

Parent Handbook



Noah's Ark Preschool

First Presbyterian Church of Hastings

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Our Purpose

Noah's Ark Preschool provides a loving Christian atmosphere, where children can grow socially, emotionally, cognitively, physically, and spiritually.

We provide a developmentally appropriate learning environment, rich in experiences, play, and hands-on learning materials for children ages three, four, and five.

Noah's Ark Preschool Mission Statement

Claimed by God and called by Jesus Christ we acknowledge that we have special responsibility for all God's children; therefore, we commit ourselves as a people of faith to:

Provide a loving and caring learning environment.

Foster Christian attitudes and values.

Nurture, shelter, and encourage spiritual, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional growth.

Celebrate the great diversity of all God's children.

Experience community with children and families

as an extension of the faith and practices

of First Presbyterian Church of

Hasting, Michigan.

WE WELCOME ALL IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST!

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“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these”.

~Matthew 19:14

Meet the Staff

Mindy Lumbert is our teacher for the 4's classes. Mrs. Lumbert holds her child development associates/preschool endorsement. She has worked in early childhood since 1994 as a teacher and parent educator. Mrs. Lumbert and her husband have 3 children: Kaylie, Noah, and Lucas. She enjoys watching MSU and Hastings Saxons sports, reading, cooking, gardening, and traveling. Her favorite foods are pizza and sushi. Red is her favorite color and she loves all Pete The Cat and Eric Carle books.

Janel Peña is our teacher for the Young 5's class. This is her 16th year at Noah's Ark Preschool. Mrs. Peña has over many years of experience in Early Childhood Education. She received her bachelor's degree from Michigan State University. She and her husband have five children: Tony, Gracie, Mara, Andy, and Isabella. Mrs. Pena enjoys traveling, gardening, reading, and is addicted to Starbucks! Her favorite foods are tacos and cheesecake. Her favorite color is orange and she loves frogs! Mrs. Peña's favorite books are: Monster at the End of This Book, and Alexander's Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day!

Wendy Clark-has been with Noah's Ark for 16 years now! She is our Teacher for the 3's classes and the Young 4's Class. Mrs. Clark has an associate degree in early childhood development from Grand Rapids Community College. Mrs. Clark and her husband live in Middleville and have 3 grown children: Maxwell, Christy, and Graham. Mrs. Clark enjoys traveling and camping, walking, and spending time with friends and family. Her favorite color is blue, her favorite food is pizza, and she loves book written by Robert Munch!

Krista Walther- is the teaching assistant in the 4's classes. Mrs. Walther and her husband Brock have 3 children. Blake, Thomas and Xander have all attended Noah's Ark. The family also has a Golden Retriever named Rosie and 2 cats named Pepper and Loki. Mrs. Walther enjoys live music, running, boating, watching her children play sports, traveling, a good book and coffee! Her favorite food is nachos. Her favorite places to visit are Ludington and Saugatuck. Her favorite color is Purple. She loves the books Where the Wild Things Are and The Story of Ferdinand.

Chelsea Bivens is our teaching assistant in the Young 5's class. She is starting her 6th year at Noah's Ark. Mrs. Bivens and her husband Gordy live in Hastings and have four children: Chance, Hailey, Violet, and Eden. Mrs. Bivens enjoys painting and draws inspiration for nature. Her favorite things are spending time with her family, painting, coffee, chocolate and the color green. Eric Carle is her favorite author/illustrator. His book Draw me a Star was her favorite as a child and it inspired a life-long love of art.

Cindy Horton is a Bonus Assistant Teacher here at Noah's Ark. She graduated from Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree in social science. Mrs. Horton and her husband have three boys: Taylor, Ryan, and Jack. She enjoys walking, running, cooking, gardening, and spending time with her family. Her favorite food is veggie pesto pizza or sushi. Her favorite children's book is Brown Bear, Brown Bear.

Ilie Bivens is the newest addition to the Noah's Ark team and is the assistant teacher in the 3's and Y4's classes. Ms. Bivens went to Western Michigan University and studied both art and public history. Ms. Bivens has a cockapoo pup named Honeybee and 4 cats: Ollie, Remi, Dottie, and Birdy. She enjoys gardening, reading, crocheting, and taking walks with Honeybee. Her favorites are the colors yellow and green, Starbucks, and her favorite food is honey garlic chicken. Ms. Bivens loves books by Sandra Boyton!

Angela Stanton – This is Ms. Stanton's fourth year as director here at Noah's Ark Preschool. She has a master's degree in education. Ms. Stanton was an elementary teacher for the Hastings schools for 27 years. 24 of those years were spent in Kindergarten and Young 5's. Ms. Stanton has two children, Isaac and Isabelle and a dog named Grace. She enjoys spending time with her family, traveling, baseball and photography. She loves pizza, salad, chocolate, and the color turquoise. Some of Ms. Stanton's favorite books are by Mem Fox and Mo Willems.

Educational Program

The curriculum at Noah's Ark Preschool is designed to provide a Christian learning environment with individual, self-directed activities and group participation. It is based primarily on Creative Curriculum. Through the use of an integrated daily plan, children participate in various activities and play that encourage growth in all areas of development. These areas include social/emotional, spiritual, physical, and cognitive.

