

St. Dorothy School

Early Childhood

Parent Handbook

St. Dorothy School
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Welcome

Starting school is an important time in a child's life. We hope the contents of this booklet will provide you with information that will help your child make a happy adjustment in school life. Most children are excited about starting school and our goal is to provide your child with experience that will foster this excitement for learning.

The first few weeks of school may be a little tiring as your child adjusts to new routines, new friends and a different environment. Please feel free to discuss any of your concerns with your child's teacher. The staff of St. Dorothy School will help you in any way possible.

We wish you and your child a wonderful year and look forward to a positive home and school relationship.

Overview

St. Dorothy School provides an Early Childhood Program for three, four and five year olds. The program is based on a NAEYC developmental theory, which makes it possible for the children to learn through play, directed academic activities, games and educational materials.

The program is staffed by a full-time Early Childhood trained teacher and a teacher aide. We are currently seeking National Accreditation for our Early Childhood Program. We are not a day care facility.

Our program is a Full Day session from 8:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. The Early Childhood follows the same schedule as the rest of the school. Besides taking part in the classroom activities, the preschoolers also attend Music, Computer Lab, Spanish, and Physical Education classes that are taught by other qualified members of the school faculty.

A Before-School program is offered from 6:00 A.M. to 7:50 A.M. and the After-School is available from 3:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M.

Program Philosophy

During the early childhood years, children are learning to trust others outside their own families, gain independence and self-control and take initiative and assert themselves in socially acceptable ways. Each child is a unique person with individual growths, learning styles and family backgrounds. It is this uniqueness that is fostered and developed everyday cognitively, socially, spiritually, emotionally and physically through play, large/small group activities, games and first hand experiences that challenge, stimulate and promote curiosity.

The environment created at St. Dorothy offers each child the opportunity to develop his/her talents, solve problems and master skills. Art, music, mathematics, science, social and self-awareness activities are developed to encourage imagination and a natural love of learning. St. Dorothy also encourages the belief in God's love and that they will grow in that love. By ensuring that each of these components are involved in the child's environment, we believe that the child's first learning experiences will lead to continued positive educational experiences throughout life.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to promote academic excellence and to inspire our students to be lifelong learners who possess the skills to compete in a global society. We teach Catholic Christian values and partner with families to create a spirit of stewardship and service.

We believe that this mission can only be attained through the efforts of priests, principal, faculty, staff, students, School Board, parents, volunteers, parishioners and community working together to graduate students with skills necessary to become competent, caring learners in the Twenty-first Century.

Program Goal

The goal of the Early Childhood program is to provide a rich environment that encourages children to observe, to be active, to make choices and to experiment. Through interactions with the environment children will develop in the following areas:

- Physically children will enhance both their large and small muscle control and use all five senses in learning.
- Children will develop socially and emotionally as they experience a sense of self-esteem, develop a positive attitude toward life and demonstrate cooperative, pro-social behavior.
- Finally children will develop cognitively as they acquire learning and problem solving skills, expand logical thinking skills, expand verbal communication skills, develop beginning reading and writing skills, acquire concepts and information leading to a fuller understanding of the world and demonstrate skills in make-believe play.

Curriculum

Our Early Childhood curriculum covers a variety of themes and concepts that center around a particular season, holiday and child initiated interest. Some of our themes have included leaves, season, health and nutrition, zoo animals, flowers and shapes. We discuss what it means to be a kind, respectful and loving child of God. Each topic is supported by activities in the areas of Art, Drama, Music, Science, Mathematics and Literature. We use our computer room where the teacher develops age appropriate computer lessons for the children to explore. Physical Education and Spanish classes are also part of our curriculum.

The classroom environment will provide a variety of activities that children can choose from such as dramatic play, block play, creative expression, and manipulative and cognitive games, literacy activities and sand and water play. Children will have a chance to sleep and rest during the day. They will also have the opportunities to engage in self-help skills such as toileting, dressing and washing hands along with tasks in the classroom such as cleaning up.

Orienting Children to the Program

The first days of school at St. Dorothy means new experiences for the child, the parent and the teacher. They can be happy and learning days for everyone.

- The child's first experience in the Early Childhood Program among new people and unfamiliar surroundings may be a little frightening. Therefore, it might be helpful if the parent stays with the child for a while during the first few days.
- Parents need to say goodbye to their child and the teacher before they leave. The child needs to know the parents are leaving so they will not be fearful that the parent will disappear. It may take a little while but your child will adjust to new relationships with teachers and peers if he/she is not hurried.
- If your child is having a great deal of difficulty adjusting to school, your child's teacher will want to meet with you to plan the best way to handle the situation.
- As your child adjusts to the school he/she may want to bring a book, stuffed animal or favorite toy from home to hold or share with the other children. It is comforting to the child to have something of their own that is familiar in a new situation. We understand this and try to provide time for this experience. Large toys, action figures with sharp edges, toy weapons and mouth toys such as horns, balloons and harmonicas are difficult to manage in school and maybe dangerous. Please label any item your child brings to school with his/her name.

