Grace Children's Learning Center
A Ministry of Grace United Methodist Church
9750 Wellington Rd Manassas, VA 20110
703-393-2345
umcgrace.org/gclc
GCLC@umcgrace.org

Parent Handbook

26-27 School year

(8-18-26)

WELCOME TO THE 2026 - 2027 SCHOOL YEAR!

We are very excited to welcome our returning and our new families to another year of learning, laughter, and growth at GCLC. Our teachers and staff have been preparing for your children's arrival and we can't wait to begin another school year in partnership with you. Thank you for trusting us at GCLC, and the larger GUMC church family, to care for and educate your children well. Partnering with you to create a place where you and your children feel welcomed into God's love and protection is a gift for which we are truly thankful!

We wish God's blessings to you all this school season, and beyond!

Dr. Robin Miller Young, Director (Interim)
Mrs. Catherine ("Cat") Aponte, Assistant Director
Mrs. Stephanie Randazzo, Office Administrator

Tuition

Tuition is due by Monday of the current week. Payment may be in the form of personal check, cash, money order, or via Playground using a credit card or debit card. A late charge of $25 will be imposed for tuition more than 5 days late. Returned checks will incur a $35 service charge. If a problem arises in meeting your tuition obligation, please contact the office. We will do our best to find an agreeable payment solution. If your account is more than 30 days in arrears, and no attempt has been made to make payment arrangements, educational services may be terminated until arrangements have been made.

Tuition checks may be dropped off in the preschool office, a tuition box or mailed to the school. Tuition boxes are located on the first-floor hallway by the restrooms and outside the school office on the lower level. Payment via Playground app using a credit card or debit card will be assessed a 3% transaction fee. Tuition payments may <u>not</u> be sent via your child's backpack or folder. Teachers are not authorized to accept tuition payments. Please make all checks out to Grace United Methodist Church; NOT to Grace Children's Learning Center (GCLC).

<u>Financial Standing</u>
Returning families must be in good financial standing to re-enroll. Any late fees, returned check fees, or outstanding balances must be clear in order to register for next school year.

2026-27 Tuition Rates

Please note all registration/supply fees are non-refundable.
Credit Card payments will incur an additional 3% fee.

Registration Fees
Registration Fee $125
Supply Fee (1/2 due at reg. 1/2 due in Aug) $200

Our infants, toddlers and twos programs are for children ages 6 weeks through 2 years.

Infants Rates
5 Full days per week $346/wk

Toddlers and Twos Rates
T/TH 9:15-12:30 $119/wk
MWF 9:15-12:30 $133/wk
M-F 9:15-12:30 $143/wk

5 full days per week $330/wk (7:00am - 5:00pm)

Preschool Options Rates
T/Th (3s only) 9:15-12:30 $107/wk
MWF 9:15-12:30 $115/wk
M-F 9:15-12:30 $126/wk
Jr. K 9:15-2:15 $142/wk
M-F 7am-5pm Full day $287/wk

School tuition is billed as weekly payments. For each of the two (2) weeks of Winter Break and the one (1) week of Spring Break, families are billed 50% of the usual weekly tuition to cover general operating costs that we experience during these break times.

Multiple Children Tuition Discount
10% discount per 2nd, 3rd, 4th etc.

Late Pick-Up Fee Schedule

$10 for first 15 minutes
$25 for 16-20 minutes
$35 for 21-30 minutes

$25 for each ten minute period thereafter
(Prices and hours subject to change.)

Probationary Period

All children are accepted into our center on a trial basis. If the program is deemed unsuitable for a child at the end of the 30-day trial period, a conference will be scheduled with the teacher, directors, and parents. Please note registration and supply fees are non-refundable.

Goals and Objectives:

At GCLC, we are committed to supporting the growth of the WHOLE child which includes developing skills and knowledge in the following domains aligned with the Virginia Early Learning and Development Standards (VA-ELDS):

Approaches to Play and Learning Social and Emotional Development Communication/Language Development	Health and Physical Development Cognitive Development Christian/Spiritual Development* * (A domain designed by the GCLC and GUMC staff; not a VA-ELDS area)

In addition to these areas of curricular priority, we also support children's development of age-targeted developmental milestones. We accomplish these goals in a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment where every child can learn, explore, and build friendships. We value the partnership we share with our families and believe that collaboration creates the best experience for each child.

