



Fall | 2023

Parent Handbook

2023-2024 School Year

With Covid Provisions, 8.31.23

St. Mark Preschool and Enrichment Center
200 South Wille Street
Mount Prospect, Illinois 60056

847.873.1110

Parent Handbook

Table of Contents

Reviewed 7/25/23

PHILOSOPHY.....	3
STAFF PROFILES.....	3
SCHOOL CALENDARS.....	6
SAMPLE DAILY SCHEDULE.....	7
GUIDANCE & DISCIPLINE POLICY.....	8,9
GENERAL SCHOOL POLICIES	
Absence.....	11
Arrival & Dismissal <i>-including late policy</i>	11, 12
Birthdays.....	12
Crisis Management Plan.....	13,14
Health & Illness <i>(see Covid policy 22-24)</i>	15
Naptime.....	16
Parent Teacher Conferences.....	17
Preschool Parties.....	17,18
Toilet Training	19
Tuition.....	19, 20
Vision & Hearing Screening.....	20
FAQS	21
ADDENDUM: Covid Policies & Guidelines.....	22-24
RECEIPT for HANDBOOK - <i>sign and return</i>	25

Welcome to St. Mark Preschool & Enrichment Center!

OUR PHILOSOPHY

The St. Mark Preschool and Enrichment Center's program is designed for young children (ages 3-6) and encourages growth of the whole child: physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and creatively in a Christian environment.

Through the school's daily routine, each child will have the opportunity to create, discover, interact, and learn concepts through hands-on experiences that are developmentally appropriate.

Using thematic units, children will have activities that are self-directed, as well as teacher-directed. Our program follows the Illinois Early Learning Standards.

Children are encouraged to problem-solve and interact with their peers.

The teachers are supportive and nurturing of each child and work with parents to provide for the child's growth and development.

STAFF PROFILES

We would like to introduce you to the St. Mark Preschool and Enrichment Center Staff for the 2023–2024 school year:

Allison Finnegan is delighted to be starting her third year as Director at St Mark. Formerly the Assistant Director of Early Childhood at the South Barrington Park District, Allison has been a Teacher in faith-based Preschools for over 11 years as well as assisted in Special Education programs. While raising a young family, Allison was inspired to pursue a career in Early Childhood Education. She continued her studies at Harper and Oakton Community Colleges, qualifying her as a Preschool Teacher and Director. Allison is married and is blessed with 4 daughters, and 2 dogs. *"My passion for quality, early childhood education is guided by my philosophy of engaging young children in hands-on experiences that spark imagination and provide the foundation for a lifelong love of learning."*

Barb Zediker began teaching at St. Mark in 1997 and served as Preschool Director for 7 years. Barb graduated from Bradley University with degrees in Early Childhood and Kindergarten/Primary Education. She taught preschool for 8 years at St. Chrysostom's Day School in Chicago. Barb taught a Mom's and Tot's class in Glencoe and then in the Mount Prospect Park District. Barb's family consists of husband Wayne, an architect, stepson Graham, a high school math teacher in Tampa, daughter Alyssa (26) a St. Mark alum and a graduate from Miami University of Ohio, and son Tyler (19) also an alumnus of St. Mark and is beginning his second year at IIT.

"I consider it my privilege to be working with young learners and their families."

Christine Renz is starting her twenty-second year as a Teacher at St. Mark and has added the role of Preschool Office Director to her responsibilities. She has attended NIU and Roosevelt Universities, receiving a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and has taken classes in early childhood education. Mrs. Renz grew up in Mt. Prospect and now lives in Arlington Heights. Her family consists of husband Bruce, a retired UPS driver and 24-year-old son, Brian. Brian is a St. Mark Alumni. *"I find it so rewarding to be a part of a child's first educational experience."*

Carolyn Zim has been teaching at St Mark Preschool for going on 16 years. She returned to the school after a brief hiatus, and we couldn't be more delighted! This year Mrs. Zim is the Lead Teacher of the Three's and is also assisting in Afternoon Kindergarten Enrichment. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Holy Family University. Carolyn lives with her husband Marty, and they often go to Milwaukee to visit their girls Kelly, 24 and Kristen, 21.

"I want to share the joy of learning by celebrating childhood every day".

Christine Eyles is starting her tenth year as a Teacher Assistant at St. Mark Preschool and Enrichment Center. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Iowa. For 11 years, she worked in marketing for a fulfillment company that handles database management for business publications. Christine's family includes her husband Brian who works in the creative field, her son Nicholas who is a freshman at Prospect High School, and her daughter Micaela who is a seventh grader at Lincoln Middle School. *"I look forward to watching your child grow and make many happy and fun experiences at St Mark."*

Julia Han is returning for her third year at St Mark as an Aide. She is currently attending Harper College to complete her major in medical sonography. Before attending Harper, she attended the University of Illinois at Chicago and completed courses in elementary and middle school education. Along with these courses, she had the privilege to student teach at a few Chicago public schools. Before working at St. Mark, Julia resided in Glenview for over 11 years and worked at Kohl Children's Museum for 5 years. She has lived in Mount Prospect since 2019.

