



**ST. ANDREW'S**  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

.....  
**BEGINNINGS**  
• PRESCHOOL •

**Parent Handbook**  
**2022-23 School Year**

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Welcome to St. Andrew's Beginnings Preschool!

We consider it a privilege that you have chosen us to partner with you in guiding your child's academic and spiritual journey. As the center's director and a long-time St. Andrew's member, I'm proud that our church has developed a safe, nurturing learning environment for the children of this church and the surrounding community. Through my work with young children and families, I have gained a great deal of insight into what is involved in being an effective teacher, maintaining productive classroom communities, and building a strong program.

We believe that young children learn best when they are respected for their unique perspective and God-given gifts. We see the role of adults in children's learning as being nurturing guides, helping them to explore their environment and the world. At Beginnings Preschool, our staff will provide rich resources and experiences – while encouraging exploration and inquiry – to help your child grow in his/her development as a decision maker, a problem solver, and a beloved child of God.

In order to serve our students best, we invite and encourage the involvement of parents and families. A strong school-family connection is absolutely essential in maintaining a solid learning foundation for each child in our program. We hope that you will find the information in this handbook to be helpful as your child transitions into this new chapter of development. Please feel free to contact me with any questions regarding our program or your child's individual experience here.

Sheila Coleman  
Director of Early Childhood Education

### Mission Statement

To provide a safe, nurturing learning environment where young disciples are empowered to explore their world and are given meaningful opportunities for strengthening of mind, body, spirit, and character.

### Enrollment/Non-discrimination Policy

St. Andrew's Beginnings Preschool admits children from 18 months of age to six years of age, without regard to race, sex, religion, national origin, or disability, except when the child's needs cannot be met by our facility. It does not discriminate in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, or other center programs.

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# ADMISSION PROCEDURES

## Classes

St. Andrew's Beginnings Preschool serves students from 18 months to 6 years of age. We offer a morning-only preschool program with 2-day, 3-day, and 5-day scheduling options. Our Parents' Day Out (PDO) program is available two mornings each week, and our Preschool Extended Day (XD) option is offered Monday through Thursday.

For specific schedules offered at each age level, please refer to the program web page at <https://www.standrewsomaha.net/beginnings-preschool/> or request a current schedule of class offerings from the Preschool Front Desk Assistant or Preschool Director.

## Financial Information

Monthly tuition is payable through automatic withdrawal, either through a bank account or personal credit card account. A deduction for the current month's tuition will be processed on the first Friday of each month.

Other financial information to note:

- At the beginning of each semester, families will be notified of the Activity Fee for that semester. This covers the cost of special classroom activities that will support our monthly learning themes and holiday class parties. This fee will be deducted via EFT with the monthly tuition charges in September and January.
- Families will also be charged a per-semester Snack Fee to cover the cost of daily snack for our preschool students. In the past, we have asked for snack contributions from parents. This new way of handling snack is being implemented both to simplify the process of managing snack for our staff and also to minimize the handling of food items prior to them being served to our students.
- A Referral Bonus credit is available, if you refer a family to Beginnings Preschool and your referral results in an enrollment. See the "Referral Bonus" section of this manual, under the heading, "SCHEDULING AND OPERATIONS."
- Late fees will be charged for any students picked up past the regularly scheduled dismissal time. See the "Late Pick-up" section of this manual, under the heading, "SCHEDULING AND OPERATIONS."
- For current tuition rates and fees, please request the most current tuition/fee schedule from the Front Desk Assistant or check our web page.

## **Paperwork**

We are required to have the following paperwork on file prior to your child's first day of attendance at Beginnings Preschool:

- Beginnings Registration Form (including deposit)
- Beginnings Student Record
- Authorization for Emergency Medical Care
- Photo Release Authorization
- Authorization for Automatic Withdrawal

Within 30 days of your child's enrollment at Beginnings Preschool, we must have the following information completed:

- Student Immunization Record
- DHHS Brochure Receipt/Acknowledgement (signed)
- Parent Handbook Acknowledgement/Acceptance Form (signed)

## **Student/Family Orientation**

At the beginning of each school year, we will schedule a Meet-the-Teacher event – a time where your family can come together to see your child's classroom environment, meet your child's classroom teacher, and meet some of the families of your child's classmates. Please refer to the school calendar for the date of this event.