Our Licensure

GCLC is licensed to operate by the Virginia Department of Education. Standards for licensed centers address health precautions, adequate play space ratios, equipment, program, and record keeping. Criminal record checks and specific qualifications for staff are required. The facility meets all applicable fire, health, and building codes.

About Our School Board

The GCLC School Board (SB) serves as the governing body to ensure that the GCLC is meeting its mission to provide high quality caregiving and effective educational services while reflecting the Grace of God in how we welcome, love, and serve the world and one another. We do that by creating a school environment based on the following GUMC values:

A Wide Welcome: Invite, accept, and include everyone with intention. Stay aware of how diverse abilities, ethnicities, orientations, and identities can enhance our work and the services we provide.

Relationships: Prioritize meaningful connections with children, one another, and our families through which we encounter God and enjoy authentic community.

Impact: Help one another notice what God is doing to positively impact children, ourselves, our teammates, our families, our community and our world for good.

Fun: Foster a spirit of celebration and abundant joy!

The GCLC SB is composed of 5 – 7 congregation members who have voting privileges. They each serve a three-year term. As each member's term expires, that person exits the board and then new board members are selected with concurrence of the GUMC Leadership Board. Other SB members without voting privileges include the Senior Pastor/Associate Pastor, the Financial Manager, the Director, and the Assistant Director. The SB meets approximately once a month to attend to regular agenda items that are aligned with the overall yearly operation of the GCLC program (e.g. Preventative Maintenance Calendar). The Board also addresses specialty concerns when those are identified and require board action. For more information about the GCLC SB, please contact the GCLC Office or the Senior Pastor/Associate Pastor.

About Our School Staff

We select our staff through careful consideration of education, training, and experience. We employ people who are warm and nurturing, understand child development, and apply their knowledge in the classroom. They must respect each child as an individual. We seek employees who value working as a team--with parents, children, and colleagues. Each staff person and School Board member has on file two references. We require a Criminal Record Check (through the Virginia State Police), Sex Offender Check, and Child Protective Services Check. Background checks are repeated every 5 years on all staff.

Continuing education is an important requirement of every staff member working with children at GCLC. Each teacher attends training in first aid, CPR, communicable disease recognition, child abuse recognition and prevention, child development, curriculum planning, health and nutrition, and teaching methods. All staff members obtain 16 hours of continuing education annually.

School Office
Our school office is located on the lower-level entrance of the church. Our school phone number is 703-393-2345 and our email is gclc@umcgrace.org.

Our Program Leadership Team Members are here to help you with your accounts, payment arrangements, program questions, staffing concerns, general information, child development concerns, evaluations, counseling, obtaining visitor passes and general guidance and friendly conversation. Office hours are 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM Monday - Friday.

If you have questions, concerns, comments, complaints or praise, please stop by, call us or email us. There may be times when we are all away from the office and we will need to get back in touch with you. Should you arrive during these busy moments, please be patient. We will return as soon as possible.

Security At Grace
If you are walking into the building to drop off or pick up your child during regularly scheduled times, you may enter on the lower level. Once you enter the building you may proceed directly to the office for assistance.

If you enter the building during non-pick up and drop off times you must enter via the lower-level entrance and sign in with the office. Once you have signed-in, we will issue you a visitor pass, and you may proceed to your child's classroom. All visitors are required to have a Photo ID. Your child is protected by a security system to maintain the safest possible environment with minimal interruption. If the doors are locked when you arrive, please press the call button located on the building near the door for access.

Attendance
Regular attendance is required so children receive the necessary experiences and instructional time to prepare them for their next year. When a child is absent, please send a message through the Playground app. That means of communicating with your child's teacher is the fastest way to get that information to them. You are welcome to send a message to the GCLC@umcgrace.org or by calling 703-393-2345; however, these these efforts should be a "back up" plan to the Playground app posting you make. Should a child require extensive absence, please contact the school office to make appropriate arrangements. Please make every effort to have your child to school by 9:30.

Withdrawals

Should voluntary withdrawal from GCLC become necessary, 2 weeks written notice is required. Refunds will not be given for any withdrawal not prearranged. Families are financially liable for 2 weeks tuition from the date withdrawal notice is given, regardless of attendance.

What Happens When a Child is Not Picked Up?

Children not picked up by the end of their session will be brought to the office, and a late fee will be assessed. We will attempt to contact the parents. If the parents are not available, we will contact the emergency contacts on file. Our school closes for the day at 5 PM. If a child has not been picked up by 5 PM or a parent reached, a member of the Program Leadership Team will contact local police, and Department of Social Services may be called to take custody of the child.

