

ECC PARENT HANDBOOK



Coral Gables Congregational Church
EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

3010 Columbus Boulevard
Coral Gables, Florida 33134
(305) 444-9792

www.coralgablescongregational.org

mailing address: 3010 DeSoto Boulevard, Coral Gables, FL 33134

DCF# 124029

[Mission Statement](#)

We proclaim to the community that all God's children are important! In a hurried world we choose to take the time, energy and resources needed to allow "children to be children" and to foster their development in age appropriate ways. We strive through our interactions to model the importance of human relationships in an inclusive community.

Accredited by



National Academy of Early Childhood Programs

A Division of the

National Association for the Education of Young Children

www.naeyc.org

A LETTER OF WELCOME FROM OUR SENIOR PASTOR

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Early Childhood Center of Coral Gables Congregational Church. We are so delighted that your precious little one will be part of our preschool family. As a parent I know what it means to entrust your child's nurture to others, and we are so honored by the trust and faith you are putting in us. As the pastor of this congregation, let me pledge to you our very best efforts and our deepest commitment to making this program the very best it can be for your child.

Let me also cordially invite you to be a part of the many programs, events, and worship opportunities here at Coral Gables Congregational Church. We have an outstanding children's and youth ministry which includes church school, summer arts programs, Vacation Church School, youth groups and children's and youth choirs. We also offer many opportunities for adults such as Careers to Crayons (for parents who have been in the work force and are now choosing to stay home with their child), a monthly Parents' Night Out, yoga, spiritual growth classes, Bible study, and so much more. The centerpiece of our life together as a congregation is inspiring and spirit-filled worship which is celebrated each Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Childcare is always available for any of these offerings.

We are truly a church that proudly extends the invitation that "whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey you are welcome here." And, we mean it!

If I can ever be of any help or support, please do not hesitate to contact me. I wish for you and your family the wonders and joys of growing together.

With warm regards,

The Rev. Dr. Laurinda Hafner
Coral Gables Congregational Church
www.coralgablescongregational.org
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A LETTER OF WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR, BARBARA WATSON

Dear Parents,

We welcome the opportunity to nurture your child here at the Coral Gables Congregational Preschool - the Early Childhood Center. We recognize that you have placed a great trust in us and we want to honor that trust by caring for your child in the best way possible. We strongly believe that each child needs opportunities for social growth and happiness which will lead to future academic success. We are certain that each child needs a chance to learn through play in these early childhood years and we want to guarantee a child's right to do so in a loving, caring, age-appropriate environment.

There is a partnership between the staff and parents in the development of children here at the Preschool which makes communication between us vital to your child's happiness and success in the program.

This Parent Handbook has been designed especially for you. If you should have more questions, please do not hesitate to call on me. I am here for you and your children.

Sincerely,

Barbara Watson

TOPICS INCLUDED IN THE GUIDELINES ARE:

- ...AUTHORIZED PICK-UPS
- ...BIRTHDAYS IN SCHOOL
- ...CALENDAR & NEWSLETTER
- ...CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS FOR FAMILY & FRIENDS
- ...CLOTHING AND SHOES
- ...CONFERENCES & OUR "OPEN DOOR" POLICY
- ...DAILY ROUTINE & EXTENDED CARE
 - ..Drop-Off & Pick-up
 - ..Pre-Care & Aftercare
 - ..Enrichment classes
- ...DISCIPLINE AT ECC
- ...EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING
- ...FIELD TRIPS & IN-HOUSE PROGRAMS
- ...FIRE DRILLS
- ...HEALTH - IMMUNIZATION & DCF Requirements
- ...ILLNESS & INJURY
- ...MEDICAL EMERGENCY PROCEDURE
- ...PARENTS ASSOCIATION & ADVISORY BOARD
- ...SAFETY AT THE PRESCHOOL
- ...SCHOLARSHIPS & FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
- ...SNACKS
- ...TUITION PAYMENTS
- ...WEBSITE & INTERNET USE
- ...YOUNGER SIBLING REGISTRATION

BACK TO SCHOOL **GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS**

AUTHORIZED PICK-UPS & REGISTRATION FORMS

It is essential that all pertinent information on your child's card be kept up to date! Remember that we cannot release your child to any person who has not been designated by you on the registration form in writing. The names of persons designated to pick up your child must be in your own handwriting. If we have not met this person we will ask for identification. No exceptions will be made!