Regardless of when your child enters our program, we still recommend that he has the opportunity to become acquainted with his school environment before he arrives for his first day. If your child is entering the program at a time other than the beginning of the school year – and you have not visited the school setting with your child - please schedule a visit several days prior to your child's first day at Beginnings. Please contact our Director to schedule your visit.

Your visit will allow your child to meet his classroom teacher one-on-one and see his classroom up close, while having the security of a parent/guardian there for reassurance. This will enhance your child's first day experience – he'll be arriving as a new student but the setting will be familiar and the adult guide will be a friendly face that he already knows!



## **SCHEDULING AND OPERATIONS**

### **Absences/Late Arrivals**

Please call or email the Beginnings staff by 7:45 a.m. if your child will not be attending – or will be arriving late – on her scheduled day. If your child does not attend on his/her scheduled day, and we have not been notified of the absence, we will contact you to assure the safety of your child.

### **Arrival Procedures/Checking In**

All Preschool and Parents' Day Out classes will begin their school day at 8:30 a.m. You may enter our building through either the main doors of the St. Andrew's Center for Kids (StACK) – located on the northeast side of our building – or the "OFFICES/GYM" doors. Use the check-in computers located in the preschool front office area to register your child's attendance each day. Once you have done so, you may bring your child directly to his classroom.

Since our teachers use their before-class time to prepare for your child's day, we ask that drop-off time be 8:20 am or after. It is helpful to have a consistent drop-off routine each day. Whether it's a "high five," a quick kiss/hug – or whatever works for your family – sticking to a set routine will provide your child with a sense of stability and a positive start to the day.

Your child has his own labeled space – a coat hook outside of his classroom – to keep personal belongings (coat/backpack). As he develops knowledge of the routines of his specific classroom, we ask that you demonstrate the confidence that you have in his abilities by allowing him to put away his personal items independently. Our staff will support and guide him as he develops skills of independence and will celebrate those achievements right along with him!

### **Building Access**

Entry to the Beginnings Preschool space at St. Andrew's requires the use of a security fob. One security fob will be given to each enrolled family for use in entering each of the outside doors for Beginnings Preschool. Use of these fobs is also required to enter the StACK/Beginnings Preschool space from within the church building during normal preschool hours.

Additional or replacement fobs may be purchased for \$5 each by contacting the Preschool Director.

## **Departure Procedures/Checking Out**

Dismissal times for our students are as follows:

- Beginnings Preschool and Parents' Day Out students at 11:30 am
- Beginnings Extended Day (XD) students at 3:30 pm

At dismissal time, classroom teachers will dismiss their students from the church building as follows:

- PRE-K MORNING-ONLY students will be dismissed from the Offices/Gym doors at 11:30 am.
- ALL OTHER MORNING-ONLY students will be dismissed from the main StACK doors at 11:30 am.
- ALL EXTENDED DAY (XD) students will be dismissed from the main StACK doors at 3:30 pm
- If you have children at more than one age level, we will work together to determine the most convenient pick-up location for your family.

At either door, if you are parked in the first row of cars nearest the sidewalk, your child will be permitted to walk to you at your vehicle, once the staff member has made eye contact with you to confirm that you're ready to receive your child. If you are parked anywhere else, please walk to the sidewalk outside of the dismissal door so that you are visible to staff waiting at the door. We will not allow your child to cross the parking lot alone to get to your vehicle.

On any given day, if your child will be picked up by someone other than a parent/guardian or regularly designated pick-up person, please also inform the Beginnings staff via written note or email. Please inform the person picking up your child that they will need to present a photo identification to a Beginnings staff member.

## **Holidays/Program Closures**

Prior to the start of each school year, St. Andrew's Beginnings Preschool will provide parents with a school calendar, detailing special school events as well as days that our program will be closed. Our calendar will align closely – though not completely – with the calendar for Omaha Public schools, in terms of holidays observed and district-wide breaks.

The most current school calendar will also be available on our Beginnings Preschool web site.

## **Hours/Days of Operation**

St. Andrew's Beginnings Preschool offers programming Monday through Friday each week, from September through May. Programming options include:

- Preschool classes for ages 2 to PreK – 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
- Parents' Day Out classes for ages 18 months to 3 years – 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
- Extended day option (XD) for ages 3 to PreK – 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

For specific schedules offered at each age level, please visit our Beginnings Preschool web site.

## **Late Pick-up**

Normal pick-up times for Beginnings Preschool programming are as follows:

- Parents' Day Out classes – 11:30 a.m.
- Preschool classes – 11:30 a.m.
- Extended day option – 3:30 p.m.