Amy LeClere is beginning her ninth year as a Teacher's Aide. She is attending Harper College and studying Early Childhood Education. Amy is an alumnus of St. Mark Preschool.

"Some of my fondest memories are of 3- and 4-year-old preschool at St. Mark."

Nancy Peterson Nancy Peterson will begin her second year with St. Mark's as a Teacher Aide. A resident of the community, Nancy enjoyed teaching and interacting with local school children, preschoolers, and scout groups in her previous position.

"Children make your life important." Erma Bombeck

St. Mark Preschool Calendar 2023-2024

Semester 1, 2023

August 14	School Reopens for Daycare (current families)
August 21	Kindergarten Enrichment Begins
August 28	First Day Preschool
September 4	Labor Day –Closed
September 16	Fall Family Fest
September 20	Picture Day
October 9	Columbus Day – No Preschool, Daycare Only
October 30	4's Class Halloween Party and Parade
October 31	3's & K. Enrichment Halloween Parties & Parade
November 17	4's Class, Stone Soup
November 22, 23, 24	Thanksgiving break - Closed
December 10	Christmas PJ Pageant
December 20	4's Class Christmas Party
December 21	3's & K. Enrichment Christmas Parties
December 22-January 2	Christmas Break –Closed

Semester 2, 2024

January 3	Classes resume
January 15	Martin Luther King Day - No Preschool, Daycare Only
February 13	3's & AM K. Enrichment Valentines Parties
February 14	4's & PM K. Enrichment Valentines Parties
February 19	President's Day - No Preschool, Daycare Only
February 21	Parent-Teacher Conferences, 4's Class
February 22	Parent-Teacher Conferences, 3's Class
February 23	Pasta Dinner
March 7	3's Class, Donuts for Dad's
March 20	3's Class, Easter Party
March 21	4's Class & K. Enrichment Easter Parties
March 25-April 1	Spring/Easter Break, Closed
April 2	Classes Resume
May 6-10	Teacher Appreciation Week
May 9	3's Class, Mother's Day Tea
May 15	4's Class, Evening Celebration
May 23	Field Day & Moving Up
May 24	Last Day Preschool
May 27	Memorial Day – Closed
May 30	Last Day Kindergarten Enrichment

Summer Session, 2024

May 28	Summer Recreation Camp Begins
July 4 & 5	Independence Day – Closed
July 29-August 9	Clean Up/Set Up Weeks - Closed

KEY

BLACK	First/Last Dates & Parent Teacher Conferences
GREEN	School is Closed
PURPLE	No Preschool Classes – Daycare only
BLUE	Class Parties/Family Engagement

Full Day Daycare Closure Dates

September 4, 2023	Labor Day
November 22-24, 2023	Thanksgiving Break
December 22, 2023 - January 2, 2024	Christmas Break
March 25- April 1, 2024	Spring Break/Easter Break
May 27, 2024	Memorial Day
July 4 & 5, 2024	Independence Day
July 29-August 9, 2024	Clean Up/Set Up Weeks

HOURS OF OPERATION

St. Mark Preschool & Enrichment Center is open Monday through Friday, 48 weeks per year. Please refer to the calendar.

We are open from 7:30 AM until 5:30 PM, except during summer session, when hours of operation are 8 AM until 5 PM.

SAMPLE PRESCHOOL SCHEDULE

60 minutes	Classroom: manipulatives, creative, basic skills
10 minutes	Small groups, show and tell
25 minutes	Bathroom, snack
25 minutes	Group Time: story, finger plays
20 minutes	Block room or outside time
10 minutes	Music: singing, finger plays, movement

SAMPLE FULL DAY CARE SCHEDULE

7:30 am - 9:15 am	Arrival, hand wash, free play – block Room/classroom
9:15 am - 10:15 am	Bathroom then outdoor play
10:20 am - 10:40 am	Hand washing, morning snack
10:40 am - 11:30 am	Curriculum including circle time, art activity, play dough, water play, dramatic play, block area, puzzles, books, clean up time
11:40 am - 11:50 am	Language development - story, finger plays, puppets
11:50 am - 12:45 pm	Bathroom, lunch, hand and face washing
12:45 pm - 12:55 pm	Story time
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm	Bathroom then rest/nap time
3:00 pm - 3:15 pm	Wake up, bathroom, and hand washing,
3:20 pm - 3:40 pm	Afternoon snack
3:40 pm - 3:50 pm	Story time
3:55 pm - 5:30 pm	Block room play or classroom activities – e.g., open art, building, puzzles - or outdoor play, weather permitting
5:30 pm	School Building is closed for day

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE POLICY

Philosophy

Each child needs to feel safe and secure at school. The purpose of discipline is to help a child develop self-control, learn to respect the rights of others, learn the rules, and to take responsibility for his or her own actions. Key elements to discipline are clearly defined limits and a consistent adult response. Children will test the limits set for them. Teachers understand that children do not learn rules the first time they hear them any more than they learn anything else in the first attempt.

Teacher's Responsibility

Each teacher is responsible to maintain an atmosphere in the classroom that is conducive to learning. Teachers will have classroom behavior expectations that are age appropriate.

