

*SAINT MARK
Early Learning
Center*



PARENT
HANDBOOK
2018-2019

SAINT MARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
2901 COLUMBIANA ROAD
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA 35216
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Philosophy

The week-day early education program at Saint Mark United Methodist Church is an extension of the ministry to the children and families of this Church and an outreach to the children and families of this community. We are excited to have the opportunity to partner with you to provide an exceptional level of care and instruction for your child.

Clear communication is one of the keys to a successful ELC program. This handbook contains specific information and requirements set forth by Saint Mark ELC

Children are a gift from God. We are given the privilege of guiding them as they grow through the most important formative years of their lives. We are dedicated to assisting families in all areas of their child's education: spiritual, mental, physical, social and emotional. Emphasis is placed on the whole child and our goal is to provide experiences that will help the child develop to his/her full potential as an individual.

Specific Objectives:

1. To develop an awareness in the child of caring for God's world.
2. To help the child develop expressive language with English as a primary or secondary language.
3. To provide a positive environment in which the child will develop an interest in learning.
4. To provide activities that are conducive to developing listening, vision, motor and social skills.
5. To aid the child in developing a positive self image.
6. To introduce cognitive material in a developmentally appropriate manner.
7. To explore the world of the child through art, music and nature.
8. To recognize and celebrate certain religious and national holidays.
9. To provide experiences that enhances religious awareness.

CHURCH MINISTRY STAFF

The pastoral staff at Saint Mark is always available to assist families of the program. You may contact our pastors by calling the Church office at 822-5980. Secretary, Ruth Miller is the Church Office Manager.

Senior Minister: Rev. Drew Clayton
 Associate Minister: Rev. Don Cross
 Financial Manager: Deanna Holmes
 Secretary: J. Ruth Miller
 Facilities Manager: Ashley Kirby
 Assistant Director ELC: Amy Wykle

Associate Minister: Rev. Ryan Karr
 Director of Music Ministry: Ruth K. Miller
 Director of Children's Ministries: Liz Biddinger
 Director of Student Ministries: Tina Nelson
 Director of ELC: Sandy Jenkins

ELC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ELC Director: Sandy Jenkins

Senior Pastor: Drew Clayton*

SPRC: Scott Perry*

Financial: Tom Brown*

Professional Representatives:
 Nancy Kennemer*
 Janet Nebrig
 Betty Walton*

Church Representative:
 Karl Turner*

Parent Representatives:
 Flynt Connor*
 Alison Hill
 Rob Luckhardt*
 Suzanne McFerrin
 Rebekah Parker*

*Church member

If you are interested in serving on this committee, please see the ELC director to submit your name for consideration.

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**Saint Mark Early Learning Center and 5K Calendar
2018-2019 School Year *Subject to change**

August

Tuesday 7th Director Meeting with Parents in Sanctuary 7PM-no children
 Wednesday 8th Meet the Teacher 12-1 PM parents & children
 Thursday 9th First Day for Students
 Thursday 23rd Parent/Teacher Night no children

September

Monday 3rd Labor Day Holiday –No School
 Wednesday 5th Gold Day –Childhood Cancer Support Day Wear Gold

October

Friday 12th Columbus Day- No School
 Wednesday 17th Pink Day- Cancer Support Day-Wear Pink
 Thursday 18th Children’s Theatre at Saint Mark ELC
 Wednesday 31st Party Day –More info to follow

November

Tuesday 6th Parent/Teacher Conference 2K-4K
 Monday 12th Veterans Day- No School
 Thursday 15th 3K & 4K Thanksgiving Program
 Wed.-Fri. 21-23 Thanksgiving Holidays- No School

December

Wednesday 19th Happy Birthday Jesus Party (All Classes)
 Thursday 20th Last Day for students Dismiss @ 1:00
 Christmas Holidays December 21st-January 4th

January

Monday 7th First Day of School for Students
 Monday 14th Registration for ELC 2019-2020 School Year
 Tuesday 15th Registration For Community
 Monday 21st Martin Luther King Holiday-No School

February

Wednesday 6th Red Day- For Heart Health Wear Red
 Wednesday 13th Valentine Parties (All Classes)
 Friday 15th School Closed - No School
 Monday 18th President’s Day – No School
 Thursday 21st Children’s Theatre at Saint Mark ELC

March

25th-29th Spring Break- School Closed

April

Wednesday 10th Doughnuts for Dad 7:15-9:15am
 Wednesday 17th Easter Parties (All Classes)
 Friday 19th Good Friday – No School
 Monday 22 Easter Monday- No School

May

Wednesday 8th Muffins for Mom 7:15-9:15am
 Wednesday 22nd End of Year Parties
 Thursday 23rd Last day of school Dismiss @ 1PM

Revised 5/7/2018

ADMISSIONS POLICY

Saint Mark Early Learning Center welcomes and does not discriminate children of any race, color, creed, religion or special need in administration of its admissions policy. The placement of a child in a class is based on his/her age as of September 1st of the school year. ***For the three & four year old classes, a child must be fully potty trained.***

Enrollment is based on the following: 1) currently enrolled children will register along with children of Saint Mark United Methodist Church families will register on Monday January 14, 2019. 2) Families in the community will register Tuesday January 15, 2019. Children from each group will be enrolled on a first come-first served basis.