The following policy will be administered regarding late pick-ups from Beginnings Preschool:

- A 5-minute grace period will be extended at all pick-up times.
- A late fee of \$1 per minute will be charged for every minute picked up after the 5-minute grace period.
- The clock in the front desk area of StACK will be used to determine actual pick-up time.
- Late fees will be deducted with next monthly tuition ACH withdrawal.
- The late pick-up fee will be waived up to one time per month, provided that (1) the parent has called ahead to inform the staff of the late pick-up and (2) the actual pick-up time is 15 minutes or less after scheduled pick-up time.

## **Referral Bonus**

At Beginnings Preschool, our sincere hope is that your family is satisfied with the learning and connections that your child has experienced here. If you are, we invite you to share those experiences with neighbors/friends/family members who might be exploring care options for their young children. If you refer a family to Beginnings – and they decide to enroll one or more children – you will receive a \$25 tuition credit on your next month's billing. The "referred" family should report the source of the referral to Beginnings staff at the time of enrollment.

## **Snow Days**

For purposes of inclement weather closures, we will follow the lead of the Omaha Public Schools (OPS). When OPS announces a “remote learning day,” due to inclement weather, all St. Andrew’s Beginnings programming will also be cancelled. Please make your own decision regarding the conditions of roads in your area, as weather conditions vary greatly across the city. Your family’s safety is our first concern.

## **Termination of Enrollment**

Under some circumstances, Beginnings Preschool reserves the right to terminate a child from the program, including:

- non-payment of tuition or pre-arranged payment agreement
- when the health and safety, developmental needs and welfare of the child and/or other children in the program as well as staff cannot be adequately assured

The Director and preschool staff will make every effort to avoid suspension or termination of enrollment, including the following:

- meeting with parents to discuss concerns and available options
- developing a plan for intervention at home and in the program

The Director will handle these cases on an individual basis with input from the other teachers and the Preschool Leadership Team. Documentation will be maintained and confidentiality will be strictly observed. In the event of a termination, teachers will talk about the situation with the children in the class in a developmentally appropriate manner.

## **CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMMING**

### **Adjustment to the School Setting**

Adjusting to a new school environment may be a source of worry or anxiety for your little one, especially if this is her first time in a group setting. These feelings reflect your child's stage in the normal development of confidence and independence. They are a signal that your child is unsure of the environment and her place in it. Your child will need to learn who can be trusted and turned to in times of trouble, and where she fits in this new setting — and she will figure all of this out!

It is not unusual for there to be tears at drop-off time during the first few weeks of school. Your child is asking for reassurance, and it's certainly appropriate for you to offer that to her in the form of a hug or words of comfort. However, lingering too long could send your child the message that you aren't sure she will be able to succeed independently. It's as if you are saying to her, "I'm not sure about this place or these people. I'm not certain you are able to do this without me." By contrast, when you smile, say good-bye, and leave, the message to your child is, "I trust these people, and I know you will be fine." As you leave, your child's teacher or another staff member will offer further assistance as she begins the day's activities.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's adjustment to preschool, please see your child's teacher or the Director. We're happy to offer tips to help both you and your child adjust to this new experience.

### **Assessments and Observations**

One of the roles that our staff takes most seriously is that of your child's personal observer and guide. Observations and assessments help us to monitor your child's development and learning as well as our planning and decision making regarding classroom activities and materials.

Teachers and classroom assistants are continuously observing and assessing all of the students during their time at Beginnings, both formally and informally. Teachers and the Director will share information with parents as needed or if requested by the parent. We also hold bi-annual parent-teacher conferences – in October and March - when teachers and parents can meet and discuss student progress and development.

### **Curriculum**

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is an approach to teaching grounded in the research on how young children develop and learn coupled with what is known about effective early education. DAP involves teachers meeting young children where they are

developmentally, both as individuals and as part of a group; and helping each child meet challenging and achievable learning goals.

DAP is foundational to all of our activities here at Beginnings Preschool. Teachers plan lessons, activities, and experiences based on their appropriateness for the group and also for each individual child's physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual development.

Though the adults in the environment are there to guide our students each day, much of their learning will come as a result of play. Through play, children learn and develop cognitive skills, physical abilities, new vocabulary, social skills, and literacy skills. Playtime gives them a place and a time for learning that cannot be achieved through completing a worksheet. For example, in playing restaurant, children write and draw menus, set prices, take orders, and make out checks. Play provides rich learning opportunities and leads to children's success and self-esteem.