Clothing

Children should be dressed in roomy, durable, comfortable clothes for Preschool students and the school uniform for Kindergarten students. All outside clothing such as coats, hats, sweaters, gloves and especially boots should be labeled with the child's name so that misplaced items can be returned to the proper owner. During wet or cold weather, children should be dressed properly (coats, boots, hats and mittens). The children will go outside unless it is raining, snowing or extremely very cold.

A complete change of clothing should be kept at school in case of an emergency. Please include underwear, shirt, pants and socks. Wet or soiled clothing will be placed in a plastic bag and returned to the parent at the end of the day. Please remember to replenish your child's extra clothing.

No lace shoes (Velcro) / No open-toe sandals

Admission

A child must be three years old by September 1st of the current year in order to participate in St. Dorothy Preschool Program. They must be toilet trained. A complete physical exam by a licensed physician is required for all children entering preschool. It should be reported on forms prescribed by the Illinois Department of Public Health and dated no earlier than six months prior to enrollment. The physical report must include all required immunizations and be kept up to date. A tuberculosis test must be included in the exam.

Students entering Kindergarten are ordinarily five years of age on or before September 1st of the current year and their health records must be up to date.

An official births certificate and required health records are due at the time of registration.

Attendance and School Hours

Regular attendance and punctuality is essential. Students are admitted to the classroom at 7:50 A.M. and school begins promptly at 8:00 A.M. If it is necessary for your child to be absent please notify the school office by 8:00 A.M. The phone number is (773) 783-0555. If the school is not notified of a child's absence, a call may be placed to the child's home or the parent's place of employment to verify the absence.

Dismissal is 3:00 P.M. Please notify the school in advance if you plan to pick up your child for early dismissal. We will only release your child to people you have authorized in writing to pick up your child. This information was requested at the time of registration and is kept in your child's school file.

Holidays and Closing

St. Dorothy publishes a School Calendar at the beginning of the school year. It contains all of the days that school is not in session and includes many of the school events and celebrations. Also, a monthly calendar is sent out with the school newsletter restating closures and events.

Inclement weather closures generally follow the public schools and are listed on the local news stations. In the November and December newsletters you will receive complete details.

School Visits

To insure a smooth running and safe school, anyone entering the building for any reason must report to the school office, sign in, and obtain a visitor's badge if he/she are going to visit in the classroom. Classroom visits are best when they are prearranged with the teacher or the principal.

Tuition and Fees

For a parochial school, the primary source of funding is tuition. Tuition and school fees are collected either quarterly during the months of August, November, January and March or monthly. All tuition and school fees must be paid to the school office by the published due date.

Any parent / guardian unable to pay tuition or school fees on time must apply for an extension. Extension request forms are available in the school office and should be filled out and returned to the school office before the said due date of the tuition. Tuition extensions are granted for a maximum of two weeks beyond the published grace period. During this time a family unable to meet its contractual financial obligations should make an appointment with the School Board Finance Committee to work out an acceptable payment plan. Students whose families have not requested the extension and whose tuition is not up to date will not be allowed to attend school until an acceptable payment plan has been mutually agreed upon.

Communication

In order to keep parents well informed about the Early Childhood activities parents will receive monthly newsletters, occasional notes home about the Child's day or development and informal and formal evaluations about our program to fill out.

Report cards are issued four times a year (about every nine weeks of school). They review the developmental areas and social abilities of a child.

Parent/Teacher conferences are held at the end of the first and second marking periods in November and January. These are meetings to discuss developmental milestones in the life of your child. Additional conferences may be necessary to discuss health, safety and behavior issues.

Birthdays

Birthdays are always a cause for celebration in our Early Childhood classes. Students may bring a snack. Please check with your child's teacher for details and the appropriate amounts for the classroom.

Healthy Snacks and Meals

Every morning the children receive a nutritious snack. This usually consists of a dairy, fruit or bread product. A small portion of one type of food and drink of juice or milk is all that is needed. Healthy meals are also very important. The school lunch is always balanced. If you send your child with a sack lunch please avoid sending foods such as cookies, cakes, candy, chips and soda pop. Allow your child to make healthy choices as they help you prepare their lunch.

Field Trips

Occasionally, the Early Childhood children will take special field trips. Permission for these events will be requested in writing for each event. Parents will be notified of the event well in advance. Usually a fee is charged for these events in order to cover the admission and/or the travel costs. No child will be allowed on the field trip without submitting the appropriate permission slip.

Child Protection

Please be aware that the staff members are required by law to report suspected incidents of child abuse. It is not the intent of the school to become involved in individual family matters; however, in some incidents when the physical and emotional safety of any child is suspect, we are bound by law to report the matter to DCFS. Details regarding any individual child's protection are a matter held in strictest confidence by all adults involved.