2K-4K will remain in the same class throughout the school year for which they are registered! They do not move up during the school year. Infants and Toddlers may be moved to the next class during the school year depending on developmental progress, class size and/or at the discretion of the Director.

REGISTRATION

- A registration fee of \$175.00 is due along with the Pre-Enrollment form in order to register for the upcoming year.
- We can not hold a space for your child without payment of the registration fee.
- If for any reason you need to change your child's schedule during the school year, please speak with the director not the child's teacher.
- Before the first day of school in the fall, we must have a current immunization form completed by the child's doctor, a DHR preadmission form and a birth certificate.

Refund Policy:

- The registration fee is non-refundable once a child is registered and monies received. If after working with the parents, we feel that your child is not benefiting from the school program and the school requests the withdrawal of the child; fees are non-refundable. If the parent withdraws the child at any time during the year, no refund is made.

Withdrawal

A two week written notice is required when a child is withdrawn from the program for any reason. This notice must be delivered to the Director. In the event a child is absent for more than two weeks without notification, we will assume that the child has been withdrawn and will proceed to register another child from our waiting list.

If a child is withdrawn and later wishes to re-enroll within a three month period (if vacancy is available), the registration fee will be waived. After the three month period, the full registration fee will be required.

REGULATIONS

In compliance with the State of Alabama Department of Human Services (DHR) we are required to have the following forms in your child's file complete with all blanks filled in even if it is something not applicable put N/A. We are honored to be a DHR licensed facility and due to that we must adhere to DHR policies and procedures.

HOURS of OPERATION

Our school hours are Monday – Friday 7:00 am till 4:30 pm*

Our Core hours are 9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Early Care is 7:00 am-9:00 am

After Care is 1:00pm – 4:30 pm

* We ask respectfully that you arrive by 4:20 so that the teachers can speak with you about your child's day. They then must clean and sanitize their room prior to clocking out for the day. When you are late that keeps the teachers on the clock and puts them into overtime. I do not want to raise fees again to cover this.

Staff salaries and work schedules are based on numbers of children registered for Before Care, Full Care, and After Care therefore we must adhere to the following guidelines:

- During the year if you drop out of full care, you may re-enter that year if space is available.
- Months with holidays have the same rates as other months.

FEES AND TUITION

We are a self-supporting, non-profit organization and all fees are used to provide the best teachers, equipment and supplies possible.

- A registration is due along with the application in order to register for the upcoming year.
- Supply fees are due in ½ August and ½ January of each school year.
- Parents will have access to view their account online and pay online.
- Months with holidays have the same monthly rate as others.
- Two weeks notice is required for withdrawals.
- Deductions cannot be made for sickness or absence of any kind.
- Checks should be made out to Saint Mark ELC and placed in the grey box beside the office door. We also accept Credit Card and Online payments.
- Infants registered before their birth date ARE required to pay tuition payments until the infant starts in order to keep their place in the class. If parents do not wish to do this then that spot will be given to the next person on the waiting list.
- There is no reduction in fees due to holidays, school closure due to inclement weather, or a child's absence.

DROP IN DAYS

Drop in days, early and after care we will accommodate when possible. These must be scheduled with the office only. Do not call or text your child's teacher. You must complete a form at the front office and payment is required at that time. These fees are per occurrence. We understand occasionally emergencies happen please call the office and these will be handled on a need basis.

Drop in and additional before and after care is not available during the Month of August.

Time	Fee
Early Care 7-9	20
After Care 1-4:30	25
9-1 only	50
Extra Day 7:00-4:30	75

TEACHER REQUEST

Due to the multifaceted decisions that must be made to compose a number of individual classes within an age group, teacher request may be made but may not be honored. A balance whenever possible of gender and race is sought when making up classes. In addition, the personality dynamics of both the teacher and children must be taken into consideration when making up class rolls.

Class	Days	Time	Monthly Fee 9-1	Monthly Fee 7-4:30	
Infants	M-F	7-4:30	-	\$850	
Toddlers	T/TH	9-1	\$300	430	
Toddlers	M/W/F	9-1	345	530	
Toddlers	5M-F	9-1	450	850	
2K	T/TH	9-1	285	430	
	M/W/F	9-1	330	530	
	M-F	9-1	440	660	
3K	T/W/TH	9-1	350	475	
	M-F	9-1	410	575	
4K	T/W/TH	9-1	350	475	
	M-F	9-1	410	575	
Registration	Non	Refundable	\$175		
Wait List Fee	Non	Refundable	\$ 50		
Supply Fee	Non	Refundable	\$250	\$125	Each Semester
Late Paperwork	Non	Refundable	\$ 50		
Change in Service	Non	Refundable	\$ 50		
Discounts					
Saint Mark Member	One	Time	Discount	Ask Admin	1 per family
Sibling Discount	One	Time	Discount	Ask Admin	1 per family

LATE PAYMENT AND LATE PICK-UP CHARGES

- There is a \$50.00 late fee for all payments received after the 15th of the month.
- \$1.00 for each minute late after 4:30 p.m.
- If parents are repeatedly late, the child will be withdrawn from school.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In case of inclement weather, Saint Mark ELC will close according to the Vestavia City School System or the discretion of the Director. If school is delayed Saint Mark will open 30 minutes prior to the start time Vestavia has announced. If schools are closing early we will close 30 minutes after the posted time by Vestavia. We ask that you do not call the office during weather emergencies. We are notified by the EMA and have the weather alerts that come on our phone. If we are under a severe thunderstorm warning we proceed to our safe place. There are no phones there so you can not reach us. If we are under a warning and you come to the center, we can not release the child until the warning has lifted so you will have to stay on campus with us. If we have to close for any reason you will be notified by our ONE CALL System. Please make sure your numbers are kept up to date.