The primary curriculum material that our teachers use is *Learn Every Day* by Kaplan Early Learning. The curriculum is organized into learning themes, represented by classroom games, stories, work materials, art, songs, pretend play scenarios, and other enrichment activities. The use of themes help preschoolers construct knowledge and build connections through real experiences. Instead of having a day of disjointed activities, themes organize new information around a unified context, which results in a growing web of knowledge.

Lessons of faith are another important part of learning here at Beginnings. Students at all age levels will explore Biblical stories through developmentally appropriate in-class lessons and periodic chapel time experiences. We will share our calendar/schedule of Bible story lessons with you, to facilitate additional learning and faith conversations at home with your child.

### **Daily Schedules**

A typical morning at Beginnings Preschool will include free-choice center work time, presentations of new materials by the teacher, indoor/outdoor playtime, group activities (stories/games), and group snack. Students at all age levels will also participate in all-school chapel time each month as well as ongoing lessons of faith as part of their normal routine at preschool. Group speakers/presenters will also visit our school throughout the school year to support our monthly learning themes.

The specific times and order of these activities will vary by classroom. Please see the Daily Schedule for your child's individual classroom, which is posted on the message board outside each classroom.

## **Field Trips**

Our Pre-K students will attend one field trip during the second semester of the school year. Information regarding site specifics, transportation, chaperones, etc. will be provided well in advance of the event. Costs associated with the field trip will be payable prior to the child's attendance on the field trip.

## **Nap/Rest Time**

For children who attend our afternoon Extended Day (XD) program, there will be a designated nap/rest time each day. All children in attendance during that time will be asked to nap, rest, read or play quietly. At the beginning of the school year, we will ask you about your child's napping/resting habits at home and your preferences for having your child sleep in the afternoon here at preschool.

All children will be provided an opportunity to rest in a quiet and calm environment. The Beginnings staff will implement a consistent rest-time routine to ensure that children feel secure and can relax. Cots will be provided for all children who sleep/rest. Napping/resting children may also bring their own child-sized blanket – one that they are ok leaving at school. Blankets and sheets will be laundered weekly by Beginnings staff. Blankets/sheets that become wet/soiled due to a naptime “accident” may be sent home for the family to launder and return.

For those children who do not typically sleep at home, our staff will provide a quiet read-aloud story time. Students will relax while listening to the story, followed by a time of individual choice book exploration on their own or quiet table/art activities until the nappers wake.

Please see the Director or your child's teacher if you have additional questions about napping and resting at school.

## **Transitions**

Transitions from one age-level class to the next will only happen at the start of each school year. For example, if a 2-year old in Parents' Day Out turns 3, (s)he would still finish out the school year in that same classroom.

We believe that there is value – both for your child and her classmates – to keeping children in the same classroom for the entire school year. Staying with the same teacher and friends will allow for the development of friendships and trusting relationships among the children and between the children and the adult staff members. Undoubtedly, the children in each classroom will pass through developmental milestones during the course of the year. Younger children can learn from – and be motivated by – the progress and development of those slightly-older classmates. Likewise, older students can begin to form early leadership skills by helping to model behavior/habits for their slightly-younger peers.

## **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

### **Communication**

If you need to reach your child's teacher during the school day, please leave a message at the main Beginnings Preschool phone number OR email your child's teacher directly. Our email address for general information or notifications is [beginnings@standrewsomaha.net](mailto:beginnings@standrewsomaha.net).

Phone messages will be delivered directly to the appropriate individual, but will not be returned by classroom teachers while they are caring for students. Email messages will be returned within 24 hours.

At dismissal time, your child's teacher can give you a brief recap of your child's day at preschool. If you have a question or concern that requires a longer period of time, please contact the teacher to set up an alternative time to talk.

### **Parent Participation**

We value and encourage your interest in your child's experience here at Beginnings. The lessons and activities that are a part of your child's day – their "work" – are a source of pride for them. Your child may tell you stories about friends, center activities, songs, and/or favorite books. You may want to know more...

Here are a few different ways for you to "get a taste" of what your child experiences at Beginnings Preschool:

- Attend the Meet-the-Teacher event for your child's classroom prior to the start of our Beginnings school year.
- Share your gifts/expertise/hobbies by being a guest presenter in your child's classroom! You – or a grandparent/aunt/uncle - may have something to share that aligns perfectly with one of our monthly learning themes. See your child's teacher if you have interest in this great option for connecting with your child and his class at school.
- Utilize the one-way mirrors – available in some of our classrooms – to discreetly observe your child at work.
- Attend all-school family events scheduled throughout the school year. This provides a great opportunity to meet your child's circle of friends and their families.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences, scheduled once each semester. Conferences will be held in your child's classroom, so you can see his daily environment, favorite centers, work stations, etc.
  