Teaching Methods to Support Social and Emotional Growth and Development

Teaching methods to support children's social and emotional growth will always be positive, productive, and immediate when behavior is inappropriate. No child will be humiliated, shamed, frightened, or subjected to verbal or physical abuse by staff, volunteers, peers or by other parents. Children learn best through positive reinforcement, consistency and imitation. We believe we can best accomplish this by having a variety of activities, limiting the number of children allowed in a particular area, and using the following discipline policy.

Infants and toddlers will always be redirected and positive behavior will be reinforced. There will not be any time outs used for these age groups. We will use words to help the child identify what he/she is feeling.

STRATEGIES:

Talk with the child. Find out why he/she is angry or upset. Discuss the inappropriate behavior and what appropriate actions could have been used.

If inappropriate behavior continues, remove the child from the area and engage him/her in another activity. Notify the child that if behavior continues, he/she will need to spend quiet time away from the group.

Give the child a few moments away from others to provide him/her the opportunity to calm down.

If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be asked not to return to the particular area for the remainder of the day.

If inappropriate behavior continues further, the child will be removed from the room and told that the inappropriate behavior will not be accepted. Parents will be notified via email/phone call about their child's continuing inappropriate behavior.

Conferences between parents and teachers may become necessary and will be scheduled for a mutually acceptable time.

After exhausting all previous aspects of the Social and Emotional Growth and Development Policy, a child may be asked to leave the program for disruptive behavior.

Children at our center will not receive physical or emotional punishment. Children who have conflicts or problems with others while at our center will be encouraged to verbalize their concerns. A teacher's role is that of a facilitator. S/he is expected to model positive problem-solving.

The following forms of punishment are absolutely prohibited at GCLC:

- Spanking or shaking a child
- Forcing a child to assume an uncomfortable position or raising arms horizontal to body
- Withholding food/beverage
- Verbal abuse/belittling
- Restraining through binding or tying
- Punishment for a toilet accident
- Enclosing in a confined space, box, closet or similar cubicle
- Using exercise as punishment
- Punishment by another child
- Punishment by applying unpleasant or harmful substances

Behavioral guidance shall be constructive in nature, age and stage appropriate, and shall be intended to redirect children to appropriate behavior and the resolution of conflicts.

Circumstances may arise making it necessary to remove a child from GCLC. These may include: class size dropping below eight children, non-payment for tuition & fees owed, incomplete paperwork for child's file, parents not supporting our developmental philosophy of early childhood education, our inability to meet a child's needs, a child becoming a danger to himself/others, and/or severe behavioral problems.

Although we do our best to work with you, these are limits that have been established and will be adhered to in the best interest of all involved.

Emergency Procedures: Fire Drills, Tornado Drills, and "Lock down" Drills

Posted inside each room are procedures to address these three emergency procedures. Parents should be familiar with these procedures so if they are in the classroom during a drill or true emergency, they will be aware of the teacher expectations for adhering to the emergency procedures. Remember to follow the teacher's lead and please do not interfere with completion of our emergency procedures. Children and our staff become comfortable and familiar with the practiced procedures, and we want everyone to comply with these practices safety procedures.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

In accordance with VA code 63.2-1509, any teacher or other person employed at Grace Children's Learning Center (GCLC) who has reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected must immediately report such information to local or state Social Services agencies. According to state law, all persons required to report cases of suspected child abuse or neglect are immune from civil or criminal liability, or administrative penalty or sanction, on account of such reports unless such person has acted in bad faith or with malicious purpose.

Missing or Lost Child Policy

Teachers, all staff, and volunteers of GCLC will and MUST have students within sight and sound at all times. Exterior doors on the lower-level remain locked when arrival time has ended. Doors to classrooms remain closed during the school day. Staff members constantly conduct "head counts" throughout the day. Daily schedules are posted outside each door to ensure parents and management can easily locate students. At no time will a child be left unattended. If a child strays from the group, a staff member will remain with the group and return them to the classroom. The Program Leadership Team will be notified immediately and will assign a search task force. The Director will immediately contact parent and legal authorities as a thorough search is conducted. Code Adam is initiated and all doors are locked and movement through the building ceases. No one is dismissed during a Code Adam.