FINE MOTOR ACTIVITIES:	Tactile learning, cutting, pasting, drawing, painting, puzzles, small blocks, manipulative toys, sensory exploration
LARGE MOTOR ACTIVITIES:	Body movement, jumping, large block building, balancing, music and dance, outdoor classroom (pushing, pulling, digging, climbing, running, etc.)
LANGUAGE EXPERIENCES:	Expression and learning through sharing, speaking, listening, circle time, puppets, conversation with staff and peers, games, following directions, stories, etc.
LITERACY:	Stories, nursery rhymes, songs, finger plays, poetry, and creative dramatics
SPIRITUAL:	Opportunities to learn in a Christian environment, emphasizing love and kindness, sharing, caring, friendship, and appreciation of God's creation
COGNITIVE ACTIVITIES:	Growing and learning in a variety of ways including: colors, shapes, matching, opposites, sequencing, sorting, conservation, pre-math, numbers, graphing, observing, predicting, interacting, pre-reading, and otherwise discovering and experiencing their world
ART ACTIVITIES:	Opportunities for self-expression with various mediums: paint, paper, crayons, chalk, clay, playdough, etc.
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:	Opportunities for problem solving, conflict resolution, self-calming techniques, roleplaying, decision making, interacting positively as individuals and in a group, enjoying childhood to its fullest
MUSIC:	Songs, movement, rhythm activities, listening, motor development

Curriculum/Planning:

- Our core curriculum is based on the “Creative Curriculum” and encourages an environmental approach to learning. It is largely researched-based and provides resources that staff can implement to guide, teach, and assess young children.
- We follow all required rules enacted by the State of Michigan Child Care Licensing, as well as guidelines set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Our teachers plan ahead and create a weekly lesson plan. An abbreviated version of this plan is available and will be sent home monthly.
- Our teachers create their lesson plan based on a variety of resources. We currently utilize “Creative Curriculum” lesson planning resources, as well as elements from High Scope, Core Knowledge, Growing Up Wild (Outdoor Curriculum), and Wonder-filled Weekdays (Christian Preschool Ministries).
- Teachers also rely on their educational background, years of experience in the classroom, and an in-depth understanding of child development and the researched-based ages and stages of development of the children we serve.

<u>GENERAL DAILY SCHEDULE</u>	
Circle Time- (Greetings, prayer, planning)	10-20 min.
Free Choice/Center Time-	45-60 min
Clean Up Time-	5-10 min
Literacy Circle- (stories, finger plays, games)	15-20 min
Snack-	15 min
Small Group Time-	15 min
Gross Motor- (Gym or Outdoor Classroom)	20-40 min
Ending Circle- (closing songs, recall)	5-10 min
<i>Each classroom will have a variation of this general schedule. Your child's teacher will provide you with their individual schedule.</i>	

Educational Program Cont.

Noah's Ark Preschool Education Goals

- Provide a secure and loving environment for every child, focusing on learning through play
- Increase the child's self-image by allowing the child to make his/her own activity choices in the classroom
- Develop a sense of wonder, appreciation, and excitement for learning about God and His world
- Develop an awareness of process, sequence, and order
- Emphasize experience and process rather than the final product, thus giving the child confidence and freedom to experiment and learn
- Enhance the child's ability to express his/her thoughts verbally and creatively
- A sense of social responsibility by encouraging cooperation and sensitivity to others

TRANSITIONING FROM HOME TO SCHOOL

“So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children. And He reassured them and spoke kindly to them.” Genesis 50:20-21

Preschool may be your child’s first experience leaving you or a known caregiver on a regular basis. Not only is the experience new with other children and adults, the surroundings are new as well. We have gathered some information and suggestions to help with this exciting time in your child’s life:

Transition to school begins at home.

Focus on simple and positive words when talking about preschool. For example, “I am excited for you to make some new friends” or “This is so fun that you are a big boy/girl and are going to school like your brothers.”

Visit Day is a perfect practice run for you and your child.

Before you bring your child to school explain:

- **Where he/she is going**
- **The names of his/her teacher**
- **What he/she will be doing at school (list a few activities: playdoh, blocks, books, etc.)**
- **When you will return to pick him/her up (For example, “I will pick you up after you sing the goodbye song.”)**

The first day of school:

- **Arrive a little early to allow an unrushed time to settle into the new surroundings. Once welcomed in the waiting area by your child’s teacher, find your child’s cubbie, hang up coats and backpacks, and give a quick hug and goodbye.**

At pick up time:

- **Your child’s teacher will knock on the door and dismiss the class into the waiting area.**

Other tips:

- **Occasionally, a child who has initially separated with ease, may later develop difficulties. This sometimes happens and you and your child’s teacher can work together to develop a plan to assist your child. This is normal and typically temporary.**
- **Communication between parent and teacher will help ease a parent’s separation anxiety too! Don’t hesitate to ask questions and communicate issues that may be affecting your child’s comfort level.**
- **As the school year and your child settle in, you will notice that we will have many opportunities for parent participation, including reading in our classroom and joining us for special occasions!**

Tuition 2023-2024

Noah’s Ark Preschool is a ministry of the First Presbyterian Church, and as such, all administrative costs are provided by the church; this means that your tuition payments directly benefit your child and the classroom setting!