Teachers will be expected to encourage children to use self-control and assume responsibility for his or her own actions. Verbal redirection in the form of positive statements shall be the primary means of child guidance to appropriate behavior. Some examples are:

- "We walk in the hallway."
- "The sand stays in the sandbox."
- "Blocks are for building, not throwing."
- "We sit on the shapes on our rug so others can see."

If redirection is unsuccessful, the teacher may lead the child to another activity, stating why the child is unable to play in that area. Children are gently reminded that they can rejoin the group as soon as they feel they are able to control their inappropriate behavior.

Teachers help children resolve conflicts with other children by having the child express their discontent. The teachers can help recall those feelings when the child does the same thing to another child.

The teacher who is most familiar with the child will provide guidance.

When a child's behavior is consistently out of bounds, the teacher will document the behavior, noting the date and what happened before, during and after the episode. Teachers will notify parents of any problems the child is having at school. Teachers will consult parents on how they handle similar situations at home. If necessary, teachers will recommend professional guidance, either through the school district or a professional agency. If professional services are obtained, teachers working with the child will receive training on how to handle certain situations.

Corporal punishment, denying food, humiliation, emotional abuse or inappropriate language shall never be used as a means of discipline. Children will not be disciplined for toilet accidents or for any accidents that happen during snack time or play time.

Parent's Responsibility

If a child is having problems at school, teachers will notify the parents by a casual conversation after school, a phone call at home or a parent-teacher conference. Sometimes parents can explain why the child may be exhibiting certain behaviors: a poor night's sleep, new baby, divorce or death in the family, moving or selling a home, or any other stressful activity. It is important for parents to know that things that happen at home affect the child at school.

Child's Responsibility

Children should understand simple rules of the classroom, (i.e. walk in the room, use appropriate voices, be considerate -- no hitting, grabbing, spitting, biting, etc.)

Children will be encouraged to use self-control and to assume responsibility for his or her own actions.

Children will be encouraged to solve simple behavior disputes, "We have a problem, how can we solve it?" It is important for the person wronged to state that as well as for the other person to apologize.

Children will be encouraged to resolve conflicts with other children, with the teacher's assistance, if needed. They will be encouraged to use words such as, "Can I play with that when you are finished?", "I don't like when you ...", "You hurt my feelings when ..."

Dis-enrollment

In certain circumstances, it may be necessary for the center director to decide to discontinue a child's attendance. Such a decision would be based on whether it is in the best interests of that child, the other children in the class and the overall operation of the center to terminate enrollment. Every reasonable effort should be made to correct a problematic situation before a final decision to terminate enrollment is made. Reasons for the termination of enrollment may include, but not be limited to the following:

- Abuse of other children, staff, or property
- Continued violation of St. Mark Preschool policies
- Disruptive or dangerous behavior
- The center's inability to meet the child's needs
- Non-payment of tuition (immediate termination)

Whenever possible, written notification will be provided to the parent one week in advance of termination of enrollment.

Please give at least a two-week written notice if you plan to withdraw your child from St. Mark Preschool. There are no refunds on tuition or registration if you withdraw.

If a child has not progressed over the course of time and continues to disrupt the program, St. Mark Preschool will insist the parents have outside intervention. The school will provide a list of available outside resources. If we are unable to meet a child's needs or if the child becomes a danger to him/herself or others, it will become necessary to ask the parents to dis-enroll their child. We will make every effort possible to make this the last resort and use whatever resources at our disposal to prevent this.

All of our teachers and aides look forward to working with you and your child this year. They recognize the importance of the preschool years and agree that teaching children at this age is so rewarding.

SCHOOL POLICIES

ABSENCES/SICKNESSES

Parents should call the school at (847)-873-1110 and leave a message if their child will be absent and specify the reason. Contagious diseases should be reported immediately so parents can be notified. Please notify teachers if you know your child will be absent due to vacations, etc.

ADVISORY BOARD

The Preschool Advisory Board's mission is to support and enhance the Preschool, its program and its philosophy. We believe that children are important and that through our actions we can positively affect the future. Board member positions are open to parents of children at the preschool. There is a \$25.00/month discount on your child's tuition if you serve on the Board.

Advisory Board meetings are each month, except in July. Meetings are open to the public. Copies of meeting minutes are available upon request. A current list of Advisory Board members, committees and contact information is published in the Student Telephone Directory.

AGREEMENT STATEMENT

Policies and practices at St. Mark Preschool and Enrichment Center are listed in an 'Agreement Statement' that requires a parent's signature.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Daycare Arrival: is between 7:30 and 8:45 am. Parent/guardian is required to sign their child in at the Pine Street entrance and may drop off at door. Teachers will gather children, escort to their cubbies, assist in hand washing and bring them to the block room/classroom.

Preschool Arrival: is at 9:00 AM. Parent/guardian is required to sign their child in at the Pine Street entrance. Parent/guardian will escort their child inside and encourage them to find their cubby and hang up their own coat. Parents must take their child to the bathroom to wash their hands before proceeding to the classroom/block room.