FACULTY AND CLASS SIZE

We require that our faculty be responsible and loving people with a broad knowledge in child development. We require that they exhibit Christian convictions in an administration of their professional duties.

It is our objective to employ highly qualified staff who love working with children, we seek staff members with a background in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, professional certification, or proven experience teaching preschool children.

The child-teacher ratio is determined by the age group per the state of Alabama:

Staff-child ratio shall be: (Revised effective July 8, 2005 DHR Regulations)

Age	Staff to Child Ratio
0 up to 18 months	1 to 5
18 months up to 2½ years	1 to 7
24 months up to 36 months	1 to 8
2½ years up to 4 years	1 to 11
4 years up to school age*	1 to 18
School age* up to 8 years	1 to 21

* The term “school age” in this context refers to children of lawful school age”

Curriculum Guidelines and Learning Resources

Our program uses a well rounded variety of socialization, free expression, creative activities, story reading, cooking activities, music, and movement. These activities are developmentally geared to the young child's interest. The class participates in unit theme activities which are age appropriate. All children will have physical activity each day according to the JCDH guidelines.

Our infants & toddlers use many hands-on materials for stacking, sensory exploration, active play, music, puzzles and puppets, manipulative and musical instruments and more! It is tailored to encourage language development, build motor skills and help the child reach developmental milestones.

The 2K classes will participate in unit theme activities and multi-sensory opportunities. They will do many art activities which help develop fine motor skills. They will participate in music, finger plays, learning colors, counting and singing the ABC's. We also will work on social skills pertaining to manners, sharing, taking turns and working together as a class.

For our 3K children they will learn the alphabet out of order, so that the children will not just learn by rote memory. Each day their lessons will target five areas: Reading, Language Development, Writing and Literacy Centers. There will also be math activities, cooking activities and other enhancements by the teaching staff. Scissor skills are also a large part of the 3K program. This is helping with fine motor skills needed for early writing.

They will also explore in a developmentally appropriate environment large and small group situations along with individual assistance while exploring the areas of Language/Literacy, Math/Science, Music and Art. On a daily basis, youngsters participate in each of the focus areas and Circle Time activities and explore designated locations in the class room known as "Centers".

Our 4K program allows children an opportunity to explore in a developmentally appropriate, environment. The program presents detailed lesson plans with defined scope and sequence. Children experience large and small group situations along with individual assistance while exploring the areas of Language/Literacy, Math/Science, Music and Art. Distinguishing the names of the letters and learning their beginning sounds are included in each session. Later in the year they will begin to blend these sounds together and begin to read simple words and sight words. Math is a small group activity allowing time for exploration, working with patterns, sorting, classifying and comparing materials and counting by rote with concrete objects. Science is included with the weather activity during circle time and at other times during the week as a separate activity that includes observing, predicting, hands on experimenting and discussing various observations. The music focus is a time to explore rhythms, play musical instruments, sing, dance, discover various kinds of music and develop gross motor skills. Art allows children opportunities to experience a variety of art materials and challenge their imaginations while developing fine motor skills.

All classes will enjoy Bible Stories, games, songs and verses as well as weekly Chapel.

Our 3K & 4K students also participate in daily enrichment classes at no extra charge such as Spanish and other interesting areas of study. You will get a copy of this schedule when it is finalized in the fall.

Videos will be used only one day in the morning instructional time to coincide with a unit being taught. All videos shown will be no longer than 30 minutes and approved by the Director or Assistant Director. Screen time is prohibited for children 2 and younger.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL TIME

- DUE TO LIABILITY AND SAFETY CONCERS, CHILDREN ARE NOT TO ENTER THE KEY PAD CODE OR THE EXIT BUTTON. Parents please do not allow this!
- Parents should share the code only with people who will be picking up their children.
- **IF YOU DO NOT KNOW THE PERSON DO NOT LET THEM IN!** This is for the safety of all children. Please do not let your children run ahead of you to the welcome area or to the parking lot.
- All children are signed-in each day on each class's sign-in sheet. If a parent walks a child into the building for any reason, he/she should sign-in the child on the class sheet. At no time or circumstance is a child to be left unattended or left alone in the classroom. They must be placed in the direct care of a teacher. We must have the full signature of the adult who delivered the child to the classroom. **Children may not write on the sign-in form.** This is a DHR policy, they are considered legal documents. If the class is not in the classroom, the sign-in form will be wherever the class is.
- Children must be signed out by a parent or other adult listed on the DHR registration form. An older child **cannot** be sent into the building to retrieve and sign out a child in our program.
- Due to liability issues older siblings are not permitted to come into the rooms of the infants or toddlers.
- Saint Mark will not release children to a person who is visibility impaired due to a medical condition, alcohol consumption, substance abuse, prescription drugs or other causes. In the event the parent or legal guardian is impaired, the Director will call someone designated on the release form.
- Please end all cell phone calls before entering the campus so that your full attention can be on the parking lot and your child.
- When parking to come into the building park in a designated parking space only.
- Turn off your car and lock it. Do not leave it running.
- Do not leave children of any age unattended for any reason,
- Saint Mark is not responsible for any personal items left in your vehicle.
- All children are to be brought to their designated area. Please make this transition time quickly. We ask that you do not enter the rooms as the staff has children to care for and they can not engage in a conversation with parents. We will be happy to schedule a conference if you need to discuss anything in depth.