- Updates and photographs from classroom activities, lessons, guest speakers, chapel time, and other events may be shared throughout the school year with families – via email, on our school Facebook page, or on the private Facebook page for your child's



classroom group. Your child's picture will be shared in these ways only if you have given us permission to do so.

### **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Twice during each school year, your child's teacher will schedule a conference with you to discuss your child's progress and development. These conferences will happen during the months of October and March.

School will not be held on our scheduled conference days. You will be asked to select from a choice of 20-minute time slots on a day that your child would normally be in school.

Conferences will be conducted in your child's classroom. During the conference, our teachers want to share with you their observations of your child's school experience, and also address any questions or concerns that you may have. For that reason, we ask that the actual conference include adults only. Beginnings staff will offer in-person conferences as well as remote conference options.

### **Preschool Leadership Team**

Beginnings Preschool is a ministry of St. Andrew's United Methodist Church. In alignment with United Methodist principles, many decisions related to the functioning of the preschool are handled by existing Boards within the organization of the church, e.g. financial matters, facility needs and staffing decisions.

The Beginnings Preschool Leadership Team has been formed to be a source of support and oversight for other matters related to the daily operations of the preschool, such as policies, procedures, special events, marketing, curriculum, etc. The suggested structure for this board allows for and encourages participation of parents of current preschool students. If you would like to be involved in this way, please contact the Director for further information.

### **Special Events**

Throughout the school year, we will schedule some after-school/evening special events for our Beginnings families. We will also make you aware of scheduled church-sponsored events that are geared toward families with young children. Attending these events provides a wonderful opportunity for you to meet other families, show that you value your child's school experience, and just HAVE FUN. These events may include movie nights, picnics, holiday programs, etc.

Check our School Calendar, monthly newsletter, or our Beginnings web page for upcoming special events.

## **Volunteers**

Throughout the school year, there may be opportunities for parents, family members, and others to support our Beginnings programs through volunteer opportunities. These volunteer tasks might take the form of assistance with a special project, chaperoning on a field trip, sharing a hobby/talent through a classroom presentation, planning/preparing for a classroom celebration, cutting/laminating classroom materials, reading to a group of students, etc.

If you are willing to serve as a regular or occasional Beginnings volunteer, please contact your child's teacher or the Director. We will communicate our volunteer needs through our Beginnings web site, email messages, our Facebook page or written communication sent home with your child. If your duties as a volunteer would bring you in direct contact with students, you will need to complete the St. Andrew's Protection Policy Training and a background check.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

### Accidents/Injuries at School

The staff at Beginnings wants your child's experience here to be not only engaging and educational, but safe and secure. Safety is a high priority when choosing classroom materials, furniture, and playground toys. Room arrangements are considered carefully, based on how our students will maneuver in the classroom and interact with others while at school. However, we do know that when busy, active children explore their environment – even in appropriate ways – accidents do sometimes happen.

Every St. Andrew's Beginnings staff member is required to maintain a current certificate in Pediatric First Aid and CPR. If your child experiences a minor injury while at school, our staff will administer first aid accordingly. A Student Accident/Injury Report shall be completed by the supervising caregiver:

- if the injury leaves a mark, bump, or cut on the skin.
- if the injury involves a burn.
- if the injury involves the head, even if there are no visible signs of the injury.
- if a child is bitten.

If a Student Accident/Injury Report is completed, a parent will be notified by personal phone call, email, or written notification sent in the child's backpack. More serious injuries will be handled as described on the Authorization for Emergency Medical Care form, which is part of the initial paperwork for registering your child.

### Allergies

Families are expected to notify the center regarding children's food or environmental allergies via the Beginnings Student Record that you will complete upon enrollment in our program. Please also discuss your child's allergies in detail with your child's teacher and the Director.

For ALL student allergies, a detailed written description should be submitted with the Student Record and must be updated every year. Our staff will take all appropriate precautions to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies. With regard to food allergies, we consider our facility a nut-free zone. This includes peanuts as well as tree nuts such as almonds, cashews, walnuts, pine nuts (pinon), etc. All families are notified of this restriction upon enrollment, and staff are diligent when checking student lunches and snacks. A list of children's allergies is prominently posted in each classroom throughout our facility.