Information about tuition can also be found in the breakdown of payments sheet that will accompany the payment envelopes you will receive at orientation.

We are required to share the following information:

1. Payments are due the first Monday/Tuesday of each month
Payments can be made by cash, check or credit card. Online credit card payments have a 3% processing fee.

2. There is a 10% discount for 2 or more children in one family

3. There are no refunds for illnesses or snow days/delays. If there are extenuating circumstances, special arrangements may be made. Please talk to the director.

4. If payments are late, they follow the process below:
 - ❖ 2 weeks late – reminder note sent home
 - ❖ 1 month late – a \$10.00 late fee will accrue monthly until payments are up to date (unless there has been contact with the director and new arrangements are made)
 - ❖ 2 months late & no contact w/director- The Ministry Team will review your account and decide if your child’s enrollment is in jeopardy.

If you have a concern or issue with tuition, please contact the financial director as soon as possible. Communication is very important; any account that comes past due is subject to late fees, change in enrollment status, and a review by the Ministry Team.

Payments are expected in the months of: October/November/December/January/February
If you need to spread out the payments into March, please let the Preschool Director know.

<p>2 Day 3-Year Old</p> <p>2023 Tuition:\$975 Due in July: \$200.00 then 5 monthly payments of: \$155.00</p>	<p>3 Day Young 4’s</p> <p>2023 Tuition:\$1350 Due in July: \$200.00 then 5 monthly payments of \$230.00</p>	<p>3 Day 4-Year Old</p> <p>2023 Tuition:\$1400 Due in July: \$200.00 then 5 monthly payments of \$240.00</p>	<p>Young 5’s</p> <p>2023 Tuition:\$1910 Due in July: \$200.00 then 5 monthly payments of \$342.00</p>
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Policies and Procedures

Admission & Withdrawal Criteria:

Noah's Ark Preschool enrolls children 2 years and 9 months and no older than 5 years by September 1. Children who are older than 5 by September 1 will be assessed to assure their most appropriate placement.

All children must be toilet trained (no diapers or pull ups).

If you need to remove your child from Noah's Ark Preschool, we ask for notice at least 2 weeks in advance. A more in-depth withdrawal procedure is available for parents to review if removal from preschool is necessary.

Appropriate Clothing

Simple play-clothes and outer clothing are best. It is most helpful to have fastenings the child can open and close themselves, allowing him/her to be more independent and will make the school experience more enjoyable.

Please label all outer clothing (boots, mittens, hats, scarves, coats, etc. and including backpacks) – it is amazing how many children have similar items of outer wear.

Children are most comfortable in tennis shoes. Dressy shoes and flip-flops do not provide stable footing, especially during gross motor activities. Remember we go outside daily. Our playground has wood chips, which can puncture feet exposed in sandals (including Crocks). We go on hikes and walk trails on various terrain, as well as play in our outdoor classroom.

During the winter months when wearing boots to school, **please remember to always send in their shoes for indoor play.**

Children may **not** go bare/sock-footed at school due to licensing regulations.

Act of God/Snow Days

Act of God/snow days are inevitable in Michigan. Each group has two weeks of these types of days built into the school year. If any group goes over the two weeks of time those days will be added to the end of the school year for make-up days. (Two weeks = Young 5's (8 days), 4's (6 days) and Young 4's and 3's (4 days).

Field Trips

Taking field trips is an important part of any school program. Noah's Ark Preschool strives for a balance of trips and classroom time. Because of this, we take trips that can be accomplished within the "school" day. Parents will be notified in advance of trips. Field trips may be parent-transport or we may utilize Barry County Transit. Siblings are welcome on some field trips but not on others. Please carefully read the information we provide before each field trip – in this way you can be accurately informed. Our "Preschool Service Agreement" gives permission in advance for some field trips. Other trips will have a separate permission form attached.

Parent Participation and Communication

Parent participation takes many forms. Classroom visits are always welcome. Our Volunteer Policy (required by state licensing) does state that we reserve the right to ask an adult to leave the classroom based on the classroom concerns, dynamics, or at the director's request. All visitors must sign in and fill out the required paperwork.

Parents or relatives who do not have legal rights to visit will not be allowed to visit.

Parent participation also takes place through field trips, snacks, special projects and/or classroom activities, and evening events. Also, involvement takes the form of keeping current on preschool events and information. This happens by reading the newsletters, class notes, and other important information sent home in backpacks or posted to Facebook. Check out our bulletin boards located inside the waiting room for the information as well.

Parent Program Orientation

In late August, we have a **required parent orientation meeting**. At this meeting, the director and staff share information regarding your child's early childhood education, preschool policies, and other important information.

This meeting is for **parents only**. It takes about 50 minutes and that length of time can be difficult for a child to sit through. We want to make sure that parents can receive all the information and can focus on the information being shared.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Each classroom will have scheduled times throughout the year to discuss your child's progress with you. For most classes, an informal observation will be sent home in the fall regarding each child's adjustment to preschool. Sometimes, that will be followed up with a phone call or meeting. Frequent communication from the parents is essential. Notes, emails, informal conversations, and phone calls are encouraged. Messages on Facebook are not always checked regularly, so do not use this as your main method of communication. We prefer a note or a phone call outside of class time. Teachers make it a point to greet or say goodbye to each child as he/she enters and leaves the building. There is however time to say, "I will email you later about a question I have."