AUTHORIZATION FOR PICK-UP

Parents must list those persons that have permission to pick up their child from Saint Mark. Anyone other than parents must be listed on the registration form along with a telephone number. Any person not recognized will be asked to show their drivers license for identification. It is a good practice for the parent to notify the staff and Director when other persons are expected to pick up the child. We also need to know if anyone is not authorized to pick up for any reason such as the other parent etc. If this is the case we must have a copy of the divorce decree or custody letter stating that they are not allowed to pick up. This must contain a judge's signature and time stamp. Legally we can not keep a parent from picking up a child unless we have that documentation on site.

NAP TIME

It is a requirement of the State DHR that every child is given a designated nap/rest time. The child does not have to go to sleep however, they are required to rest. Many of them are very tired from the daily activities that they welcome the time to rest. The following is how nap time at Saint Mark works:

Infants- All infants have their own crib to sleep in. Sheets are changed weekly or when soiled. We keep the same sleeping pattern that they have at home for this age.

Toddlers-4K will sleep on a cot provided for them. This cot is designated for them only, we do not share cots. You will be required to provide a "Nap Mat/Napper" to go on the cot. These may be monogrammed if you wish. Their name must be clearly seen. You are required to take the Nap Mat/Napper home each Friday and wash and return it to school on Monday. Children are allowed a blanket if there is not one attached to the nap mat.

The Toddlers lie down at 1:00 pm and sleep until 3:30 pm

The 2K lie down at 1:00 and naps until 3:30

The 3K & 4K go to the gym or playground from 1 pm-2 pm. At 2 pm they lie down and nap until 3:30

The majority of the children do not fall asleep instantly but usually within 15-30 minutes they are asleep.

Children will be required to keep their shoes on during nap, this is a safety issue. In case of evacuation we can not stop and put on shoes. You may want to practice this at home.

For the new toddlers sleeping on nap mats I would suggest that you go ahead and purchase one and let them practice at home before school begins.

Once awake they will all take turn going to the potty, washing hands and we will serve them an afternoon snack.

ADJUSTMENT PERIOD

Starting school for the first time often causes anxiety for children. We recommend that you visit the center with your child before the first day of school. We will work with you and your child to make this adjustment period a positive experience. We recommend that you give your child at least one month to adjust to the early education center experience. It is usually the parent who has the hardest time adjusting, Please do not linger, the longer you do the longer it takes them to calm down. Please be assured that we will call you if your child cannot be consoled or we feel that they are unhappy.

ASSESSMENTS

All children are assessed through observations of peer interactions and play, developmental checklist, and portfolios of their work. Areas of assessment include: socio-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, math, science, technology, social studies, creative expression, and health and safety. This information is shared formally twice per year at the parent/teacher conference. This process encourages parents and teachers to develop a plan that will best meet the needs of the child. It will be sensitive to the family's values, culture, identity, and home language.

If, through the above mentioned process, teachers suspect a developmental delay or other special need, the teacher will communicate the concern to the Director. The administrator will observe the child, document the findings, and meet with the teachers to discuss the concern. A meeting will then be scheduled with the family to share the concern in an honest and supportive manner. We will suggest future steps and assist the family by providing information and resources for further assessments.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

A parent/teacher conference will be held in November and March. At that time the teachers will give parent information about their child and a class recommendation for the following school year. The teachers and the Director are available throughout the year for individual conferences with parents. Please call the office if you wish to set a conference with your child's teacher.

FOOD AND SNACKS & POLICIES

- If your child participates in Early Care you may bring your child's breakfast to school.
- Jefferson County Department of Health requires that "potentially hazardous" foods be refrigerated. Each of our classrooms has a small refrigerator, ice packs are not sufficient. All foods that normally require refrigeration must be marked by the parents with the child's name and will be refrigerated until lunch.
- Under direction of the Fire Marshal we are not allowed to cook or heat food for children via a microwave. Saint Mark ELC will not heat food for children.

- Lunch guidelines: You know which foods your child enjoys, but often children have too much and food is wasted. These guidelines are in an effort to cut down on waste.
 1. The parent should make every effort to send healthy foods. Please see the USDA suggested meal patterns page at the back of this handbook for suggestions.
 2. When sending a sandwich, please cut it in fourth or in half so they can handle it easily.
 3. Fruit and a few chips or crackers are fine. Cut up meat and cheese or vegetable sticks are also good ideas.
 4. We do not allow carbonated drinks of any kind. If your child has a “lunchable” please remove any carbonated drinks. According to the USDA food guidelines, a child must have milk with lunch. We request that you provide milk (ex: milk box). We will place your child’s milk box or Sippy cup of milk in a refrigerator.
 5. Water is provided throughout the day as needed by the child.
 6. No candy, gum or medications should be in a child’s lunchbox.
- The school provides mid-afternoon snacks and water for children that are in after care and a weekly menu for those snacks will be posted in the hall.