Peanut Policy and Allergy Policy

Our school is sensitive to the increased number of peanut allergies in our community and world. The National Food Association recommends children under the age of five years not be served peanut products. GCLC is proud to be a Peanut-Free School. During school hours, products with peanuts and peanut butter are not prepared, served or eaten by staff or children. This policy includes field trips, special events and all school activities.

When children bring lunch from home during the school day or for a field trip, we follow the same peanut-free guidelines. If a child's lunch contains an item with peanuts, our staff will remove it and replace it with an appropriate item. When this occurs, we will explain to the child and send a note home with the item.

Children supply **ALL** of their own food for snacks and lunches. We request special treats to be sent in ahead of time to keep in the freezer or classroom cabinets for party days.

If a child has a food allergy, we have medical forms to be completed. A physician's signature is required for all food allergies and medications. While we make every possible effort to maintain a safe environment, we cannot guarantee children suffering from a peanut allergy will not come in contact with peanut traces. Our school does not permit peanuts and peanut butter, but we cannot ensure that every field trip location will be peanut-free. We will do everything within our ability to ensure the safety of each child. When prescribed, Epi-Pens are kept with the child at all times. They are locked in a medication box and carried by the teacher. All GCLC staff are trained in Epi-Pen use.

An open line of communication is the key to a safe environment for everyone. Each class has an allergy chart posted in their teacher cabinet with the child's allergies listed along with a picture of the student.

Guidelines for Keeping a Child Home From School:

* Red, irritated eyes
* Nasal discharge that is not clear
* Fever
* Diarrhea
* Vomiting
* Rash of unknown origin

Children must remain home from school for 24 hours after the above symptoms have disappeared. When a child is ill, he/she has a weakened immune system and is more susceptible to germs. If a child becomes sick at school, he/she will be separated from the group and made as comfortable as possible. Children must be picked up by a parent or emergency contact within 30 minutes.

Families are required by law to report to Grace Children's Learning Center within 24 hours when an enrolled child or a member of their immediate household has developed any communicable disease. If any enrolled child or any member of their household

contracts a life-threatening communicable illness, families agree to contact the school immediately.

Medication Policy

Medication may be administered when necessary by a Program Leadership Team who has participated in required training. Medication includes topical ointments, Epi-Pens, oral medications and sunscreen. *(Topical ointments, sunscreen, diaper rash cream and other over-the-counter medications do not require a physician's signature, but a parent must complete a Medication Authorization Form.)* The following criteria **must** be met prior to medication being administered:

1. The parent/guardian must complete a Medication Form which authorizes permission to administer the medication.

2. Medication or topical ointment must be in the **original bottle** with **prescription label affixed.** *(Prescription label not required for topical over-the-counter sunscreen and ointments, but they must be in the original bottle.)*

3. All medication forms must read the same as the prescription or Doctor's note. (With the exception of topical ointments, over-the-counter medications, sun screen and ointments, but they must be in the original bottle.)

4. All medications, prescription and over-the counter, must be taken to school office for proper processing. Teachers are not permitted to accept medication from parents. Office personnel will deliver medication to the teacher if it is a life-saving medication, such as Epi-Pens and inhalers. Other non-life saving medications will remain in the school office. The child's name must be written in permanent marker on the outside of the bottle. School personnel will administer medication to children at appropriate time(s). Medication requiring refrigeration will be kept in a locked box in the refrigerator on the lower level.

5. Staff will record the times sunscreen and topical ointments & creams are applied. Grace Children's Learning Center will not apply insect repellent. If a child is sensitive to insect bites please administer repellent prior to school arrival.

6. When a prescription medication must be given for more than ten school days, a form from a physician is required. With a physician's signature, medication may be kept at school for a calendar year without an up-dated form.

Should any of the criteria not be met, medication will not be administered.

Communication
Letters, information, newsletters, and announcements are communicated in a variety of ways, and our preferred mode of communication is the Playground app. We also send home materials, notes and messages via students' communication folders in back packs, and emails. These materials and will contain messages from the classroom team, GCLC Program Leadership Team, about important class events, holidays, curriculum notes, school wide activity updates, etc. Please keep these items in a safe and convenient place to stay "on top" of school events.

Communication folders will travel between school and home. These folders will transport letters, class work, art, and communication between families and the teacher. Please check your child's folder daily.