Personal Belongings

There are many reasons we encourage children to leave their personal toys at home. At times however, an item from home may be useful as an enhancement to a unit of study, as an item to share at group time, or as a form of security in making the transition to school. In these cases it is permissible, but in general, we hope you will cooperate with us in discouraging toys being brought to school. Most often we will suggest they go back home or stay in the child's backpack.

Safety Procedures

We are committed to creating a trusting, safe and quality early childhood program. To this end:

- **Children will only be released to those people whose names appear on the yellow Child Information Card.** Make sure you keep those cards updated with current information
- If a child is not living with both parents, we ask you to fill out a Custody/Divorce form which will enable us to be prepared for any visitation or pick-up situation
- The main entry door into the preschool area is locked for most of the day. If you arrive after the posted pick-up/drop-off times, you will need to use the phone outside the preschool entrance to call our extension. The information is posted there.
- **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR CHILDREN ALONE IN YOUR VEHICLE AT ANY TIME.** This is an unsafe practice. Occasionally our parking lot is full (due to weather or church functions). If this occurs, staff will assist with drop-off and pick-up at the doors.
- **Crisis Management Plan-**Noah's Ark Preschool staff have been trained in safety procedures involving multiple scenarios of possible crisis situations. Crisis drills take place twice a year. Parents will be notified within 24 hours if a crisis occurs.

Pest Policy

We will communicate with you when any pesticides are used on our playground or preschool for pest management. We follow the guidelines for child exposure provided by our Pesticide Management Company, currently TERMINIX. We will alert you with a note home and a posting in our waiting area.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

- Plan to arrive a few minutes early to allow for an unrushed time to settle in.
- Park in the main parking lot and walk your child in.
- Be prompt when bringing and picking up your child.
- If you are running late, please give us a quick call to let us know.
- When arriving, please do not leave young children unattended in the car in the church parking lot. If you have a sleeping child or sick children or some other special circumstance, please call the preschool and we will arrange to meet you at the front entrance to greet your preschooler.
- When picking up your preschooler, make sure you come into the preschool waiting area. We do not dismiss students without the pick-up person coming to the waiting area.
- When picking up early, you will need to sign your child out, noting the date, time, and reason. Your signature is also required.

Children will be dismissed at the same time each day. This dismissal time is assigned according to your child's classroom.

Please note dismissal policies are as follows:

1. Children will be released to **authorized** adults only. Authorized adults are listed on the child's State of Michigan Child Information Record (yellow card filled out at enrollment).
2. **Identification** will be checked if someone other than the regular adult picks up a child. The name of the adult on the yellow card will be compared to photo identification.
3. If a note or a phone call is received giving temporary authorization for a child to be picked up, it will be verified per phone call by a Noah's Ark staff member. The adult who has given temporary permission to pick up will need to show **photo identification**.
4. Only the names listed on the State of Michigan Child Information Record are authorized to pick up a child. **According to licensing rules, no parent's name may be omitted unless there are court documents on site stating that is legal fact.** If there are custody/visitation orders stating when parents may or may not pick up a child, a form providing Noah's Ark with custody information must be completed and kept onsite.

Food Service Policy

Noah's Ark serves a snack each preschool day. The goal of our food service policy is to provide healthy nutritious options while the children are under our care. **For safety, we are a nut free facility.**

Our snacks meet the USDA guidelines as required by licensing, based on the Michigan Department of Education/U.S. Department of Agriculture. Based on the guidelines, a snack shall be 2 food components, of the following: **milk/yogurt, fruit/vegetable, and grains/breads**

Serving sizes are based on recommendations by the same program above, and the USDA My Pyramid standards.

Lunches are not provided by the preschool. The Young's Five children will need to send in a lunch on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. In the event that a child does not have a packed lunch, staff will provide a nutritious lunch that meets state licensing requirements for that day. Thursday is a shorter day, and only snack will be eaten. **Lunches need to be labeled with your child's name and date.** They will eat in the classroom and when lunch time is over, the area will be swept, and thoroughly washed, rinsed, and sanitized.

A menu for the current month of snacks will be posted on the Noah's Ark bulletin board inside the waiting area. Should your child require a special snack menu, due to allergies or other dietary needs, we will work with each individual family. In some cases, parents will send in an alternative snack if needed. In that case, a signed note may be required.