Dismissal: Parent/guardian will be required to sign their child out. Check signage at the door if children are on the playground. Children will be dismissed to another adult only with the parent's written permission on their child's dismissal list. For safety reasons, **each child needs to be signed in and out on the sign-out sheets at the Pine Street doors. If children are on the playground, sign out clipboards will be located at the playground gate, accessed by Pine Street and walking around the school to the back.**

Note: The entrance door is kept locked at all times for safety. Please ring doorbell for assistance. Parents should park their cars on Pine Street or Evergreen Street. **Please do not park in the Fire Lane or block driveways.** There is a two-hour parking limit around the church. Please park in the St Mark Center parking lot if you will be here more than two hours. For your child's safety, please have your child exit the vehicle on the passenger side and hold your child's hand when crossing the street at the corner.

LATE POLICY – General

It is important for you to arrive for pick-up with the other parents. Children can become nervous and upset if their parents are late.

If parents are going to be more than ten minutes late, they should call the director with an approximate time of arrival. Each parent will be given a business card with the name and phone number of the preschool. The director will tell the child's teachers, who will stay with the child until an authorized person arrives to pick up the child. Every effort will be made to make the child feel safe and comfortable.

In the event of a parent being habitually late, the director will talk to the parent about the situation. The next time the parent is late, a \$10 fee will be charged and the child will not be able to attend school until it is paid.

In the unlikely event that a child is not picked up within an hour of school ending and the parent has not called to notify the preschool and the preschool is unable to reach the child's parents or anyone on the child's emergency phone list, then the Mt. Prospect Police will be called for their assistance.

At no time will the child be left alone. A preschool staff person will stay with the child until an authorized person arrives for pickup.

LATE PICKUP POLICY – Full Day Care

Late pickups are highly discouraged since it causes distress to children. Late pickups will be subject to a \$1.00 per minute late fee. If you cannot pick up your child on time, you must notify the school, however, you will still be required to pay the late fee. This charge goes directly to the family's account. Repeated late pickups or failure to pay fees will result in the termination of services. If a parent is not at the center by 5:35PM, the staff member that is present will call parents and then the emergency contacts on the child's list. It is very important to keep your emergency contact's current. The police will be called for assistance after one hour of no contact with the parents or authorized person. It is our responsibility to stay with your child until he/she is safe. Staff will not hold the child responsible and late pickups will only be discussed with the parent and never with the child.

BIRTHDAYS

We will celebrate each child's birthday. Summer birthdays are celebrated during the school year and are called 'special days. Children will get to choose from our assortment of snacks. **Please do not bring in food treats for your child's birthday.**

If your child is having a birthday party, we will hand out invitations only if the whole class is invited. If all the children in the class are not invited, children will be discouraged from talking about their party.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

A monthly calendar is sent home detailing special activities, gym days, chapel time, birthdays, and special day celebrations. The preschool also plans special events outside the classroom for e.g.:

Fall Fest. An outdoor family festival in the fall.

Stone Soup. A fours class gathering of family & friends to enjoy soup and a performance around Thanksgiving.

Christmas PJ Pageant. This is the school-wide Christmas Program and is typically on a Sunday in December.

Pasta Dinner. This special event invites the entire family to come for an evening of fun for all ages.

Donuts for Dad's. Held on a weekday morning in spring, threes' dads are invited into the classroom, to eat donuts and experience some typical activities at St. Mark Preschool. In lieu of dad, a grandpa, uncle, or any important man in your child's life.

Mother's Day Tea The threes' class hosts a special tea party in honor of Mother's Day in May. Threes' mothers or any special woman in your child's life (grandma, aunt, friend) are invited for songs, tea, snacks and a special gift.

Fours Celebration. The fours class, end of year, special evening celebration.

Field Day & Moving Up Ceremony. The end of the year is celebrated with an indoor field day and bridging ceremony to the next year. Memory books are distributed.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

We are licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. As a state licensed facility, an official investigation (by employment and home address) of all preschool employees is done for prior accusation/conviction of child abuse or felony. The classrooms are always open, and parents are invited to visit without notice. Teachers are mandated by the state to report any suspected child abuse activity.

CLASS PHOTOGRAPHS

Candid photos and group photos are taken of the children during class and at program-sponsored activities. These photos may be used for class dojo communication, bulletin board displays, class books, our website, our Facebook page, presentations, and/or publicity in local newspapers. Generally, group photos will carry the caption, 'St. Mark Preschool Students'. If a publication wishes to feature a photo of one/two students, we will request parental permission. Parents sign a release form at the start of school year.

CLOTHING

Children should wear comfortable clothes that them to play freely. A plastic smock is provided for painting. Tempera paint is used and should wash out if treated before washing.

Each child needs to bring a labeled set of extra clothes, including underwear and socks, to be placed in their cubbies.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Mount Prospect Fire Department has provided St. Mark Preschool with an emergency hand-held two-way radio. With a press of a button, this radio will provide the

preschool with immediate and direct contact with the Fire Department. This radio will be available in case of an emergency.