Please be assured that all information is kept confidential and secure.

BIRTHDAYS IN SCHOOL Each of our classes has their own tradition of honoring a child's birthday in unique & developmentally appropriate ways. You are always welcome to visit the school on your child's birthday but we ask that you do not send any food items in. Please remember, gifts for the birthday child are inappropriate at preschool and we ask that you please do not bring "goodie bags" for the children for birthdays or holidays.

If you are planning a "home birthday party" we will be glad to pass on the invitations via the cubbies, only if all children on the classroom list are invited. Otherwise we ask that the invitation be mailed to the child's parent.

CALENDAR & NEWSLETTER You will receive a year's calendar in late July which is a revision of the Dade County Public School Calendar. We follow the latter as closely as possible with a few exceptions. Early each month you will receive a newsletter which will also keep you up on events and dates of special happenings. Please post it where you can stay up to date.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

It is our custom to have a program with the children around holidays and other special times. It is not our philosophy to put pressure on children to "perform" for parents. We like to "share" the things they've been singing and learning all year. This "sharing" must be a relaxed, low-keyed time in a pleasant atmosphere. Please be aware that your child may or may not wish to participate on this day in your presence. This is a normal reaction for preschool age children and we feel it is totally acceptable.

We enjoy special event days such as Halloween, Hispanic Heritage Day, Pilgrim Day, Pow-Wow, La Posada, Circus Day, Olympic Day, May Day and America Day. Look for these special days written in the newsletters. All the classes come together for these special events around 9:30 or so. Remember that these are not "performances" for parents but occasions to learn and share a social experience for the whole school regardless of age. Parents are usually invited to observe and take pictures if they so choose.

We always welcome an opportunity to have a special day for the country of your family's origin. We enjoy sharing diverse cultures and customs with our students. If you would be interested in sharing your heritage with the children we would be appreciative and help in any way we can. Please see Mrs. Watson.

CLOTHING AND SHOES Remember that your child may get dirty during play or art time, so please send them to school in simple play clothes that you can easily wash. Your child's cubby in the classroom should have a bag containing extra clothing for a quick change. Be sure to have your child's name printed clearly on any items that they bring to school. This is especially important for coats and sweaters.

Non-slip athletic shoes suitable for running and climbing are imperative. Sandals, open-toed shoes and long dresses are dangerous for children on the playground and will not be allowed!

Belts and any other tight clothing make it very difficult for children to be independent in the bathroom. Make sure clothing is loose fitting enough to help a child become self-sufficient and build self-esteem. **If your two year old child is still in diapers, we ask that you do not send them in clothing that makes it hard to change them - overalls, belted pants, etc.**

Children love to dress up in imaginative costumes which we encourage. Please check to see that they are playground safe.

CONFERENCES AND OUR "OPEN DOOR" POLICY Open communication between parents and school is so important to your child's success and happiness. Parents are always welcome to drop in to visit and observe. Please remember that a very brief classroom visit is best for a child who is having difficulty separating from parents. Parents are welcome to come to the classroom so often at our school that there are many opportunities for conversation with the teachers. Please note that while school is in session a teacher must give full time and attention to the children and would not be able to confer with parents for any lengthy discussion. This is especially true at dismissal time at 11:45 each day.

You will receive two written reports each year about your child's progress and an opportunity to have a conference with the teacher. If at any time you have concerns about your child and wish an additional conference about your child's school experience, please feel free to make an appointment with the teacher.