We ask that you try to make your lunches as healthy as possible. No fast food lunches are allowed. **Saint Mark is a nut free facility.** This includes tree nuts, peanuts, and hazelnuts. Some of our children have severe allergies and it is our policy that we do not permit the use of peanut butter or nuts of any kind for lunches, snacks or crafts or in-class cooking. If sending Lunchables for your child, be sure to remove any peanut butter candy/cookies that may be included. If you use a peanut butter substitute, it must be labeled each time, otherwise it will be assumed it is peanut butter and they will be given an alternative.

See the meal pattern for children located at the back of this handbook.

Other than daily lunch you prepare, food to be served to your child or the other children in your child’s class such as (birthday or holiday party items) must be prepared in a commercially approved kitchen (e.g. grocery store deli, bakery, etc.) and be individually wrapped commercially prepared products. This policy is set by the Jefferson County Health Department in accordance with guidelines set by the Department of Human Resources.

Please note the following top 10 choking hazards list. If you send any of these items make sure they are prepared in the proper manner. (Some of these items are not even allowed)

Top 10 Food Choking Hazards

1. **Hot dogs:** The roundness of a hot dog makes it easy to get stuck in a child's throat. It's also very moldable, so it can adapt to the shape of the passage, making it especially difficult to dislodge. To minimize the danger, slice a hot dog in half and then further cut into small pieces.
2. **Nuts:** The size and shape of all types of nuts and seeds make them difficult to chew with baby teeth, so they may slide down whole, where they can easily become lodged in your child's throat. Remember we are a nut free facility.
3. **Grapes and Raisins:** The problem with these fruits is their small size and shape, making them easy to eat without chewing. However, they may not make it through the narrowest part of your child's throat. Slice grapes in half for your little ones and hold off serving raisins until your child goes to elementary school.
4. **Carrots:** Raw carrots are certainly nutritious but they also come with a very big choking risk. Because of their hard and dry texture and shape, they can be difficult to chew and can easily become stuck in your child's throat. To avoid the problem, serve carrots in narrow strips that are easier to chew and swallow.
5. **Popcorn:** Popcorn is a popular offering at movies, parties, and special events. Yet the size, shape, and texture make it easy to choke on. Un-popped kernels in the bag also increase the choking risk. That's why this food is better saved for older kids and served under supervision. Puff Corn is acceptable.
6. **Hard candy:** Hard candy is a particular danger for kids of all ages. The size and slippery shape make it easy to slide down your child's throat and get stuck there. Since candy isn't good for your child's health or teeth, this item should be avoided from her diet completely.
7. **Gum:** This is another treat that doesn't bring any value to your child's diet. It's also easy for children to lose control of the gum and have it slide down the throat and become stuck. Gummy treats, fruit roll ups, and caramels can be equally dangerous. That's why many pediatricians recommend steering clear of such items entirely.
8. **Bagels:** Hard foods like bagels can also be choking hazards. That's because these can be difficult for small teeth to chew and that fact may prompt your child to swallow them in large chunks that can easily get stuck.
9. **Apples:** You know the saying, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." But you may not know that their dry skin and hard texture can easily get caught in a small throat. Cut apples into small slices. You can also mash, cook, or grate the apples to make them easy to swallow.
10. **Cheese cubes:** When you cut cheese into cubes, it may be easy for your child to hold and eat, but it also puts her at increased risk for these soft squares to get stuck in her throat. Shred cheese or dice it into tiny bits instead.

PLEASE LABEL EVERYTHING!

Please make sure your child's name is clearly marked on their lunch box and each container. This helps the child with name recognition as well as helps the teacher to ensure that everything gets sent back home. Saint Mark is not responsible for any lost items.

Please plan for your child's lunch to be as convenient and neat as possible. If they need a fork or spoon please supply them. If you send food in a thermos please send a small bowl or plate to put their food on so that they can have easy access to it.

Younger 2's and toddlers should bring a Sippy cup with the child's name clearly marked on it.

Please only send one dessert/snack in your child's lunch. Our policy is that the dessert or sweets are put aside until they make a good effort in eating their healthy portions first.

Cooking for instructional purposes IS allowed and will be conducted as part of Saint Mark curriculum and activities.

Infants

Because breast milk is recommended as the best source of nourishment for infants, breast feeding is encouraged and supported by Saint Mark. We have a nursing room provided for convenience and privacy for nursing mothers. It is highly advised that infants receive their first feeding of the day at home before center arrival, until they are old enough to eat table food. According to Health Department regulations bottles must be identified with the child's name. Stored breast milk must also include the date of storage and the child's name. All bottles must be pre-made at home. We are not allowed to mix bottles. We **do not** warm bottles in a microwave. We use a bottle warmer for this purpose. Infants will be held for bottle feeding. Once they can hold their own bottle that is allowed. Infants will not be placed in a crib with a bottle. If not consumed, formula will be discarded within one hour unless refrigerated and any leftover will be discarded at the end of the day. If baby food is provided by the parent, all containers shall be labeled with the child's name. No previously opened containers can be accepted. All opened containers will be sent home or discarded at the end of the day. Remember no glass containers are allowed.

HEALTH RELATED POLICIES

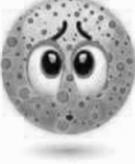
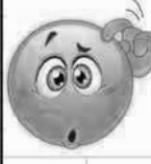
A current physician's immunization form is required by the State of Alabama for each child. If the form will expire during the school year, the parent is required to supply us with a new up-to-date form. The Jefferson County Health Department checks regularly each child's file. If your child's form has expired they will send you a letter stating that your child can not return to school until all immunizations are current.

