:40	Group time activities (Story)
10:40 - 11:00	Indoor/outdoor large motor activities (Handwashing)
11:00 - 11:25	Music/Storytime
11:30	Dismissal

CURRICULUM

South Gate Preschool is dedicated to nurturing the whole child—his/her spiritual, emotional, physical, social, and intellectual needs—in a positive, accepting environment. Emphasis is placed on learning through active involvement and self-discovery as children participate in art, music, stories, dramatic play, group discussions, large muscle play, and a variety of outside enrichment experiences.

Reading and math readiness skills are developed through the use of educationally oriented material and participation in group activities designed to meet the needs of each child at his/her level of development. Self-esteem is enhanced as children explore their imaginations, share ideas, make choices, and learn through trial and error in an open-ended, nonjudgmental atmosphere.

South Gate Preschool incorporates into its curriculum elements of the Christian faith that build each child's character and helps them identify themselves as God's beloved children. For the 2021-2022 school year we will use the framework of Galatians 5:22-23 and the Fruits of the Spirit. Each month will focus on one of the "fruits": love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Children will engage in story time with the pastor on a monthly basis, and will also learn prayers and songs to reinforce their learning. Children will know that God loves them and helps them to do good things.

- Circle Time provides the children with the opportunity to interact with each other as a group. During this time, we learn calendar skills, weather skills, sing songs, play games, read stories and learn about each other. Circle activities are designed to stimulate the children's thinking, enrich their social skills and expand their attention spans.
- Letters and Numbers – Children learn to recognize and identify numbers and letters. We concentrate on one letter and number each week. During this time, many of our songs and games focus on the letter, number and color of the week.
- Fine-motor/Manipulative- These activities help improve small-muscle development and eye-hand coordination. Some common items found in the manipulative area include puzzles, beads and laces, pegboards, crayons and scissors.
- Sensory Experiences are provided with a wide variety of hands on, concrete, real world sensory experiences appropriate for the child's age and stage of development. They learn about all of their senses and how to use them.
- Large Motor activities give children the opportunity to use their muscles – as well as their imaginations – as they engage in fun, healthy exercises, such as running, jumping, riding trikes, bouncing balls, and climbing
- Art Activities help children creatively express their thoughts and feelings. They help reinforce fine-motor skills and concept development in areas such as colors, shapes, and size relationships.
- Dramatic Play activities help children express themselves, practice life skills, improve social skills, increase self-esteem, build vocabulary, and solve problems.

- Music Activities promote children's listening skills, creative expression, and social skills.
- Literature activities are incorporated throughout our day. The children have the opportunity to listen at the listening center. Books are available to explore by children and stories are read throughout the day to the children.
- Block Play gives children experience with many different concepts, such as shape and size discrimination, spatial relationships, number skills, balance, organization, cause and effect and classification cooperative play skills, social development, problem solving, and creativity are also promoted in block play.

DIAPERS/WIPES/EXTRA CLOTHES

Please help us by including in your child's backpack each day, an extra set of clothes, just in case of an accident. Parents need to provide diapers and wipes for their child if applicable.

CONFERENCES

Communication between parents and teachers is very important. If you would like to schedule a private conference with the teachers throughout the year please let us know. For our Pre-K students there will be an opportunity to meet in January with your child's teachers to discuss Kindergarten readiness.

SHOW AND SHARE DAY

Show and Share Day is your child's special day. They can bring something to share. They also get to be the calendar helper, line leader, decide how we are getting from place to place and the game leader. It is a very important day for your child. (Pending COVID in the community status).

BIRTHDAYS

Bringing a special treat for your child's birthday is a very important event. In the past, we have found that children do not eat cupcakes very well. The children tend to lick the frosting and not eat the cake. To be honest, cupcakes also take more time out of our schedule because of clean up. Therefore, we are asking that you bring something other than cupcakes for your child's birthday. Several alternatives to cupcakes are individual cookies, a giant cookie with a small amount of frosting, or your child's favorite snack treat.

Birthdays during the school year are celebrated on or close to their actual birthday. Summer birthdays will be celebrated close to the child's half birthday as "half birthday celebrations." Or if your child has a late August Birthday we will celebrate in early September. Birthday treats can be homemade.

BOOK ORDERS

Beginning in September, your preschooler will bring home a book order form each month. We encourage you to consider purchasing books for your child. They are a wonderful way to interact with your child. By purchasing from the book order, the Preschool accumulates points that we can use to help grow our Preschool library.

Two ways to order:

1. Go online to: scholastic.com/newparent

Look up my name: Tisdale

Or enter our Class Code: HRNKP

Follow the instructions to place your order online. Credit Cards only.