In times of emergency, teachers will take the children to the safest place possible. Teachers will do their best to keep children calm. Teachers will have access to children's emergency contact information and will call parents if needed.

FIRE DRILLS

Fire Drills are rehearsed monthly with each class. Children will follow a teacher who will show them the safest way out of the building. Two different exits will be practiced during the course of the year. In the event of a real fire, children will walk to the Center.

SEVERE STORM/TORNADO WARNING

The children will follow the same procedure with teachers leading the children either to the preschool bathrooms, or if there is time, to the Ezekiel and Nursery rooms.

TERRORIST ATTACK WARNING

The children will follow the same procedure, taking the children to the Ezekiel and Nursery rooms. The preschool has emergency supplies stored there.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

See Guidance and Discipline Policy, pages 8 - 10.

DIVORCED PARENTS

When a preschooler has parents who are divorced or estranged, the school needs a copy of the portion of the divorce degree that pertains to the custody of the child. It will be kept in the child's personal file. Each student will receive one copy of all written material. If additional copies are needed, please talk to your child's teacher or the director.

FIELD TRIPS (TBD)

Teachers may periodically arrange for their class to go on a field trip, pending having enough parent volunteers to accompany the class. We must take one adult volunteer for every two or three children for a field trip to be feasible. Permission slips will be sent home and must be signed and returned before the trip. Any field Trip fees are to be paid in advance by parents.

GYM DAY/OUTDOOR PLAY

The preschool enjoys the use of a large gym at the St. Mark Center on Wille Street and a playground on the south side of the church. Every day that weather permits, we play on the playground or go for a walk. We will not go outdoors if the temperature or wind chill is zero degrees or colder. In Winter, classes go to the gym for large motor time at the St Mark Center. We also have the use of the school block room for recreation when it's raining or cold out. Please make sure your child is prepared for daily outdoor play and has proper outerwear and gym shoes.

HAND WASHING

DCFS requires that the children and teachers wash their hands routinely and frequently with soap and water at the following times:

1. Upon arrival at the preschool
2. Before and after snack
3. After using the toilet
4. After wiping or blowing nose
5. After touching an item soiled with body fluids or wastes
6. Before and after cooking or other food experience
7. After outdoor play
8. Before and after using the water table

HEALTH & ILLNESS POLICY

GENERAL

Children need to be healthy to attend preschool. Do not send your child to school if he/she exhibits any of the following symptoms: a fever, sore throat, earache, flushed appearance, rash, vomiting or diarrhea. Your child must be free of vomiting, diarrhea, and fever for a minimum of a full 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication to be permitted to return to school. If your child shows symptoms of illness while at school, he/she will be isolated from the other children and supervised *until a parent or other authorized adult can take the child home.*

Colds: Please keep your child home for a *minimum of 24 hours* from the onset of cold symptoms (runny nose and sneezing) as this is typically when they are most contagious and cannot fully participate in school activities. It is also important to observe your child: if symptoms get worse, (e.g., thick yellow or green mucus, or develop a cough or flu like symptoms) families are **required** to keep their child home and call their pediatrician to discuss if their child needs to be seen. In the case of an excessively runny nose, if your child is uncomfortable and unable to participate in activities, and/or cannot keep up with wiping their nose, your child should remain at home until their symptoms subside.

See Covid Guidelines: see page 22-24

Head Lice: Children who have head lice will not be allowed to come to school until they have been treated and are nit free. The first day the child returns to school, the child will be checked for head lice and/or nits. If head lice or nits are found, the child will not be allowed in the classroom. If the child is lice free and nit free, he/she will be allowed in the classroom and will be checked weekly for two weeks to guarantee the child is free of head lice.

Absences and reason for absence must be reported to the school daily before 9:30 am as per DCFS licensing rules. If your child has been exposed to any contagious disease, (see above) please immediately notify the Director.

Medical Report: Children are required by the State of Illinois to have a medical report on file that is dated **no earlier than six months prior to the first day of preschool. The medical report shall be valid for two years.** The report shall indicate that the child has been immunized as required by the Rules and Regulations of the Illinois Department of Health. These required immunizations include a series of four DPT, three oral Polio, the MMR, the Hib, Hepatitis B, Pneumococcal, and Varicella (chicken pox). The medical report also needs to include results from a tuberculin test taken within six months of entering school and results from a lead screening test.

Medication: In the case of students attending day care, medication, clearly marked with your child's name may be sent to school for your child; an **Authorization for Medicine** form, or **Allergy Action Plan** (e.g. for EPI, Benedryl) **dated and signed by the physician and parent MUST accompany the medication (must be in the original doctor prescribed container) with specific directions for administering.** We **MUST** have a permission form for ALL medications including insect spray, and suntan lotion. Medication **MUST** be in its original container.

NAPTIME (For Full Day Care Children)

The licensing regulations of the Illinois Department of Family Services require that we provide a rest period for the children each day. A rest period will last almost 2 hours between 1:15 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. each day. Children who do not sleep will remain on their cots and continue to have a quiet time. A blanket or favorite stuffed animal may be brought for use during naptime only.

NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY

St. Mark Preschool admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies and other school-administered programs.