If your child needs medication at school to treat allergies, we must have appropriate instructions and documentation from the treating physician. Please see the “Medication at School” section of this manual for more information.

### **Biting**

Biting is a typical behavior often seen in young children. As children mature, gain self-control, and develop problem-solving skills, they usually outgrow this behavior. While not uncommon, biting can be an upsetting and potentially harmful behavior. Toddlers may bite to express anger or frustration or because they lack the language skills needed to express their feelings. Biting is less common in older preschoolers, and may be tied to feelings of fear, frustration, or a desire to get attention.

The staff in each Beginnings classroom works to create an environment of kindness and respect in an effort to keep this behavior to a minimum. If a situation of biting does occur, parents of both children - the child who bites and the child who is bitten – will be contacted via phone or written communication. We will not disclose the name of the other child involved to either set of parents. Instances of continued biting will be handled on a case-by-case basis, and every effort will be made to try to remedy the situation, to ensure a safe classroom environment for all of our students.

### **Clothing**

There are many factors to consider when you and your child are choosing what she will wear to school each day. On any given day, she could be creating an art project, playing a gross-motor group game, engaging in outdoor play, or mixing up a cooking project. Once your child arrives, we want her to be able to fully and safely participate in whatever activities we have planned for that day, and not be inhibited by her clothing, outerwear, or shoes. Additionally, we are helping to support your child in skills of independence – including bathroom time - so the clothes that she wears to school should be ones that she can easily take on/off by herself. Flip-flops and open-toed shoes should not be worn to school, due to the hazard they pose when children are running.

Keep in mind that, with the exception of extreme cold or heat, our students will go outside for some sort of activity every day they are here at school. Please ensure that your child’s outerwear is appropriate for the high/low temperatures forecasted for that day. Also, we know that some clothing can actually be a distraction at school, both for your child and for her classmates. For that reason, we ask that you please avoid sending your child to school in costume-wear, extremely dressy clothes/shoes, or pajamas.

### **Emergency Evacuation**

In the unlikely event that a building evacuation is necessary, Steeplechase Apartments - located directly east of St. Andrew's - has agreed to let us temporarily utilize their clubhouse to shelter our children and staff. If this should happen, a staff member from St. Andrew's UMC or Beginnings Preschool will contact you to advise you of the situation and give you the necessary information to pick up your child.

### **Extra Clothing**

Please provide one complete change of clothing for your child to keep here at school, labeled with his name or initials. This should include a season-appropriate shirt, pants/shorts, underwear, and socks. These extra clothes should be present in your child's backpack each day he is at school.

If your child has to change into his extra clothes while at school, the dirty/soiled clothing will be sent home in a plastic bag placed inside his backpack. Please send replacement clothes back with your child on his next scheduled school day.

### **Guidance and Discipline**

When it comes to discipline in our Beginnings Preschool programs, the focus is on helping our students to develop their own self-discipline. Self-discipline is an essential skill that is the root of all success in learning and in life. The most effective way to encourage self-discipline in a school setting is to understand the child's developmental needs, prepare an environment rich with activities to meet those needs, and guide him in making positive, age-appropriate work and social choices throughout the school day. It is important to understand that self-discipline is not a skill that is learned overnight; rather, it is the result of many years of development. Self-discipline is not an arriving point in children's development, but a journey. Children learn self-regulation gradually and through many sources and strategies.

We see the role of the classroom teacher as being a model and a guide while supporting the child as he develops to the point where he is able to choose to accept and to follow the standards and expectations of the classroom community. Each and every day, classroom teachers strive to develop and maintain a classroom environment that promotes respectful treatment of all. Standards and expectations are a natural extension of that climate of respect – they guard the rights of everyone to have a safe, enjoyable place for learning and relationship building. Positive behaviors are specifically acknowledged throughout the school day. Choices that harm others and/or interfere with that climate of respect will result in redirection by the teacher and, whenever possible, a natural consequence that promotes the development of increased self-discipline.

Classroom standards and expectations are framed in a positive way: “Do my work,” “Control my body and voice,” “Speak kindly,” “Listen for directions,” “Honor myself and others,” etc. When a child is having a difficult time following directions, the child may be asked to leave the group until ready to return and follow directions. This is not a “time out,” as the child controls how long they are away from the group and at what point they are ready to return. If the child appears to be in control of himself, he will be asked if he is ready to return to the group.