The State Department of Human Resources states that a child who is ill should not attend school. "Determination of illness may be based on: the child's inability to participate in school activities, signs of serious or contagious disease or condition, such as but not limited to fever, diarrhea, vomiting, unexplained rash, scabies, head lice."

In addition, we have these guidelines for parents:

- Fever is considered 100.4 or higher.
- Do not give your children medication for fever then send them to school.
- Children should be fever free 24 hours before returning to school without medication.
- A child with a bad cold should not attend. Green runny nose, coughing and sneezing.
- Any child who has vomited or had diarrhea within 24 hours of school time should not attend. They must be symptom free without medication for 24 hours prior to returning.
- Any child with a suspected concussion should not attend.
- Any child treated for head lice must have no evidence of nits in his hair in order to return.
- If your child can not participate in their daily routine of activities such as going outside they must stay home.

Please refer to the chart on the next page for any questions you may have.

I NEED TO STAY HOME IF...						
I HAVE A FEVER	I AM VOMITING	I HAVE DIARRHEA	I HAVE A RASH	I HAVE HEAD LICE	I HAVE AN EYE INFECTION	I HAVE BEEN IN THE HOSPITAL
						
Temperature of 100.4 or higher	Within the past 24 hours	Within the past 24 hours.	Body rash with itching or fever.	Itchy head, active head lice.	Redness, Itching, and/or "crusty" drainage from eye.	Hospital stay and/or ER Visit
I AM READY TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL WHEN I AM....						
Fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication i.e. Tylenol, Motrin	Free from vomiting for at least 2 solid meals	Free from diarrhea for at least 24 hours	Free from rash itching, or or fever. I have been evaluated by my doctor if needed.	Treated with appropriate lice treatment at home and proof is provided to nurse.	Evaluated by my doctor and have note to return to school	Released by my medical provider to return to school.

If your child becomes ill at school we will call a parent or designated caregiver first to pick up the child and then we will move down the child's emergency list in their file if the parents can not be reached. We ask that when called you make arrangements to **pick your child up within one hour.**

If you plan to be unavailable while your child is at school, notify someone on your emergency list and send a note letting us know who to call if there is an emergency. If a parent cannot be found in an emergency, it can be an even more frightening experience for your child.

Accidents

Accidents will happen with young children, even with careful monitoring. Any time we treat your child following an accident, you will receive an accident report. If the accident is severe, we will call you immediately. If a child has received a hard blow to the head or a major cut or injury, we will call you and 911. It is our policy to always notify you in the case of an accident, however, please be aware that sometimes you might notice bruises or scrapes that the child did not call to our attention. Hopefully this will not happen. Please inform us if your child has had an accident while in your care since the last time they were at school.

Air Quality

During months in which air quality is of concern, a daily monitoring of air quality alerts and posting of such information at the front desk will be available. While it has always been thought that being outside a little while each day is good for children, outside play time will either be limited or scheduled for indoors on days of poor air quality or alerts.

Asthma

We are a fragrance free facility so that we are asthma friendly. Teachers and staff may wear lotion but no perfume and children are asked to refrain from using parent's cologne/perfume for asthma/allergy sufferers.

Medicine:

- It is not our policy to administer medicine. However, if a child has a chronic condition and requires medicine during the school day, the parent must provide written instructions on a DHR form that can be obtained in the office or on our website. The only person that will administer medication is Mrs. Sandy. No other employees are able to administer medication.
- All medicines must be in their original containers.
- No over-the-counter medications will be given unless we have written instructions from the doctor and the required DHR form from parents.
- If your child is allergic to bee stings, ant bites or has food allergies, we need to have prescribed medication on hand at all times.
- **Medicines should never be sent in a child's bag or lunchbox. All medicines must be hand delivered by the parent to the office.** All medications are kept in a locked cabinet and will be administered only by Mrs. Sandy.
- The Department of Human Resources will not allow us to apply sunscreen or other lotions to the skin, unless we have instructions from the parent on the DHR medication form.
- If there are any contagious diseases reported to us we will inform the parents of the class. Such as strep, chicken pox, flu etc.
- We ask that if your child does contract an illness please let us know so that we can inform the other parents. We never give names or details of illness to others.
- Children are not allowed to bring hand sanitizer or chap-stick to school. This is a DHR policy.

Head Lice:

The Jefferson County Department of Health has issued the following advisory concerning treatment for head lice:

“Even though it is sometimes difficult and time consuming, all nits must be removed to insure complete treatment. Lice products do not kill all the nits (do not be fooled by manufacturer’s claims to the contrary) and survivors will hatch into crawling lice within 7-10 days. This causes a continuing cycle of lice infestation.”

If your child needs head lice treatment, he or she may not return to school with nits in evidence in his/her hair. Following nit removal, a daily check is advisable for at least 10 days following treatment. We will work with parents to keep all children lice free.

If a child is found to have head lice we will send a letter home to each parent in the child’s class.

Emergency Evacuation

If for some reason we need to evacuate Saint Mark campus we will notify the parents of our location via One Call. We are currently working on an evacuation plan. This will be posted when completed.