DAILY ROUTINE & EXTENDED CARE

- **Drop-Off:** Teachers will be prepared to receive their children at 8:45. Before that time, the playground is open to all children who are being supervised by their parents. **At 8:45, children in the 2's, 2T's, 3's and 3T's classes must be escorted to their classrooms.** At 8:45, only the Pre-K4 class remains on the playground. Parents and caregivers are free to leave knowing that their children will be supervised by their teachers. A bell is rung at 9:00 to signal their return to the classroom. **It is imperative that all children be signed in at their classroom. A sign-in sheet is in the classroom and must be signed in and out daily!**

- **Pre-Care:** If you wish to drop your child off early, Pre-care is available every day, with no prior notice necessary. Early arrivals will be supervised in Room #1 from 7:30 to 8:45, at which time they will be escorted to their regular classroom. A nominal fee is charged for this service and will be added to your account at the end of the month automatically.
- **Pick-Up:** Dismissal is promptly at 11:45 each day. Pre-K4 children are to be picked up at 1:00. If you are late your child will be taken to the AFTERCARE room and you will be charged for aftercare on that day. Remember that only authorized people will be allowed to take your child and that they must sign them out on the **Sign Out sheet at the door with the exact time noted.**
- **Aftercare:** Aftercare is available until 4:00 PM every day on a per diem basis. Aftercare packages are also available. Aftercare time is a chance for children to extend their day playing with friends and is often an intentional choice for parents. Aftercare is also a safety net for parents when unforeseen events make it necessary to have extended time. Parents can be assured that their children are well taken care of and having a happy experience in "aftercare".
Charges are set per hour or part thereof and will be charged to your account at the end of the month automatically. If you know in the morning that you will be using this service, we ask that you let the teacher know. Don't forget to put extra food in your child's lunch box if they will be staying for aftercare. If something arises during the day and you expect to be late and wish your child to stay for aftercare, you need only call the office and we will arrange it.
- **Enrichment Classes for 3's, 3T's and PreK4:** Special classes are offered each day of the week during aftercare hours. They include Spanish, Music & Movement and Cooking which are all taught by our own teachers. Ballet is also offered by an outside contractor. You will receive information early in the school year about these classes. Enrollment is open throughout the year as space is available. Payment for these programs is not included in tuition. As an outside contractor, Ballet-At-Your-School requests that payments be made directly to them. Charges for in-house enrichments will be added to your bill on a monthly basis.
*Note- On days of enrichment programs you may wish to sign your child up for AFTERCARE or you may pick them up at 11:45 and return later for the class.

DISCIPLINE AT ECC We believe that positive reinforcement, teaching appropriate behaviors, good Class room management and a calm, loving atmosphere are essential ingredients in helping children to establish inner controls and to socialize in positive ways. Spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited at the Early Childhood Center. Discipline will not be shaming, humiliating or frightening and will not be associated with food, rest or bathroom procedures.

A child's aggressive behavior which is hurtful and disruptive is handled with care. A short "time out" period in which a child can regain control is helpful. Persistent aggression by the child will lead to a parent/teacher conference. We feel it is important to keep lines of communication open between preschool and family. A cooperative, loving effort will build your child's trust of the preschool experience and make a big difference.

The biting behavior of a two year old child is considered normal but dangerous. If aggressive behaviors such as biting or hitting persist after cooperative efforts by parents and teachers to guide the child have failed, further consultation will be necessary.

ECC reserves the right to exclude a child from preschool, at the Director's discretion. It is important that parents are cooperative in this matter, agree to have conferences and acknowledge the seriousness of biting and other injurious behavior.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING In the event of a community emergency such as a hurricane, or flood we will follow the policy set by the Miami-Dade County Public School System. Please listen to your radio or television news station for school closings. The Early Childhood Center may not be listed individually, but you will know that **if the public schools are closed, due to a major weather event, we will also be closed.**

We will open as soon as possible. Keep in mind that due to extended power outages we may open earlier or later than the Public School System. Please be sure that all of your phone contacts are up to date so that we can contact you. Call the school office for updated messages.