NUT-FREE POLICY

St. Mark Preschool takes reasonable measures to provide nut-free snacks to the children during preschool. Additionally, St. Mark Preschool has asked parents of the preschool not bring any product that cannot be verified as nut-free into the preschool building. St. Mark Preschool has requested that volunteers running school sponsored events serve only nut-free products, but the preschool cannot warrant that food served at sponsored events are nut-free.

OUTDOOR PLAY (see also Gym Day)

The outdoor play area is on the south side of the church. We go outside every day, weather permitting. **Please be sure your child wears weather appropriate outer wear and sunscreen when appropriate. Children should wear gym shoes on the playground.**

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences are held in February. If at any time you have a concern about your child regarding matters at school or at home, feel free to contact a teacher at school, or schedule an appointment before or after school. Teachers also send home a **Fall progress report** to discuss the child's adjustment to preschool and goals for the school year.

RELEASE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

There are times when the staff at St. Mark Preschool would like to talk to other professionals regarding a specific child. Before any information can be shared, the parents need to consent by filling out the Consent to Communicate form. The form needs a parent's signature and is dated to be used only with a certain period of time for a specific organization or individual.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Children will have a cubby in the hallway that will be used to store their coats and backpacks. Children are discouraged from bringing toys to school. If they do, they will be asked to put the item in their cubby. An exception is made when a child is bringing a toy in the show and tell bag. At the conclusion of show and tell time, the child will be asked to put the item their cubby. Full time children may bring a blanket and 1 stuffed animal for nap time; only small flat pillows permitted.

PEST MANAGEMENT POLICY

INSIDE:

Pest management is handled by St. Mark Lutheran Church and is contracted out to International Exterminator Company. They are scheduled to treat the premises after preschool hours. Classrooms are not treated unless a specific problem is noted. No chemicals from the contractor are stored on preschool premises. The contractor has provided the preschool with the MSDS for all chemicals used on the premises. The classrooms are swept daily and garbage is taken out daily.

OUTSIDE:

St. Mark Lutheran Church contracts Mayer Lawn Service for lawn care. The enclosed playground area is not treated. Mayer Lawn Service is contracted to treat the lawn after the children have left the premises. No lawn chemicals from the contractor are stored on preschool premises. They have provided the preschool with the MSDS for the chemicals used on the premises. Parents will be notified prior to any spray application.

PRESCHOOL PARTIES

Each preschool family is asked to volunteer for one class party during the school year. [This will be determined based on current Covid transmission and Covid protocols.](#) We celebrate Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Easter.

Party Volunteers: First, organize a meeting with the other parents scheduled to plan the party. Plan as much or as little of our preschool day as you want. It is not necessary to spend a lot of money on your party and candy/goodie bags are discouraged.

Second, we ask that you follow our daily schedule as much as possible and keep the activities developmentally appropriate – if in doubt please ask the teacher.

Third, we ask that you inform your child’s teachers of your plans.

The items below are a guideline to help you plan the party:

SNACK: Please remember that St. Mark is a **NUT FREE ZONE**. More and more children in our program are affected by severe nut allergies, many of which can be life threatening if a child comes in contact with a nut product. Please do not bring homemade food items and bring in original packaging for all food items. This allows the teachers to review the ingredients. Decorative cups and napkins are optional.

ART EXPERIENCE OR CRAFT: Keep it simple -- check with your child’s teacher to see if they have supplies you may need (glue, paint, staplers, etc.).

GAME(S) Active games can be played in the block room or more quiet games in the classroom.

BOOK TO READ: This is optional -- please note if a parent is reading or if you want a teacher to read.

REGISTRATION FEE

The registration fee of \$100 is due at the time of registration and is not refundable. Registration fees do not apply to tuition.

RELIGIOUS POLICY

St. Mark Preschool is a Christian preschool. We sing songs and plan activities that reflect aspects of the Christian faith. Christmas is celebrated as the birth of Jesus.

Once a month we have a short chapel time led by one of the St. Mark pastors. The date will be on the calendar; parents are invited to attend.

Prayers are said daily before the snack. A common prayer is:

Thank you for the world so sweet
Thank you for the food we eat
Thank you for the birds that sing
Thank you, God, for everything

RESOURCES

The St. Mark Preschool and St. Mark Lutheran Church have many resources available to preschool parents. There are many books, tapes, and videos on parenting. There are books of activities and ideas for children, and there are many files with information relating to child development. Names of professionals who work with children and/or parents on specific concerns such as speech and language, physical development, and emotional/social development, are also available. Please talk to your child’s teacher or the director if you have a special concern.

SIGN-IN/SIGN-OUT PROCEDURE (see also Arrival/Dismissal, page 11)

Only those people authorized on the **dismissal form** will be allowed to pick up a child. Special exceptions will be granted only with written permission by the child's parent or guardian, submitted to the teacher or director in advance. A guardian (or authorized person with ID on dismissal list) must sign the child in upon arrival, including the time the child arrived and sign out upon dismissal including the time leaving the school.