Child Abuse

The staff of Saint Mark ELC is required by Alabama state law to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Child guidance has an important place in the program at Saint Mark. Parents and teachers will need to work together in order to be consistent and effective in training children to make appropriate choices in a classroom setting. We have developed a formula we feel is appropriate in shaping and encouraging responsible behavior in children. First we will talk to the child, calling them by name about the choice made and try to redirect their focus in a positive manner. Secondly a hand on the shoulder is a gentle reminder of choices. At times the child may need to take a time out (one minute per age) either in the class or if the behavior has warranted the child may be in time out, in the office with the Director or Assistant Director. If none of the above achieves desired behavior the Director will call the parents to come and speak with their child directly and schedule a conference to discuss the situation. The Director has full discretion to ask that the child be suspended or removed from the program, so as not to disrupt the learning process for other children. Saint Mark reserves the right at any time to suspend or permanently expel a child from enrollment if the Director, in consultation with the staff, senior pastor, and Advisory Board feels that the needs of the child are not being met. If you have any questions about our discipline procedures, please talk to the Director. At no time is corporal punishment used at Saint Mark ELC.

Staff behaviors that are prohibited at the ELC:

Physical or aversive punishment

Withdrawal of food, nap, or bathroom opportunities

Abusive, profane, or derogatory language, including yelling or belittling

Any form of public or private humiliation

Any form of emotional abuse

Biting

In the case of biting, every effort is made to ensure the safety of every child. Biting is typical for toddlers and children whom are not yet verbal. When biting occurs the following steps will be implemented:

- When a child bites they will be isolated in a high chair or bed. The bitten child will be attended to and First Aid rendered. The child who bit will then be talked with at that time and then reintroduced to the class. Also a report of what action was taken will be provided to the parent of the biter and to the parent of the child that was bitten. If the bite breaks the skin the parents will be informed by phone.
- If the biting persists the teachers will keep a log of dates, times and activities. We will then have a mandatory conference with the parents to come up with an action plan for prevention – which may result in the changing of classrooms.
- If the biting still persists the parents will be required to attend a parenting class on biting. The fee for this class is \$50.00
- If the biting still persists it will be at the discretion of the Director but may result in dismissal of the child from the program with no refund of registration fees or class fees.

HITTING/ROUGH PLAY POLICY

Some young children need more instruction in social skills than others and our teachers and staff will work with parents of children who need extra attention to learn those skills.

However, no child should be afraid to come to school because he fears another child. It is unacceptable for any child to hit or injure another child. Therefore, when a child continues to hit or injure other children, it will be necessary to enforce our hitting/rough play policy.

- During the day if a child has been corrected 3 times for hitting or playing roughly with other children (such as tackling, tripping, pushing, biting, etc.), on the third time They will come to the office.
- When they return to class, if he is corrected 3 times again, the parents will come and meet with the director to form a plan of action.

CLOTHING

Children are requested to wear play clothes. We do paint, play outside and do various other messy activities at times. If you have any questions or complaints pertaining to clothing please direct them to the Director and not your child's teachers.

Younger children during toilet training should wear boxer type shorts jeans with elastic unless they can handle other types on their own. Please no bubble suits or overalls or belts for children in toilet training also refrain from wearing long dresses and tights. When toilet training we prefer pull ups with the side access Velcro so that the children do not have to be fully undressed when an accident occurs. We encourage independence in our children and a child can better attend to their own bathroom needs in garments that are easy for them to handle alone. We can not wash any soiled clothing. These items will be sent home in a bag. If underwear are beyond saving the will be discarded.

Parents should provide Infants and toddlers to have bibs for feeding.

Put your child's name on all clothing, coats and other belongings to help ensure their safe return. All children will go outside each day that weather permits, so dress them accordingly.

- Each child is required to furnish the school with a "change of clothes", including socks, underwear, shirt and pants. These also need to be upgraded as they grow through out the year. All clothes will be returned at the end of the year.
- Extra shoes would be nice if they are toilet training.

SHOES

- Children must wear tennis shoes that support and protect their feet with complete coverage of the foot. Sandals (including Keen styles), crocs, boots, jellies, slip-ons, rain boots, including girls' "pumps" and clogs are not permitted. A parent will be asked to bring another pair of shoes if a child comes in inappropriate footwear. Even if we do not go outside we will run and play in the gym.

POTTY TRAINING POLICY

Children are required to be potty trained in order to go into a 3K or 4K. We recognize that accidents do happen.

The policy concerning the 3's & 4's:

1. Children are never allowed to wear pull-ups or diapers to school.
2. Children should wear underwear and bring several changes of clothes for "just in case".
3. Any preschooler can regress for a short time because of life changes, emotional concerns or physical problems. If a child that we know has been successfully potty trained begins to have accidents, we will work with the parents to find out what is causing the problem and to help the child find success again.
4. If a parent wishes to hold a place for the child at Saint Mark while he/she is not in school, the parent must continue to pay tuition monthly.
5. If a parent withdraws the child, no funds will be refunded.

Verification Signatures

We must have a verification page in each child's file relating to tuition, address, video, pictures etc. policies and other policies.

Smoking Policy:

Saint Mark United Methodist Church is a non-smoking campus throughout the week. Smoking is never permitted on the grounds or in the building.

Firearms Policy:

No firearms are allowed on the campus of Saint Mark unless you are a member of the police department.