Our snacks served are often prepackaged, with minimal preparation on site. **We do not serve homemade snacks from home.**

Celebrations

Birthday celebrations are handled a bit differently in each classroom; however, every child at Noah's Ark Preschool receives a "crown" with stickers that they get to wear (if they choose) during their school day. And of course, the birthday song will be sung to your child. Suggestions for parents are found below:

- Keep it simple!
- Parents may want to send in a small item for each child in place of a sugary treat. Make sure to include your birthday child as well! Great choices include pencils, stickers, bubbles, erasers, bouncy balls, and other small and inexpensive items.
- If you would like to send in a treat, please check with the teacher first. Allergies and changing health considerations, as well as licensing guidelines dictate that we may only serve pre-packaged snacks. **We are a nut free facility.**

Volunteer/ Classroom Visitor Policy

Our licensing agency requires that we provide our volunteers with a written plan of supervision. We would like to welcome you into our classrooms and give you a bit of information:

- You are invited in as a volunteer and may not supervise anything outside the classroom. Volunteers and visiting parents will need to fill out and sign our required paperwork 2 weeks in advance, including a screening affidavit statement.
- Once a background check has been done you will be contacted with the results.
- At no time can you be left alone with a child other than your own.
- You will always be under the direct supervision of a staff member.
- Under unusual circumstances we may ask that you discontinue your visit due to child distress or classroom tone. You may speak with the director if you have any questions about this.
- Please remember to follow classroom rules about play and equipment while you are visiting. Our child management policy is in effect at all times, while volunteers are on site, including the volunteer's own child.
- Only staff members are to supervise children in the restrooms. We request volunteers use the restrooms in the waiting area.
- Long-term volunteers (those who have contact with children at least 4 hours per week for more than 2 consecutive weeks) shall have a physician-signed health appraisal onsite, as well as a negative TB test.

Behavior Management Policy

Staff will utilize developmentally appropriate methods of child management. We use both indirect and direct methods of management.

Indirect Methods of Child Management

The goal of indirect guidance is to create an environment that encourages self-guidance/control, positive self-esteem, and cooperation in children.

Strategies to create indirect methods of child guidance include:

- Creating an interesting, relevant, classroom environment that is orderly and well stocked; which rotates materials to invite new discoveries. The environment is labeled, and children are able to choose items and put them away independently. Popular items are duplicated when at all possible.
- Providing a predictable schedule which includes a balance of quiet and active, child-directed and teacher-directed, large and small group activities.
- Using positive, enjoyable transition activities that encourage cooperation as a classroom moves from one task/schedule component to the next.
- A well prepared, lesson-planned day that also allows flexibility as needed according to the tone and developmental needs of the classroom.
- Guidelines (rules) are in place that are consistent, developmentally appropriate, and used in a positive manner.

Direct Methods of Child Management

The goals of direct methods of child management are to assist children in developing self-control, positive self-esteem, and to become more confident navigating their social world. It is meant to encourage feelings of empathy, and foster the ability to label their own feelings, and to express them in positive ways!

Strategies to implement direct methods of child management include:

- Being a positive role model and an example in using negotiating skills, appropriate language, and reflecting feelings.

- Guiding and facilitating children in the environment and encouraging interaction with materials; joining and observing children in their play, and encouraging and extending their experiences.
- Giving children guidance that includes what the child **can do** rather than what they cannot do. Example: "Chairs are for sitting, Tommy" rather than, "No standing on the chair".
- Negotiating disagreements using techniques that encourage problem-solving among children.
- Using redirection when children are misusing an item or an area.
- Giving choices to children that are developmentally appropriate and that make sense to them. Choices help them feel in control in their world. The end goal of the choice still results in the expected behavior, the child just gets to choose how he/she will make that result happen. Examples:
 - Would like to sit in the red chair or the blue chair?
 - Would you like to clean house keeping or blocks first? Which works best for you?
- Using speech techniques that give directions in positive terms while redirecting children from undesirable behavior.
- Respecting the child's level of development by allowing children an appropriate amount of time to cooperate.

At No Time will we use:

- Corporal punishment of any kind
- Shaming or humiliating a child in any way
- Depriving of snacks as a punishment
- Exclusion from outdoor play as punishment
- Exclusion from daily learning experiences
-

The above suggestions are the basic tools to create the most positive environment for a child to feel safe and secure in the classroom as he/she negotiates the environment! **The above policy complies with R400.5107/Discipline in licensing rules.**

Health Care Plan

Our goal of our Health Care Plan is to maintain a healthy environment at Noah's Ark Preschool and reduce the spread of illness in our school and community. To achieve this, we communicate with families about their child's illness and inform families about any communicable diseases. We also communicate with our local Health Department about illness, monitor required immunizations, report to MCIR, as well as maintain a clean, sanitary facility. We utilize the Barry Eaton Health Department for any illness concerns and follow the State of Michigan Licensing rules for illness exclusions and cleaning procedures. Referring to these resources ensures that we are providing a safe and healthy learning environment for children. Communication from families about what illness their child is experiencing is important information for families to share with us. We document what illnesses are occurring in our center and report that information to the health department. We also send notes home in backpacks to inform families when communicable diseases occur in our facility.

Please contact us when your child will be absent due to illness.