SCHOOL CANCELLATION POLICY

School will be canceled when the safety of the children is jeopardized. Large snowfalls, unplowed streets and/or sidewalks, no water and/or electricity are some of the reasons to cancel school. Parents will be notified with a message notification on Class Dojo and/or email or phone call from the school. We typically follow D57 for closure due to snowfall.

SHOW AND TELL

The show and tell bag will be sent home with one child each day and it is to be returned the next school day with ONE item of the child's choice. As this is a language development activity, the child should be able to give three descriptive clues such as color, size, shape, if it has wheels, makes a sound, has legs, etc. The other children will guess what is in the bag before the child talks about the item.

ST. MARK PRESCHOOL T-SHIRTS

Children receive a St. Mark Preschool t-shirt when they begin preschool. Though the shirt can be worn any time, children **MUST** wear them on field trips. The t-shirts are large enough to be worn over jackets or coats.

SNACKS

The school provides healthful snacks and water to our students during class time. The snacks are trans-fat free, and nut free.

TOILET TRAINING

Children must be toilet trained before beginning preschool. They are not allowed to wear diapers or pull-ups to preschool. It is the parent's responsibility to teach their child personal hygiene in the bathroom. Teachers will assist with buttons, belts, etc., at the child's request and will encourage hand washing.

TUITION

Tuition is calculated so that the school can always maintain a proper staff to student ratio in accordance with DCFS regulations. Tuition is based on reserving your child's space in the program, not the number of days of care provided. Refer to the Tuition Schedule and your Tuition Agreement for current pricing.

No CREDITS or REFUNDS will be given for non-attendance, regardless of absence due to sickness, vacation, and other non-attendance days including days off indicated in the 2023-2024 School Calendar. The only exception is one week at Christmas Break

(12/22/23-1/2/2024), and Spring Break (3/25/24-4/1/24) where tuition is not owed. Tuition is not owed for the two weeks in August that school is closed 7/29/24-8/9/2024. Parents with students enrolled in day care will be given one-week vacation (tuition free) after one year of continuous enrollment. Your child may not attend school that week.

Late Tuition Payment Policy: Tuition is due on the first day of attendance for the week or the first day of the month. A written notice will be sent home if tuition is not paid by the 10th day of the month. A \$10 fee will be assessed if tuition has not been paid by the 15th day of the month. Returned checks will be assessed a \$20 NSF charge for the first return, \$25 for the second and the account must be paid by a cashier's check or money order for a period of six months before checks will be accepted again.

Payments will be accepted by check, money order, or cashier's check made out to the St. Mark Preschool and Enrichment Center. Zelle payments are also accepted:

payments.stmarkpreschool@gmail.com

VISION AND HEARING SCREENING

Per Illinois Statute (401ILCS205) Child Vision and Hearing Test Act, vision and hearing screening services are administered annually to all children ages 3 years and older. The cost of these screenings is to be paid by the parent prior to services, on the first day of attendance of the month services are rendered.

These services are mandated by the state and therefore are not optional, unless there is proof of a child's eye examination by a M.D. specializing in diseases of the eye or a licensed optometrist and/or proof of an audiological evaluation completed by an audiologist that has been administered within the previous 12 months. Vision screening is not a substitute for a complete eye and vision evaluation by an eye doctor.

VOLUNTEERS

Typically, there are many opportunities for volunteers. Opportunities are available in the classroom, for social events, fund-raisers, and in supportive or administrative tasks, and as an Advisory Board member. If you have a special talent or occupation to share, let us know! Talk to your child's teacher, the director, or a Preschool Advisory Board member for more information.

- Volunteering in the Classroom will be at the discretion of the Teachers.
- Understand that children require time to adjust and settle into school and routines before this will commence.

WEBSITE

Our preschool website is www.stmarkpreschoolcares.org. The website offers general information about St. Mark Preschool and Enrichment Center, forms, news, and a classroom blog. Candid photos are posted to the website in accordance with the Agreement Statement signed by parents at the beginning of the school year. Stay tuned for updates & improvements to the website.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why do we have to pay full preschool tuition for the months when they miss a week of school for breaks?

A: No tuition credit is given for scheduled school holidays. Tuition is based on reserving space in the program, not on each day of care provided.

Q: Where does the money from school fundraising go?

A: The fundraising money is placed in an Enhancement Account. This money is used to enhance the preschool with items that we couldn't otherwise provide from our operating budget. Tuition fees supply the operating budget.

Q: Why aren't we allowed to bring snacks to school?

A: Over the years we have seen an increase in children with severe allergies to nuts. To manage this concern, we stopped allowing children to bring snacks to school. This change has positively impacted all our students because we now have more fruits, more variety and more cooking projects in class.