Our teachers are focused on your child during school hours. Please be sensitive to this fact and do not call teachers' cell phones, send emails, or texts to the teachers during class time. If you have important information regarding your child to share with us during the day, please phone the school office. The administrative team will get a message to the teacher, and we will be able to provide immediate action for you. However, if you text the message to your teacher, she may not see it until the end of the school day.

Our staff will return all non-urgent communication within two working days. If you have an urgent need, contact the school office and we will be happy to assist you immediately.

Conferences & Progress Reports
Preschool parent/teacher conferences will be held in the Fall of the school year, typically in the first week of November. These conferences are designed for teachers and parents to collaboratively share information on each child's growth and progress over the course of the first few months of school. There is also often an opportunity to discuss how to promote continued growth and to address any concerns raised by the teacher and/or parents regarding the child's growth and classroom performance.

Inclement Weather Policy
Inclement weather occasionally forces us to alter our regular schedule for the safety and well-being of our students, staff, and community members. GCLC Program Leadership Team carefully weighs various factors such as current weather conditions, forecasted weather conditions, current and forecasted transportations impacts, temperature, and rain/snow already in place and expected. We consider the number of staff members

who can make it to work so we can “stay in ratio” with proper number of adults to children.

Notification of Schedule Change Due to Inclement Weather
Families and staff will be notified via email and the Playground App of schedule changes due to inclement weather.

Schedule When A Delayed Opening Is Announced
Extended Care Program 9:30 am- 5pm (depending on conditions)

Infant, Toddlers & 2’s	9:30 am to 5:00 pm
3’s and 4’s classes	9:30 am to 12:30 pm
Jr. K classes	9:30 am to 2:15 pm

Carpool eligible families will resume normal program time.

GCLC Early Closure
Infant, Toddlers, Twos, 3’s and 4’s, and Jr. K will dismiss at 12:30, and we will notify families in Extended Care what time we will close the facility.

GCLC Closure Due to Inclement Weather
Should it become necessary to close the facility due to weather related conditions, all scheduled classes, programs, meetings, and events will be cancelled.
Five inclement weather days are built into our school year calendar. These five days are added to the calendar after tuition has been prorated. Any five days above and beyond that would be considered an “Act of God” and there will not be any tuition refunds.

Celebration of Holidays
Each classroom plans their own holiday parties. Successful classroom parties are often the result of good parent participation. This may involve helping in the classroom or sending in needed supplies.

Field Trips
Field trips are an extension of the classroom and are scheduled during the school year. Field trips are planned to enrich a topic or theme that has already been introduced in class. Parents are notified of each field trip and given a permission slip for their child. Parents transport their child to the field trip site and stay to enjoy the experience with their child, unless other arrangements are approved by a member of the Program Leadership Team.

School Clothing
We do not have school uniforms, but do have some simple dress suggestions:

- Clothing should allow for self-dressing and be comfortable
- When the weather is cold, send in mittens, hats and a sweater to layer over clothes
- We go outdoors most days, even when it is cold, and especially when it snows! Remember boots become warm when worn all day, so please send alternative shoes for indoors
- When it rains, always send a raincoat, but never an umbrella
- Send a complete change of clothes
- Flip-flops are not safe for active play...closed toe shoes are best.

Summer Camp
Summer Camp may be offered at Grace for children ages 6 weeks through 6 years. Camp is divided into groups by age. Children will engage in arts and crafts, sports and games and have special events weekly. The decision to offer a summer camp rests with the GCLC School Board. If sufficient interest exists, the decision regarding whether to offer a summer camp is usually communicated to parents in early Winter.

Infants, Toddlers and Twos Program
Our Infants, Toddlers and Twos Program is for children ages 6 weeks through 2 years. Children are not required to be potty trained. The purpose of this program is to help children “learn by doing”, while exploring areas of interest in our carefully planned and monitored learning environment. Children will have the opportunity to build social skills while learning to cope with separation anxiety. Our staff guides and facilitates all learning experiences, thus providing each child with an individualized learning program which meets his/her interests and abilities. Our program is designed to instill a sense of self-worth, independence, and a love of learning that will remain with children throughout life. Our activities are comprehensive and provide physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth.

Children in this age group are filled with energy and curiosity about the world as well as a new sense of increasing independence. Twos are highly active and interested in objects and people. They're undergoing rapid development in many areas. They are eager for attention to help them learn and understand basic concepts about how the world works.