If you have additional questions regarding guidance and discipline in our Beginnings classrooms, please see the Director or your child’s teacher.

### **Illness/Infestation**

Your child should remain at home and not attend preschool if these symptoms are present: vomiting, diarrhea, unexplained rashes, skin eruptions, severe congestion, weeping eyes, pink eye, lice or just not feeling well enough to participate in typical activities. Please notify the school when your child contracts diseases such as mumps, chicken pox, measles, head lice, impetigo, pink eye, etc., so that other parents can be alerted to look for symptoms in their own children. Parents will be notified via email or written notification on the main Beginnings bulletin board.

If your child complains of not feeling well, shows symptoms of illness, or his/her temperature is 100.4 degrees or higher, you will be contacted by a Beginnings staff member. In these circumstances, we ask that you pick up your child within 30 minutes. Children may return to preschool when they have been fever-free without medication for 24 hours AND all evidence of the condition is gone.

Outside play time is an important part of childhood. Except in cases of inclement weather, we believe that children need time outside every day. We do our best to go outside twice a day - once in the morning and once in the afternoon – throughout the school year, even in winter months. If the temperature or wind chill is below zero, we will not go outside. If you feel like your child is not well enough to go outside, please make alternate arrangements for them as staffing does not allow for a single staff member to stay inside with one child.

Regarding the use of protective face coverings by our students during the preschool day, we will support each family’s decision for their child. If your child wears a mask and it becomes lost/soiled while they are with us, we do have some on hand or you may keep extras in their backpack.

## **Mandatory Reporting**

The safety and well-being of your child is always our primary concern. As child-care providers, we are considered mandatory reporters in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect. This means that we are required to contact local authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, or if we observe a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that reasonably would result in abuse or neglect.

## **Medication at School**

If your child requires medication during their time at school – either prescription or over-the-counter – we will need your written permission to administer that medication and specific instructions for doing so. Prescription medication must be in the original pharmacy bottle and we will not exceed the dosage written on the pharmacy label. In the case of over-the-counter medication, it must be in the original manufacturer's bottle/container, and we will not exceed the recommended dosage written on the package label.

We must have a signed note from the prescribing licensed health-care professional in order to administer medication under the following circumstances:

- The prescription medication is given or applied “as needed” i.e. PRN. The written statement must describe the route and what symptoms need to exist in order for the medication to be given.
- The prescription medication is to be given by a route other than oral, topical, inhalant, or instillation.

A Medication Release form may be obtained at the Beginnings front desk. Please do not leave any medications in your child's backpack but, rather, give directly to staff at the front desk or your child's teacher. With the exception of an EPI-pen, all medication should be taken home each day when your child leaves. Any staff member can get it for you from the medication lock box.

## **Personal Belongings**

As your child gains confidence and independence in her school experience, one skill that we will help her to develop is an ability to manage her own personal belongings each day. Outside each classroom are individual hooks, labeled with student names, to help facilitate the orderly storage of student belongings. One way that you can help your child in this skill is to ensure that every item that she brings to school is labeled with her name or initials – items such as backpacks, lunchboxes, coats, gloves, scarves, mittens, hats, shoes, boots, extra clothes, nap blankets, etc.

It is important that your child have a “school backpack” when she arrives each day. This backpack should be reserved for items that your child will need at school, rather than toys, snacks, etc. When choosing a backpack for your child, we ask that you select one that is large enough for a 9”x12” piece of paper to fit in, without being folded. If a personal “creation” comes home in your child’s backpack, chances are it was created with excitement and enthusiasm. We want that creation to be a source of pride and a catalyst for conversation – not a source of disappointment because it’s been folded/bent to fit into a too-small backpack.

### **Potty Training**

Children who are enrolled in 3&4 year-old and Pre-K classes are required to be fully potty-trained before entering our program. We consider a child to be potty-trained when he wears cloth underwear, independently initiates going to the bathroom and can independently dress/undress/wipe after urination or having a bowel movement. We do understand that even a fully potty-trained child may have an occasional “accident” or need help cleaning himself once in a while. We consider that to be a part of the learning process and our staff will support children in those circumstances as they move toward independence.

For children in our Nearly Threes or Parents’ Day Out program who are not yet potty-trained, parents will need to provide disposable diapers/pull-ups and diaper wipes for their child’s time at school. Our Beginnings staff will work with you as your child begins to master the potty-training process. We are happy to support your family’s plan for potty-training and recommend resources for any questions you may have along the way.