Covid-19 Policies & Guidelines

SCHOOL POLICY

*In alignment with the CDC's Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning **released August 11, 2022, updated May 11, 2023** [Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning | CDC](#), St Mark Preschool & Enrichment Center will promote and implement the following guidelines:*

1. Encouraging children to get vaccinated for COVID-19: please provide a copy of your child's vaccination card once they are fully vaccinated or receive a booster
2. Staying home when sick: ***see Health & Illness policy page 15***
3. Optimizing ventilation systems: the school utilizes air purifiers in each classroom and block room
4. Reenforcing proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette: hands are washed upon first entry to school; before and after snack and meals; after sneezing/wiping nose; after toileting; after coming in from outside; after communal sensory play
5. Utilizing proper cleaning and disinfection practices: sanitizing high touch surfaces frequently; cleaning & sanitizing classroom centers directly after use; sanitizing toys in between group use; cleaning and sanitization of lunch tables after snack and meal

Re Community Levels and Prevention Strategies:

1. The Preschool will work with the CCDPH to consider other local conditions and factors when deciding to implement prevention strategies.
2. The addition and layering of COVID-19-specific prevention strategies will be tied to COVID-19 Community Levels
 - A. When the COVID-19 Community Level indicates an increase, particularly if the level is medium or high, ECE programs will consider adding layered prevention strategies listed below.
 - i. Masking
 - ii. Implement screening testing at home
 - iii. Maintain ventilation.
 - B. If experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak at school, the school will consider adding prevention strategies regardless of the COVID-19 Community Level (for e.g. requiring masking; limiting gatherings; limiting foot traffic in school to students & staff only; promoting assigned pod seating where possible at snack & meal time; removing communal sensory play and soft fabrics)
 - C. With decreasing or low COVID-19 Community Levels, the school will consider removing prevention strategies one at a time, followed by close monitoring of the COVID-19 Community Level in the weeks that follow.

PPE will be provided as well as other supplies including but not limited to: masks for children, visitors and staff upon request; hand sanitizer; gloves; protective goggles & gowns; institutional grade disinfectant; clean up kits for vomit/diarrhea

FAMILIES: COVID-19 GUIDELINES

Home health check:

Please observe your child each morning. Does your child or any member of your household have any of the following symptoms?

- Fever (above 100.3 and is your child on any fever reducing medication?)
- Flu like symptoms (any of the following: vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat, new cough, headache, shortness of breath, loss of taste/smell, unexplained fatigue, unexplained muscle or body aches)

If a child has illness or any flu like symptoms such as listed above, the child is to remain at home. Please call the school office to report and discuss. We reserve the right to request a negative Antigen Covid test to return and/or a doctor note with alternate diagnosis. Unless doctor note indicates can safely return earlier, the child may return to school if they are a **minimum of 24 hours**, fever, vomit, or diarrhea free without the use of fever reducing medication, and symptom free (or in the case of a cough, the child must be comfortable enough to participate in indoor and outdoor activities). In certain situations, we may request the use of a mask. **The CDC views masking as a good precaution for the spread of many common illnesses.**

If your child is POSITIVE FOR COVID-19, please call the school right away. If it is after hours, please email the Director. Please verify the first day of onset of symptoms as well as when your child tested positive, and if anyone else in the family has illness/Covid. Your child will be required to isolate from school for 5 days (the first day of symptoms is Day 0) The child may return on Day 6 if he/she is vomit, diarrhea & fever free without the use of fever reducing medication, for a minimum of 24 hours and symptom free (see notes on returning from any illness). *He/she will be required to wear a face mask upon their return to school for 5 days and to eat distanced from other children.*

If a family member is ill with flu-like symptoms, please test for Covid and monitor your child/family.

If your student is a close contact of a positive case – you are required to notify the school to discuss your situation. Please see the following scenarios:

** If a family member is a positive case, and your child is fully vaccinated, we require a negative Antigen test for that child, close monitoring, and masking for a child to remain in school. **We also reserve the right to request that a child remain at home for observation based on their circumstances.***

If a family member is a positive case, and your child is unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated yet, we require a negative Antigen test for your child, close monitoring, and masking for a child to remain in school. **We also reserve the right to require that a child remain home based on the circumstances.*

**If your child is a CLOSE CONTACT OF ANOTHER STUDENT OR STAFF MEMBER at St Mark Preschool, the school will notify you by phone or by email. We will advise you of the circumstances while protecting the privacy of the positive case.*

FACE COVERINGS/MASKS: *St Mark Preschool reserves the right to request or require that your student wear a face mask depending on level of community transmission, positive cases in the school, close contact exposure and vaccination status. Children testing positive and returning to school after isolation will be required to wear a mask at school for 5 additional days and eat distanced from other children.*

COVID -19 VACCINATION/BOOSTERS: *St Mark Preschool requires to know your child's vaccination status and, if vaccinated, requires a copy of your child's most current vaccination card once he/she has received all doses.*

Covid 19 guidelines may be subject to change, and St Mark Preschool & Enrichment Center reserves the right to change the school guidelines at any time, to align with current guidance from the CDC, CCDPH, and our ruling body, DCFS.



Receipt of Parent Handbook

I have read and understood the policies and guidelines in the 2023-24 Parent Handbook, including Health & Illness Policies and Policies and Guidelines regarding Covid-19 which serves as the school Enhanced Risk Management Plan for Covid -19.

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

Please print, sign and email or bring in copy for your child's file.

St. Mark Preschool and Enrichment Center admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies and other school-administered programs.