The Twos curriculum is designed to support and reinforce the independence that a two-year-old exhibits. Our program provides the structure and guidance needed throughout

the day as he/she learns to share, get along with others and perform tasks that require a longer attention span. Listening to stories, singing songs, playing games and doing art projects all help to develop language and vocabulary skills, as well as movement and sensory motor skills. Our Twos Program focuses on developing these skills and readying a child for a Threes classroom.

Admission Policy

- Children may register for the upcoming year during the registration period or at other times during the year as openings occur
- Prior to admission, parents are required to tour our center
- A birth certificate and up-to-date immunization record are required at the time of registration for new students
- Children must be no less than 6 weeks of age by the day they register
- A complete physical is due within 30 days of the child's first day of attendance

-for children 6 months and under, the physical must be dated no more than 2 months prior to attendance

-for children 7-18 months, the physical must be dated no more than 3 months prior to attendance

-for children 19-24 months, the physical must be dated no more than 6 months prior to attendance.

-for children 2-5 years, the physical must be dated no more than 12 months prior to attendance.

What to Bring for Infants

All items sent in for your child must be labeled with your child's name. Please send all formula, juice, milk and food necessary for the child, as well any bottles and baby spoons that will be needed as well. We'll also need diapers and wipes; many families find it helpful to send in a large bag or sleeve of diapers at one time; then, we can let you know when we start running low via the Playground app. For sleeping purposes, we need five (5) fitted crib sheets, plus a "sleeper". Per licensing requirements, we can no longer put a loose blanket in a crib with a child.

We head outdoors (weather permitting) for blanket play and walks, as well as time on the playground. Please dress children appropriately for the weather.

What to Bring for Toddlers

All items sent in for your child must be labeled with your child's name. Please send all juice, milk and food necessary for the child, as well as any bottles and baby spoons that will be needed. We'll also need diapers and wipes; many families find it helpful to send in a large bag or sleeve of diapers at one time; then, we can let you know when we start running low via the Playground app.

If your child is coming for the "Full Day" experience, please send in a "Napper" for them to use during the afternoon nap time. The "Napper", consisting of a pillow attached to a light-weight sleeping bag, is brought in each Monday, then used throughout the week, then sent home with you on Fridays to be washed.

We head outdoors (weather permitting) for walks as well as time on the playground. Please dress children appropriately for the weather.

What to Bring for Twos

All food is brought from home and must be labeled with your child's name. Questions regarding snack should be directed to the child's teacher or the school office. Full day children need to bring an AM snack, lunch and PM snack as well.

If your child is coming for the "Full Day" experience, please send in a "Napper" for them to use during the afternoon nap time. The "Napper", consisting of a pillow attached to a light-weight sleeping bag, is brought in each Monday, then used throughout the week, then sent home with you on Fridays to be washed.

Your child will need a backpack. Pack a change of clothing, diapers and wipes. Please label the outside of all items with the child's first and last name in permanent marker. If you do not label your child's items, teachers will label unmarked items on the first day. Dress children appropriately for the weather.

Diaper and Potty Log

Throughout the day, diapers are checked regularly. A diaper log notes the time diapers are checked and when a child has urinated or had a bowel movement. This log is maintained via the Playground app.

Sample Daily Schedule

9:20 – 9:45 Welcome
9:45 – 10:00 Art Activities
10:00 – 10:30 Music, Special Play
10:30 – 10:45 Snack/Quiet Time

10:45 – 11:30 Story Time, Centers, Sensory Play
11:20 – 11:40 Outside Play/Walk Gross Motor Activities
11:50 – 12:15 Floor Play
12:15 – 12:30 Saying “Good-bye” to our Friends

Information for 3’s and 4’s, and Jr. Kindergarten

3’s and 4’s - Our programs for 3’s and 4’s are designed to emphasize the development of a child’s social, emotional, cognitive, and motor skills. Socialization is vital, and activities are presented in a weekly thematic format. Academic, self-awareness, and social objectives are addressed through thematic units of study. We offer two-day, three-day and five-day classes from 9:15-12:30.

Jr. K- Children turning four years old by October 31st of the enrolling school year, and who are ready for a longer day, may benefit from our Jr. K Program. Jr. K is a unique option which allows more time for learning centers and socialization. This class meets five days a week from 9:15-2:15.

Lunches

Lunch is brought from home. We encourage all families to follow the USDA guidelines for healthy eating. Please remember we are a ***peanut-free*** facility.