### **Safe Gatherings**

All employees of Beginnings Preschool receive the United Methodist Church’s Safe Gatherings training. Safe Gatherings is a comprehensive system that incorporates an online application, online abuse prevention training, several levels of background checks, and paperless reference checks for people who volunteer or are employed with churches, schools, and organizations that serve or work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

### **Snacks**

All students at Beginnings Preschool will be offered a morning snack during each school day. Students who participate in our Extended Day (XD) program will be asked to bring an extra food item in their lunchbox to be consumed as an afternoon snack. For the morning snack experience, we will offer our students one age-appropriate serving from two of the following five food groups: milk/dairy, meat/meat alternatives, vegetables, fruits, and grains.



Preschool staff will purchase the food items to be used for students' daily snack. This simplifies the process of managing snack for our staff and also minimizes the handling of food items prior to them being served to our students. To cover the cost of these snack items, families will be charged a snack fee each semester. This fee will be deducted via EFT during the months of September and January.

As we are a nut-free facility, no items containing nuts or nut products will be served to our students. For the additional safety of your child, please be certain that you have given us the most up-to-date information about any food allergies that your child may have.

Thank you for your support as we teach and model healthy eating habits for our students. If you have questions regarding snack at school, please ask your child's teacher or the Director.

### **Sun Safety**

We strive to give our students some outdoor play time, each day that they are at school. Because we know that there are dangers related to over-exposure to the sun, we want to support your family's plan for sun protection during school hours. Please consider bringing a sun hat or sunglasses for your child to use while he is at school. These items should be labeled with your child's name and placed in your child's backpack. They will be returned there each day, when we come in from outdoors.

If you wish your child to be protected with sunscreen for morning outdoor play, please apply it at home. If your child attends our XD program in the afternoon, you may also provide sunscreen for us to keep at school, labeled with your child's name. Whatever sunscreen that you choose to send, please send only in stick form rather than spray or lotion. This will allow school staff to more efficiently apply sunscreen to all children, since using lotions would require us to wash hands in between applying sunscreen for each individual child.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Birthdays**

At Beginnings, we value each child in our care as a unique creation of God. We believe that each child should be remembered and cherished on the special day that they were born.

A few weeks prior to your child's birthday, you will receive a communication from your child's teacher about the scheduling of a short birthday celebration in your child's class. You may/may not choose to bring a special snack on that day as a part of the celebration. If you choose to bring a snack for your child to share, it should include only healthy choices. It should be store-purchased and pre-packaged into individual servings. Please save cupcakes, cookies, etc. for at-home parties.

We encourage you to work with your child to create a simple timeline to share with his class on that day, using one photograph for each year of his life. Your child will enjoy choosing his favorite pictures for the timeline - and it will be a wonderful lesson for him and his classmates on how each of us grows and changes with the passage of time. Children with birthdays that fall during the summer months – when Beginnings Preschool is not in session – will have their celebrations scheduled in the month of May.

For more information about nutritious snacks, please check under the “Snacks” heading from the Health and Safety section of this Parent Handbook.

### **Grievance Procedure**

In order to best serve your child, our Beginnings staff strives to develop and maintain open and honest communication with parents and families. If you have a question or concern regarding your child's experience at school, you are encouraged to contact your child's classroom teacher directly through a personal conversation or their school email.

If you are unable to come to a resolution or require further information, please contact our Director, Sheila Coleman, at [scoleman@standrewsomaha.net](mailto:scoleman@standrewsomaha.net) or 402-504-3466.

### **Lost and Found**

Please ensure that your child's belongings – including backpack, shoes, clothing, and outerwear – are clearly labelled with your child's name or initials. Any unlabeled, misplaced items will be kept in a “Lost and Found” bin in the Beginnings front desk area. Unclaimed items will be donated to a local charity at the end of each month.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND ACCEPTANCE

I/We have read and agree to abide by the rules and policies stated in this Parent Handbook of St. Andrew's Beginnings Preschool. I/We understand that not following these procedures may result in the dismissal of my child from the program.

Parent signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent signature \_\_\_\_\_

Enrolled children: \_\_\_\_\_

Date signed \_\_\_\_\_

*I give permission to the staff at Beginnings Preschool to share my contact information with the parents of other enrolled children, for the purpose of facilitating play dates, encouraging friendships, etc. during the coming school year.*

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_