After an illness, **please keep your child home for 24 hours after:**

- Beginning an antibiotic for any nose or throat infection
- Your child has been fever free and off from fever reducing medication
- After the cessation of diarrhea or vomiting

To meet compliance with R 400.5111b (1) of the Center Rules, and to provide a safe and healthy environment for the children and staff of Noah's Ark Preschool, our health care plan is as follows:

Controlling Infection

It is essential to maintain a healthy learning environment. We have the following guidelines to protect against the spread of infectious illnesses and disease. In case of illness, please keep your child home if:

- Fever and behavior changes indicating discomfort
 - At or above 101° orally
 - At or above 100° axillary (armpit)
 - At or above 102° rectally
- Child appears to be severely ill or too sick to play
- Diarrhea (2 or more times)
- Vomiting within the previous 24 hrs.
- Uncontrollable excessive cough
- Uncontrollable excessive cold symptoms, especially when accompanied with secondary symptoms (fever, crankiness, coughing, etc.)
- Unidentified rash
- Head lice and/or nits (may return after treatment, a head check may be necessary)
- Mouth sores and drooling

- Any infectious disease, until the child has completed the initial treatment as outlined by his/her health care provider and is deemed healthy to return
- Any illness that prevents a child from participating comfortably in activities as determined by the NAPS staff

This same list applies to any child, staff, and volunteer. Should any child/staff/volunteer that has been in attendance be discovered to have an infectious illness/disease, the appropriate classroom will be notified, and information about the specific disease will be provided, including incubation and exclusion guidelines. The child/staff/volunteer will be separated from the other children and cared for and supervised until a parent arrives. Items used by the ill child will be cleaned and sanitized. We request that the child/staff/volunteer be kept home for 24 hours after beginning an antibiotic for a throat/nose infection, and 24 hours from the last bout of diarrhea or vomiting.

Employee Responsibilities

All NAPS staff and volunteers shall immediately report to the director when experiencing symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting, fever, sore throat with fever, jaundice (yellowish skin/eyes), discharges from the eyes, nose or mouth, infected wounds, open sores or boils. Staff must report to the director when diagnosed with any of the "Big Five" illnesses: Typhoid fever, Shigellosis, Escherichia Coli, Hepatitis A, and Norovirus Infection.

The director may exclude/restrict a NAPS staff person/volunteer when diagnosed with a "Big Five" illness, jaundice has occurred within the last 7 days, and/or employee is experiencing Noro-like symptoms (vomiting and/or diarrhea).

The director may restrict a NAPS staff person/volunteer from handling food, food-ware, equipment, utensils, linens, and single articles when: jaundice is greater than 7 days, persistent sneezing, coughing or runny nose persists (discharges from the eyes, nose and mouth), exposed lesion, boil, or wound that is either open/draining or infected.

The director may reinstate a NAPS employee/volunteer as specified "after health department approval and medical documentation, stating the excluded person is free of symptoms and free of the infectious agent."

All NAPS staff receives the NAPS health policy yearly, signing an employee reporting agreement.

It shall be the responsibility of the director to inform, educate, and evaluate all NAPS workers as it relates to the health requirements specified in section 2-2 of the 2005 FDA Food Code.

Medication

Because children at Noah's Ark attend "part-time" preschool, we request that all basic routine medications be given before or after the child attends. However, some medications, such as inhalers or epi-pens may be needed at preschool. In that case, a signed permission slip and medication in its original container with the prescription label on it must be provided. A medication log will be kept in the child's classroom.

Health Resources

Information about keeping children and staff healthy can be referenced by your child's physician and Mrs. Jennifer Casarez, RN at the Barry Eaton Health Department. Our health care plan is reviewed yearly or as needed. The Barry Eaton Health Department has reviewed our health care plan and has recommended contacting Mrs. Casarez, RN as she is the contact person responsible for addressing any questions about communicable diseases, outbreaks, or general questions about head lice, bed bugs, etc.

Medical Clearance, Physical Evaluations, Immunizations

All Staff, as well as volunteers, who spend at least 4 hours a week for more than two consecutive weeks shall have a medical clearance signed by a licensed physician on site. In addition, a negative TB test is required. Children who are enrolled shall provide a copy of immunization records, signed waivers for immunizations not administered, and will also have a physical evaluation signed by a licensed physician. **Physical evaluations for enrolled preschool age children must be updated every two years.**

Illness while is attendance

A child who begins to exhibit symptoms of illness during class time will be isolated from the group with the Director to a designated area, and the family will be contacted to pick up the child within an hour.

Accident or Injury

All staff at Noah's Ark are prepared to handle emergencies and are certified in CPR and First Aid. In addition, all staff have received Blood Borne Pathogen training. Parents will be notified immediately by preschool director or staff if an injury occurs. Details will be given to parents along with directions to come and pick up the student if needed. An incident report will be filled out by attending staff member within 24 hours and a copy will be given to the parent and one will go in the student's file. If hospital care is needed, the center will fax incident report notifying licensing consultant.

Incidents

Parents will be notified if an incident occurs at preschool either by the lead teacher or the director within 48 hours of the occurrence. Documentation of the incident may be necessary and if so the parent will receive a copy and a copy will be placed in the students file.

Hand washing

Hand washing is one of the single most effective practices to prevent the spread of germs. Procedures for hand-washing are:

- Have a clean single service towel available.
- Turn on water to a comfortable temperature between 60° F to 120° F
- Moisten hands with water and apply soap.
- Rub hands together vigorously until a soapy lather appears continue for at least 20 seconds or sing "ABC's" or sing "Happy Birthday" twice.