Special Needs Policy

Children with special needs that cannot be accommodated by the Early Childhood Program are referred to the local public school or other appropriate agency for testing and/or services. For all other cases, a plan is developed with staff and parents as needed.

Health and Safety

Emergency Information Card: Each year parents are asked to complete an emergency information card listing home and business telephone numbers, the name of the family doctor and the names of people who will care for their children in an emergency. If any changes occur during the school year, they must notify the school office immediately.

Accidents or illnesses: If a student becomes ill or injured, the parent /guardian is called. If the parent/guardian is not available, the persons listed on the student's emergency card are then contacted. If a serious emergency arises 911 will be called. Students will only be released to those people listed on their emergency card.

Medication: Students should not be in possession of any prescription or not-prescription medication at any time. School personnel including teachers are not involved with administering medication. If a student requires medication during the school day it is recommended that the parent/guardian come to school and administer the medication.

Communicable Disease Control: Rules and regulations regarding communicable diseases control shall be enforced as required by Illinois Department of Public Health. Children with infectious, contagious or communicable illnesses that require isolation will be excluded from the program. Parents should notify the school if their child has a communicable disease so that the other school families can be notified.

Emergency Evacuation Plan: There is an emergency evacuation plan for your child's classroom. The plan is posted in an easy visible place by the door and the teachers and students practice evacuating the classroom and building on a regular basis to be prepared for an emergency.

Hand-washing Policy: In order to decrease the spread of infection, children and staff wash hands at appropriate times while they are at school. These times include, before each meal and snack, after using the toilet, after handling pets or animals, after wiping or blowing one's nose and before and after food experiences. When washing hands, children and staff use warm water and soap, rub their hands together under running water, dry hands with disposable towels and turn off faucet with the disposable towel.

Fire and Tornado Drills

Ordinarily, fire drills will be held monthly. Quiet order will be maintained during the fire drills. Any volunteers or visitors will be instructed to follow the same procedures. The building will be evacuated according to the posted plans.

Two tornado drills are held each year. Early childhood students will go to their assigned spot in the gym according to the posted plans in the classroom.

Sanitizing Procedures: In order to maintain a clean and safe classroom, it is necessary to sanitize and wash tables, toys and bedding on a regular basis. Teachers use a bleach solution in order to sanitize tables that are used for meals and snacks. These tables are sanitized both before and after any meal or snack. Other tables are cleaned on a daily basis. Toys that children put in their mouths are immediately put aside to be sanitized. Other toys are cleaned on a regular basis. All bedding used at naptime needs to be washed weekly. If these items are sent home please make sure you wash them whenever they are sent home and return them with your child when they return to school.

Discipline

Discipline means guiding and directing children toward acceptable behavior. The most important goal of discipline is to help children gain self-control over their actions. Teachers discipline children to help them learn consequences for their actions. Children need to assume responsibility for their actions and develop an awareness of the rights of others.

Simple understandable rules will be used with the children. Children will be made aware of the relationship between their actions and the consequences that follow. Teachers who have an ongoing relationship with the child will be responsible for discipline and will use the following approaches: 1. redirection to another activity, 2. loss of privilege or activity, 3. where age appropriate, helping children resolve conflicts, 4. anticipate and intervene before disruptive behavior occurs, 5. praising positive behavior.

Children will never be subject to corporal punishment or verbal abuse. Meals or parts of meals will not be withheld as punishment and children will never be punished for toilet accidents.

Handling Difficulties and Differences

When a parent has a concern about something that is going on in the school or the classroom, the first person that should be contacted is the classroom teacher. Often these situations can be readily explained or remedied when the teacher and parent work together. If there is a continuing concern on the part of the parent and/or teacher, the principal will be invited to participate in the problem-solving process in the continuing effort to bring home and school together on behalf of the student.

Transitions

Your child will experience some transitions through the year. If your child is in the before or after school program, we will work to make the daily transition from that program to the Early childhood program as smooth as possible. The children in before school will be picked up by the preschool teachers in the gym where the before school program is held at 7:45 A.M. The preschool teacher will take the after school students to gym at 3:00 P.M. where the parents will pick up their child from the after school provider. Parents/Guardians must sign their child in and out at this program.

If a child is beginning first grade next year or moving to another Early Childhood class we will do everything we can to prepare him/her for that change. We will visit the classroom your child will be moving on to or try to prepare your child for a new school by reading children's books about different schools to the class and discuss the changes the children will experience in a new school.

**Parents' Acknowledgment of Receipt of the St. Dorothy Early
Childhood Program Handbook**

I/We, _____,
parent(s) of

_____, have read the St.
Dorothy Early Childhood Program Handbook, and hereby indicate that by
my/our signature below, I/We do understand and agree to abide and be
governed by all the policies set forth by the school.

Signature

Date