FIELD TRIPS & IN-HOUSE PROGRAMS

It is not our policy to take 2 and 3 year old children on field trips by car or bus. Occasionally this age group will take a supervised walk across the street to the Church or Church garden.

The Pre-K4 children occasionally take field trips by chartered bus companies with licensed chauffeurs. Field trips are scheduled and printed in the newsletter which you will receive monthly. Occasional walks from school grounds to the Church are covered by the permission slip you signed at registration. If your child is eligible for an off-campus field trip, you will be notified in advance and asked to sign a permission slip specific to that event.

It is our preference, in lieu of field trips, to have community resources come to us and to conduct our own in house programs. Look for these special events in our newsletters. If events are planned on a day that your child does not regularly attend you may wish to bring him just for the program and then take him home after.

FIRE DRILLS We have monthly fire drills with all classes to teach the importance of a smooth, calm exit from the school in case of fire. Each classroom is equipped with a proper fire extinguisher and inspected yearly. Electric smoke alarms have been installed school-wide. This is a "smoke free environment". Please refrain from smoking on school grounds.

HEALTH - IMMUNIZATION & DCF REQUIREMENTS

The law requires that you must submit health form DH 3040 and immunization form DH 680 before entry to school. Both forms must be complete for your child and presented at the time of enrollment. No child will be admitted to Preschool without them. We will notify you if the forms need to be updated during the school year.

DCF Requirements - "THE BLUE SHEET"

We have combined all of our other requirements into one "blue sheet" which you must read and sign in the designated places. The "blue sheet" includes: the reading of the discipline policy, the alternate nutrition plan in which you agree to provide nutritional foods for your child at snack time, and your signature attesting that you have read the DCF document #175-24, "Know Your Childcare Facility." It also includes the field trip permission form, approval to use pictures on the website and your acknowledgment of the receipt of this Parent Handbook.

ILLNESS & INJURY If your child shows symptoms of a communicable disease such as diarrhea, irritated eyes, fever, rash, vomiting, head lice, or other signs of an infectious disease, please notify the office and keep your child at home for the appropriate isolation time. We ask that your child be free of fever for at least 24 hours, without the use of medication, before they return to school. If your child should develop these symptoms at school you will be called to come and take your child home.

We appreciate your calling the office to inform us when your child is ill and will not be attending school. We will attempt to contact you to inquire about a child who has been absent more than two days. While we miss your children, we appreciate that it is important that they remain at home for the duration of their illness.

It is imperative for the safety of your child that we are informed of any significant injury they may sustain away from school. We want to be able to monitor your child a little more closely and be sure that they can participate in the regular classroom routine.

We reserve the right to ask for a medical release for your child to return to school if they are recovering from an infectious disease or have sustained an injury that would curtail their activities at ECC.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY In the event of a medical emergency, Fire/Rescue 911 will be called and if necessary will transport your child to the appropriate facility. Every effort would be made to contact the parents immediately. Please be sure to update your registration card in the office whenever there are changes in your contact numbers.

THE ECC PARENTS ASSOCIATION & THE ECC ADVISORY BOARD We invite you to participate and actively support your child's school. The *ECC PARENTS ASSOCIATION* meets regularly throughout the year. This is a wonderful support group for our preschool and a great way to meet other parents, plan family events & participate in fundraising activities. Everyone is invited to attend.

The *ECC ADVISORY BOARD* is a separate group which functions to help preserve the preschool and its philosophy, to uphold existing policies, to assist and advise, as well as to help design new programs.

Members include parents, Preschool staff and Church representatives who serve as a liaison between the Church and Preschool. Issues include budget approval, personnel, technology, property, program, and public relations.

SAFETY AT THE PRESCHOOL

Parking Lot Safety: It is important that you park your car in the Church parking lot or in a safe area on the swale and **walk your child** to the classroom to be received by a teacher. ***Do not park in or around the intersection, in the walkway of the school or double park on the street.*** **Never, ever, ever leave your car's engine running while escorting your child to class or leave other children alone in the car!**

Enter and exit the Church parking lot with caution. Use extreme caution when backing up! Remember that in vans and SUV's, it is difficult to see small children from your rear view mirror.