- Rub areas between fingers, around nail beds, under fingernails, jewelry, and the back of hands.
- Rinse hands under running water until they are free of soap and dirt. Leave the water running while drying hands.
- Dry hands with a clean, disposable single use paper towel.
- Turn the tap off with the towel to avoid recontamination.
- Dispose of the single service towel in a lined trash container.

Hands shall be washed upon arrival to the preschool, before and after eating, after using the bathroom, after coughing or sneezing, wiping noses, and whenever hands are visibly dirty. We encourage staff and children to cough into their elbow rather than into their hands.

Cleaning Bodily Fluids

For safety reasons, all bodily fluids should be considered potentially infectious. Spills of bodily fluids shall be cleaned and surfaces sanitized to reduce the risk of infection.

Steps to reduce the spread of infection when cleaning bodily fluids include:

- Wearing single use disposable gloves in administering first aid, and in cleaning bodily fluids is required.
- For small amounts of urine/stool, wipe off and clean visible soil with detergent solution. Rinse with clean water, then apply approved sanitizing solution, and allow to air dry.
- For larger spills, wipe as much of the visible spill with disposable paper towels, and carefully place them into an approved leak-proof plastic bag. Immediately use a detergent or approved disinfectant detergent to clean the spill area. Rinse with clean water. For carpets, continue to apply and extract the cleaning solution until no visible soil remains. On hard surfaces, apply an approved sanitizing solution and let air dry.
- Mops and other equipment used to clean bodily fluids need to be discarded.
- Be sure to remove gloves in the appropriate manner. Removing first one, holding it with the other, then the other over it and discard. Always wash hands after.
- Remove and bag any clothing soiled by bodily fluids.
- Be sure all hands and soiled skin of all involved are washed.
- Public Vomiting: due to the virulent group of viruses called the Noroviruses, clean up for vomit must follow a different protocol.
 - Materials needed include: bleach, disposable gloves, masks, eye protection/face shields, and protective clothing.
 - The bleach solution must be 1/3 cup of bleach/1 gallon of water.
 - All surrounding area must be wiped down and/or laundered.
 - All surfaces in the room must be wiped down and allowed to air dry.
 - For more information see: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/gl>
 - Also, NAPS has on file the "Recommended Procedures for Cleaning Up Vomit" from the Barry-Eaton Health Department.

Cleaning and Sanitizing of all Toys, Equipment, and Other Surfaces

Maintaining a safe, clean, and organized setting contributes to the health, safety, and well-being of both children and staff at Noah's Ark Preschool. Our church custodian provides cleaning and trash removal on an arranged schedule and our staff maintains daily upkeep of our classrooms and work areas. Toys and classroom work areas are cleaned with a combination of bleach-water at a concentration of 200 ppm (1 tablespoon of bleach per 1 gallon of water).

Although individual classrooms cleaning and sanitizing schedules may vary depending on frequency of use, the following is a basic cleaning schedule of our facilities:

Area	Clean	Sanitize	Frequency
Bathrooms/Trash Removal	X	X	Daily and when soiled.
Carpets and Area Rugs	X		Vacuum every other day and as needed. Deep clean once yearly with hired service, and steam clean in house as needed.
Hard Floors (Hallway and Classroom). Mops and Cleaning Rags.	X	X	Sweep and spot clean after each session. Mop one to two times weekly, or as needed. Mops cleaned after each use, and sanitized as needed, then air-dried. Cleaning rags are disposable, and sanitized, air-dried, then disposed of as needed.
Snack 'station' and refrigerator.	X	X	Spot clean daily, sanitize 'trays' daily. Wipe down and sanitize entire 'station' weekly.
Classroom learning materials and toys, dress up clothes and laundry, etc. Containers that hold classrooms items.	X	X	High use items (such as art tools, science items, housekeeping food and phones, etc.) sanitized daily. Everything else is cleaned and laundered weekly.
Art drying racks	X		Weekly
Classroom tables and chairs	X	X	Tables cleaned and sanitized before and after snacks, chairs wiped as needed and cleaned weekly.
Classroom furniture items.	X		Weekly and as needed.
Teacher Resource Room	X		Weekly and as needed.
Office and Hallway Areas	X		Weekly and as needed.
Children's mailboxes and cubbies.	X	X	Weekly and as needed.

Cultural Competence and Inclusion Practices Policy

Noah's Ark Preschool collaborates with local Intermediary School Districts (BISD, KISD, CISD) to provide for and support our students with special needs or disabilities. In addition, they serve as a resource for training and consultation regarding cultural sensitivity and inclusive practices. Our brochures and our website state:

“Noah’s Ark Preschool does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or physical/mental disability in its educational programs and activities.”

Accordingly, inclusive practice is the broader umbrella, under which racial/cultural diversity is found. Our goal is to place each student in the most appropriate educational setting, utilizing information from staff, families, and informed representatives of the child/family. For specific information about a child with special needs or disabilities please see the Noah's Ark Special Needs Policy.