COVID Guidelines

Health Policy Additions:

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported- ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19. (Per CDC)

- Fever (100.4 or higher) or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscles or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

If your child or anyone in their household has been experiencing these symptoms, has a pending test or positive test they should refrain from attending Preschool, and contact their primary care doctor.

Children or Staff with coughs due to asthma or regular allergies should provide a doctor's note.

Children and Staff need to be fever free for 72 hours without medication to return to care unless a child has another doctor confirmed illness (such as an ear infection or strep) in which case we will go back to our normal policy or 24 hours fever free without medication. Please submit doctor's note upon return in this case.

Responding to a Confirmed COVID Case:

If there is a positive case of COVID-19 among the children or staff at South Gate we will report and work along with Lancaster County Health Department. We will follow guidance from LLCHD regarding contact tracing notification to our families and returning to school.

Tuition During Quarantine:

If your child is required to stay home to quarantine, your tuition will be reduced to 50% for the two-week period.

Face Coverings/Masks:

- Families are to supply a clean mask daily for their child, to be washed after each session.
- Breakaway lanyards are available upon request.
- Preschool children will be required to wear their mask while in the building. We will be taking mask breaks throughout the day. During snack and outdoor large motor time the children will not be required to wear their mask.
- Staff and Parents are required to wear a mask at all times regardless of vaccination status at this time.
- Teachers will include discussions and activities in their classroom to help the children feel comfortable wearing a mask and making the concept more child friendly and fun. We understand this is a new concept for some children and will help to make the transition a success.

Teachers:

All four of our preschool teachers have received their COVID vaccines, along with Pastor Amy & the church's administrative assistant. Our staff will be prescreening themselves daily prior to work. We are going to have each individual teacher stay strictly with their own class. Due to this there is a chance that if a teacher will be absent due to illness, we may need to cancel that class first thing in the morning. We will try to give you as much notice as possible.

Drop Off: We are implementing staggered drop off/pick up times for two classes at a time. You will be assigned a time to arrive to drop off/pick up your child based on what class your child is in. Please abide by these times.

- Preschool Mrs. Tisdale & Mrs. Reynoldson's classes:
 - Parents will enter off of Pioneers Blvd. at their scheduled drop off time. We are having staggered drop off to reduce the number of vehicles and people at the building. It is important you arrive on time. Preschool parents will park on the SOUTHWEST side of the building and will walk their child up to the side playground door where their teacher will greet the child to take their temperature and enter the building. Preschool parents are not allowed to walk into the building with their child, and will return to their cars.
- Preschool Mrs. Stacey & Mrs. Sarah's classes:
 - Parents will enter the parking lot off of Daniel Dr. at their scheduled drop off time. We are having staggered drop off to reduce the number of vehicles and people at the building. It is important that you arrive on time. Parents will park every other stall on the North side of the building (this will allow for social distancing with buckling car seats). Parents will then walk their child in to the building using the education wing doors and head straight for their classroom. Please help your child hang their coat and backpack on the coat rack. Your child will be greeted by their teacher to check their temperature and head into the classroom. Parents are quickly

to return to their car and not mingle in the hallway/ stop to talk with the teacher.
Drop off should be in a quick fashion, while staying 6' from other families coming in.

Your child will find out who their teacher is at the 'Meet the Teacher Day'.

Mrs. Tisdale & Mrs. Stacey's classes: Drop off 8:45-8:50, Class will begin at 8:50. Pick up at 11:20.

Mrs. Reynoldson & Mrs. Sarah's classes: Drop off 8:55-9:00, Class will begin at 9:00. Pick up at 11:30.

It is crucial for you to be on time.

Pick Up:

- Preschool Mrs. Tisdale & Mrs. Reynoldson's classes:
 - Parents will park in the same area of the parking lot for their scheduled dismissal time, and in nice weather can wait on the sidewalk/grassy area by the playground door for dismissal. In rainy/snowy weather parents should watch the door at dismissal time to help escort their child to the car and leave promptly to allow for the next scheduled time of dismissal.
- Preschool Mrs. Stacey & Mrs. Sarah's classes:
 - Parents will park in the same area of the parking lot for their scheduled dismissal time, and in nice weather can wait on the sidewalk by the education wing. In rainy/snowy weather parents should watch the door at dismissal time to help escort their child to the car and leave promptly to allow for the next scheduled time of dismissal.

Disinfection:

- Our rooms will have disinfectant in them to wipe down surfaces throughout the day.
- Playground and gym toys will be disinfected between groups
- Separate areas will be roped off on the playground and in the basement for our groups to remain separated but still ensuring there are two adults present in case of emergency.

Snack:

- More information about snack donations will be provided at the 'Meet the Teacher Day'.
- Children will be given a dixie cup with water at snack time.
- NO homemade snacks will be allowed, only commercially produced and packaged snacks.