Exit and Entrance Safety: The gate by the office is the only gate for entering and exiting. ALWAYS BE SURE TO CLOSE AND LATCH BOTH GATES! Hold your child's hand when leaving. Do not allow your child or car pool children to run ahead of you! We always try to have someone at the gate to assist you both at the opening of school and at dismissal. Please ask for assistance if you need help.

Playground Safety: There are specific playground rules which will be posted on the bulletin board and sent home with the newsletter in the beginning of school which will make your child's time on the playground safer and happier. At dismissal you are responsible for supervising your own child and those in your carpool. The safety rules apply for anytime your child is on the playground before, during, and after school. Parents - the playground is reserved for our classes from 8:45 to 11:45 and again from 12:25 to 1:00pm.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE There are specific guidelines for scholarships and financial aid that are available on request.

SNACKS Children bring their own snacks each day in a bag or lunch box for mid-morning nourishment. **Please be sure to have your child's name printed clearly on the outside of their lunch box.**

Reminder: **No sodas or glass.** Please be aware of items which might possibly be causes for choking, such as hot dogs, small plastic tops, grapes and raw vegetable shapes. Hot dogs & grapes must be cut in very small pieces! Raw vegetables are good but for your child's safety, please cut them in thin strips and not in circular chunks.

Please avoid sugary snacks, candy, chocolate, and gummy fruit snacks. Choose nutritional items such as cheese, bread, crackers, diluted fruit juices, apple slices, bananas, etc. Remember that snacks high in protein and complex carbohydrates will sustain your child's blood sugar levels better than those high in sugar, fat and salt.

If your child eats a full healthy breakfast then a light snack is in order. If not then you may want to include a sandwich or something more substantial. Uneaten food, if any, will come home in your child's lunch box. This may help you gauge what and how much your child will want for snack time. If your child will be staying for aftercare don't forget to add enough food to their box for lunch.

The staff is here to assist your child with snack but remember that packing foods which your

child can open and handle with ease will promote self-esteem and self-reliance, one of the main goals for our children.

Don't forget to sanitize your child's lunch box regularly. Hard plastic boxes that can be immersed in hot soapy water or run through the dishwasher are best. Be aware that children frequently spill juice and food in their boxes. Soft-sided, covered foam bags easily absorb liquids that are spilled in them and are very hard to keep clean over time.

TUITION PAYMENTS The year's tuition is broken down into 10 equal increments, in order to arrive at a standard monthly fee. (The amount you pay each month is not reflective of the number of days in that particular month but represents 10 percent of the yearly total cost.) Each increment is due on the **15th of the month** starting with registration. The last payment of the school year is due on April 15.

Checks may be made out to: EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER (or ECC)). Payments may be brought to the office (we always enjoy the chance to see you) or they may be mailed to us at 3010 DeSoto Boulevard, Coral Gables, Florida, 33134.

Remember that we are a nonprofit school and we can not offer reimbursements or refunds for times a child may be absent from school. Salaries and programs are carefully budgeted and the flow of monies is important to the continuance of good programming.

WEBSITE & INTERNET USE Please visit our website at www.coralgablescongregational.org We believe it will become an invaluable tool to you as a parent, helping you to stay informed, getting a glimpse into your child's day and appreciating the fullness of their life at school. We know you will want to visit the site often. You can contact the office through email at BarbaraW@ucc-cgcc.org

YOUNGER SIBLING REGISTRATION If you have younger children that you think you will want to attend ECC, the time to pre-register them is now. We do honor returning families by giving their children priority along with church families in the registration process. However, please be aware that this is no guarantee of admittance. We make every effort to hold a place for younger siblings but may not always be able to do so. This is especially the case for last minute requests. Early preregistration is your best assurance. We look forward to caring for your family for many years to come.

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