Admission Policies for our 3’s, 4’s and Jr. Kindergarten Programs

Children must be three, four or five years by September 30th of the enrolling school year. This allows us to keep children grouped together that would all enter kindergarten during the same Fall.

The following forms must also be completed and returned with the registration fee:

1. Fully Completed Registration Form available on the GUMC website.
2. Physical & Immunization Record– Physical must be dated no more than 12 months prior to attendance and due within 30 days of date attendance begins.
3. Original Birth Certificate

Preschool Curriculum

Our curriculum, STREAMin3, was developed to provide educators with a full scope and sequence of developmentally-appropriate activities to support children’s instructional

engagement. Our teachers prepare lesson plans that incorporate the required skills and goals. A variety of sources are utilized to provide a well-rounded curriculum.

Sample Daily Schedule
3's and 4's

9:20-9:40 Meet & Greet/Free Choice
9:40-9:50 Circle
9:50-10:10 Outdoor Play
10:15-10:45 Language/Math Centers
10:45-11:00 Restroom and Snack
11:00-11:20 Playground/Gross Motor
11:30-12:00 Art/Science Centers
12:00-12:30 Closing Circle/Recall
12:30 Dismissal

Sample Daily Schedule
Jr. K
9:20-9:40 Arrival and Free Choice
9:40-9:55 Circle
10:00-10:20 Outdoor Play
10:20-10:40 Snack & Restroom
10:40-11:00 Language Centers
11:20-11:40 Science Centers
11:40-12:00 Circle/Story Time
12:00-12:30 Lunch
12:30-1:00 Restroom & Recess
1:00-1:20 Journal Time
1:20-1:40 Art/Music
1:40-2:00 Social Studies
2:00-2:15 Closing Circle
2:15-2:30 Dismissal

FULL DAY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS
Children enrolled in our Full Day program will have organized, planned activities between 7:00-9:15am and 12:30pm-5:00pm. Children arriving between 7:00am and 9:00am will have the opportunity to eat breakfast prior to the start of the school day if needed.

Security Codes
Our full-day families will receive a personal, private code that can be entered on the key pad at the exterior doors to allow access to the building for early morning drop-off and late afternoon/evening pick-up. The codes are only valid during the hours of 7am-5pm M-F. This code is not to be shared with other families to ensure safety of the children and staff.

Meals & Snacks
Children bring breakfast and lunch from home. We are a peanut-free facility, so please consider the use of almond butter or sunflower seed butter as a replacement for peanut butter. Children will eat an AM snack during their preschool day. Lunches are eaten around 12:30 pm. Their PM snack will be eaten in the afternoon, following rest time and playground.

Rest Time for Toddlers, Two's, 3's and 4's
Full day children will have a rest time daily. All children will be provided a cot to rest on. Children need to bring a slumber bag or blanket and a pillow for nap time. These items will remain at school during the week and will be sent home every Friday for laundering.

Specialty Classes
In addition to daily classroom curricular experiences, a variety of special curricular experiences are offered regularly to enhance the children's competencies of the new knowledge and essential skills noted the Virgina Early Development and Learning Standards (VA-ELDS) noted in an earlier section.

To address communication skill development, we have the PWC Mobile Library visit once a month. During these visits, the children and staff check-out books, and also engage in story-book reading activities with the PWC librarians. We also plan to increase use of our dedicated library on the second floor to enhance children's narrative, story-telling skills In the GCLC library, stories come to life through activities, creative dramatics, movement and storytelling. Children learn how to apply what we learn in a story and to make connections to our everyday life. They also learn what an author, illustrator, publisher and editor do. They then use their knowledge to publish a class story.

We also plan to improve our focus on children's language and early literacy skills, including and word knowledge (e.g., knowing the meanings of many words) and phonological awareness skills (e.g., rhyming words, finding words that start with the same sound, etc.), Finally, we want to increase children's communication skills by

teaching essential words in American Sign Language (ASL) as an additional means of communicating among people.

Another set of specialty experiences will be devoted to developing an awareness of music and how it affects us through exposure to various styles of music and instruments. We also target learning about geography, culture, and history of people in various countries across the globe. Finally, we also plan to focus on physical fitness and development of problem-solving skills in large body play,

Spiritual Development
Children attend Chapel twice a month for about 15 minutes at a time in the church Sanctuary. At that time, a GUMC staff member teaches children a song, or a prayer, or conducts a short lesson on one of the ways in which we should treat each other as Jesus would want us to treat each other. JAM is conducted once a month for about 30 minutes by Grace's Director of Children's Ministries and includes simple Bible stories, songs, and discussions. The days/dates and time for Chapel and JAM distributed at the beginning of the school year.