1. Noah's Ark will:
 - a. Respect the cultures and traditions of each family
 - b. Seek outside additional resources for information based on a family or culture that may be new to us
 - c. Support and encourage transition planning where needed to implement the strongest educational experience
2. Noah's Ark will:
 - a. In print, language (verbal interactions), and environmental displays, model diverse (culturally, physically, and gender) families and children
 - b. Maintain a culturally diverse selection of classroom materials: puzzles, babies, dress-up choices, food selection in housekeeping, transportation toys, etc.
 - c. Expand our literature selections to include stories from a particular author, country, and culture; this would expand to our musical selections as well.
3. Noah's Ark will:
 - a. Maintain a lower teacher pupil ration than most early childhood/preschool settings
 - b. Accept all children who will benefit from our program and whose needs we can accommodate
 - c. Support the child and the family through communication, personal contact, and classroom planning and intervention
 - d. Have a caring and experienced staff willing to do what is best for children
 - e. Require annually, Professional Development in cultural awareness topics

Special Needs Policy

Noah's Ark Preschool collaborates with local Intermediary School Districts (BISD, KISD, CISD) to provide for and support our students with special needs. We accept children with special needs

when the identified disability and Noah's Ark Preschool classroom is a compatible match. This match will be determined by the Director, classroom teacher, local Intermediary School District's representative, and the parents/guardian of the child.

1. Noah's Ark will:
 - a. Refer to Barry Intermediary School District (or the appropriate ISD) any currently enrolled child who has been identified through routine screening/developmental assessment as possibly having a special need
 - b. Participate in the development of the Individual Education Program (IEP) with the local ISD and the parents of the referred child
 - c. Will support and encourage transition planning for the child and implement, to the best of the program's ability, recommendations for intervention in the classroom
2. Noah's Ark will:
 - a. Accept children with already identified special needs if/when it is determined that the child and the program are a good match
 - b. Meet with the local ISD and the parents to better understand the IEP
 - c. Will support recommendations for classroom interventions, transition planning for the child, and the child and the family as appropriate
3. Noah's Ark does:
 - a. Have a lower teacher-pupil ratio than most preschool settings
 - b. Accept all children who will benefit from our program and whose needs we can accommodate
 - c. Support the child and the family through communication, personal contact, classroom planning and intervention
 - d. Have a caring and experienced staff willing to do what is best for children.

Severe Weather Procedures

If students are in preschool when a TORNADO WATCH or THUNDERSTORM WARNING is issued, students will remain in classrooms until the usual dismissal time. If students are in preschool when a TORNADO or BLIZZARD WARNING is issued, students will remain at preschool, taking shelter in designated areas, until the warning is cancelled. Parents/guardians or approved individuals may pick up their child during any severe weather situation, but we ask that you not call the preschool during these times unless there is there an emergency. It is most important that preschool/church lines remain open during thunderstorm warnings and tornado/blizzard warnings. Announcements regarding preschool cancellations and early dismissals will be emailed and posted to Facebook.

REMINDER: Noah's Ark Preschool follows the Hastings Area Schools for weather cancellations and delays.

School Closings

Sometimes it is necessary to cancel school for weather or mechanical reasons. If the problem is mechanical (for example, the heat is not working in the winter), you will receive an email and it will be on our **Facebook Page**. If the problem is weather, you will receive an email and it will be on our **Facebook Page**. You can also listen to the radio and/or watch television (WOOD TV8), for delay/closing listings for Hastings Area Schools.

If Hastings Area Schools are closed **due to weather**, we will also be closed.

2-HOUR DELAYS

On the days Hastings Area Schools have a 2-Hour delay, we will also have a 2 hour delay. Morning classes come at 10 and dismiss at the regular time. Young 5's will report at 10am on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays.

Man Made/Natural Disasters

In the event of a **Fire or Gas Leak** in the church, we will evacuate to the softball field. Staff will attempt to reach parents on cell phones for a safe student pick up. Teachers will also post details on their Facebook pages. Students and staff will stay a safe distance until given an all clear is given or all students are picked up by parents.

In the event of a **Power Outage**, students and staff will go on with their day. If the outage exceeds 20 minutes, the director or a staff member will email/call all parents to pick up students early. Teachers will also post to their Facebook pages about it.

In the event of a **Chemical Spill**, students will remain in the church or be taken to a safe location (whichever the situation requires). The director will inform parents of the disaster and of specific pick-up instructions through email and teachers will post directions to Facebook pages.

In the event of an **Interior/Exterior Intruder**, students will be taken to a safe location and stay with staff until given an all clear by authorities. Parents will be contacted to pick up students when authorities clear the staff to do so. Details of the situation will be shared with parents when the authorities give the direction to do so.

Schedule of Operations 2023-2024

First Day of School	Sept 11
Thanksgiving Break	Nov. 20-24
Christmas Break	Dec. 22-Jan. 7
School Resumes	Jan. 8
Spring Break	March 25- April 7
School Resumes	April 8
Last Day	May 9

It's not "just play"...

Play is an essential part of early learning.

It is the essential lifeblood of the learning process.

As children play, they are developing their curiosity, socio-emotional, and physical skills they will need to take them into a successful adulthood.

They are developing their curiosity, problem solving, intentionality, flexibility, and verbal & nonverbal skills.

Social- emotionally they are developing their emotional intelligence- learning confidence, cooperation, negotiation, sharing, empathy, and how to communicate appropriately.

Physically their fine motor and gross motor skills are being practiced and developed.

It is not just play! It is skills for life!

~MHC Childhood Solutions