Physical Activity Policy:

Children will have an opportunity for appropriate amounts of active play each day. Children who are here for 4 hours will have at least 30 minutes of active outdoor or gym play daily. Those who are here from 7:00-4:30 will have at least 60 minutes of active play daily.

Screen Time Policy:

Screen time is very limited and is used to supplement the daily lesson plans. Screen time is prohibited for children 2 and under.

COMMUNICATION

1. Each child is to bring the Saint Mark Early Learning Center tote bag each day to carry art papers, notes, checks, etc. New bags may be purchased in the school office throughout the year.
2. The child's name should be clearly written on the outside of the tote bag. The bags can be monogrammed.
3. We use a folder in the children's tote bags as our daily form of communication. Notes from parents and to parents should be placed in the child's bag. We will check your child's bag daily and request that you do the same. A daily report will be sent home with your child each day.

NEWSLETTER

This monthly publication includes information about activities happening at Saint Mark ELC as well as general early childhood news.

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER AND REPORT CARDS

The teachers will send home a weekly newsletter containing specific class information for each class. Children in 3K and 4K will receive two report cards one per semester.

OFFICE COMMUNICATIONS

You may call the office during normal program hours with any questions or concerns. Please remember that the Director has many responsibilities. If she is not available you may leave a message and she will return your call as soon as practical. Lengthy conference and consultations should be scheduled in advance by calling the office

BABYSITTING

Saint Mark hires employees based on their education and expertise within a supervised and managed environment. Center management, therefore, cannot be responsible or held liable if parents hire Saint Mark employees for privately arranged child care outside the scope of its employment. Staff are allowed to transport children enrolled in the program only if they are listed on the parents designated list. While parents may feel comfortable approaching their classroom teachers to babysit, it is prohibited that your child's actual teachers be asked to babysit as this often diminishes the student/teacher relationship that teachers work so hard to establish in the classroom.

CONCERNS AND SUGGESTIONS

Any concerns or suggestions can be addressed to the Director via email or written communication. All concerns and suggestions will be taken seriously and responded to in a timely manner. Suggestions can also be directed to the ELC Advisory Committee.

BIRTHDAY PARTIES

All the children enjoy sharing their birthdays with the class. Please discuss with your child's teacher an appropriate time to celebrate. Please keep refreshments simple. Cupcakes are allowed if you are available to clean up the refreshment area after the children are finished eating. No homemade items are allowed all food items must come from a bakery such as Publix, Edgars etc. **NO GIFTS!**

Children cannot go to another class party for any reason during the school year. This includes sibling birthday parties. Parents are responsible for cleaning up afterward.

Please do not bring or send party assistants to the classroom (i.e. clowns, Elsa/Batman impersonator, etc.) These disrupt the class schedule and often frighten young children. These should be reserved for your own personal parties outside the school setting.

VISITATION

- We invite you to visit your child's room for short periods of time. We ask that you limit this to the 3K and 4K classes. Younger children do not understand someone coming to visit then leaving. We also ask that you wait until at least September to visit so that the children have plenty of time to become accustomed to being away from you and home.
- We suggest that this visit not exceed 15-20 minutes and that you observe as quietly as possible so that the teacher's focus is on the class and not the visitor.
- Please do not bring any siblings when visiting, since they do not understand not to interrupt the class.
- You do not need an appointment, but please come to the office to check in before visiting a classroom. Saint Mark has an open door policy and you are welcome at any time.
- This is not the time to talk with the teacher about your child or any other matter. The teacher must stay focused on the children at all times.
- You may schedule a conference with a teacher to take place at another time.

VOLUNTEERS

- You are encouraged to volunteer to read to your child's class or to share a special hobby or interest that you may have. Your child's teacher might need help with special art projects or room mothers might ask you to help with a party or a school-wide activity.
- According to State regulations, we must have a complete teacher's file on anyone who is left alone with a class, so we can not ask parents to substitute or otherwise watch a group of children unless that parent is also a staff member.

SOLICITATION

Saint Mark ELC may not be used as a setting for solicitation.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Children are requested to leave gum, candy, money or other valuables at home. We also ask that you refrain from sending your child with special jewelry except those of religious purposes. These are a potential choking hazard to them and the other children. Please discourage your child from bringing toys or other "prized" possessions to school except on special occasions planned by the teachers. Such highly valued items are often difficult to keep up with, may get broken and very hard to share. We can not be held responsible for any personal items lost or damaged.

It is understood, however, that many young children do have an object of special attachment, such as a blanket or stuffed toy, that helps to ease the transition from home to school and that they might not be ready to share. Teachers will help other children to understand and respect such feelings and once a child is settled the item will be placed in their cubby. Teachers will do their best to keep up with children's belongings but cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage of personal possessions. Labeling of all personal belongings helps to avoid loss.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

All possible provisions have been made to assure that children and teachers follow appropriate rules of personal hygiene. Teachers will use gloves at all times when changing diapers or assisting older children in the restroom. Antibacterial soap is used for hand washing before meals and after toilet use. Disposable paper towels are used for drying hands.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Our program complies with non-discrimination laws covering hiring of staff, enrollment of children, and termination of staff and children.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

All children's records shall be kept confidential. No staff of Saint Mark shall discuss or disclose personal information regarding children or facts learned about children and their relatives.

If anything in this handbook is unclear to you or if any of your questions have not been covered, please call or come in to see the director. We want to make sure that you feel comfortable about your child's safety and well-being while he/she is at school.