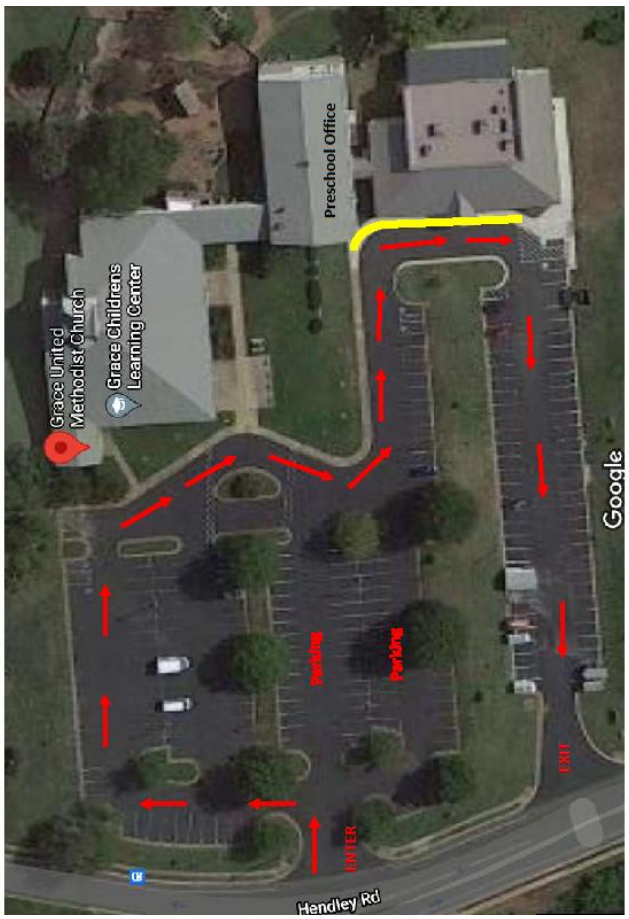
Car Pool
We encourage families to use daily carpool option throughout the school year. Each child, eligible to use carpool, will be given a carpool tag/loop for their backpack and a carpool card for your car's rearview mirror. Be sure to have your carpool card with you each day for dismissal. Please attach the tag to the handle of the backpack that your child will use each day for school. Carpool can be used by all families, w*ith the exception of Infants, Toddlers and Twos*.

Morning arrival time for carpool is from 9:15-9:25. Afternoon dismissal times are from 12:30-12:45 (AM classes) and 2:15-2:30 (Jr Kindergarten).

The guidelines that are in place **MUST** be followed for the safety of the children and our staff. While we understand arrival and departure times can be hectic, we must remain patient and alert. The safety and well-being of our Grace Family members is important to us. Please review the following:

- *If you are NOT in line for carpool by 9:25 in the mornings, you will have to park and walk your child to the preschool office. W*e use the clock on our cell phones to have the most accurate, universal time for everyone; Please understand that this will be strictly adhered to, as this ensures your child's timely arrival to his/her class

- Please review the attached map of our parking lot, which outlines the proper flow of carpool traffic; *The upper entrance to the parking lot is for ENTRY ONLY during all carpool times*; If you have parked and walked your child to the office, you MUST exit from the lower entrance—There are no exceptions! During carpool times the lower entrance is EXIT ONLY; This is to ensure the effectiveness of carpool and everyone's safety
- Please *DO NOT use your cell phones to talk or text while in the carpool line*, especially if it is your child's turn to exit/enter your vehicle. This distraction causes an unsafe environment
- Be sure that *your car is fully in PARK and remains in PARK* when it is your child's turn to exit/enter your vehicle. Having your foot simply on the brake is not adequate; Please wait until you are sure your child is securely in or out of your vehicle, and that the staff member assisting your child has fully cleared the area around your car before putting your car into drive and pulling away
- Make sure that your child is awake/alert and has his/her socks, shoes, coats, mittens, etc. on and ready to exit your vehicle when the staff member arrives to get them out; *Having your child prepared to exit your vehicle will help keep carpool running in a timely manner;* Please also be sure your child has completed eating any breakfast or snack they were enjoying prior to exiting as well; You may be asked to pull around to the back of the line if your child is unprepared to exit the car.
- When and if at all possible, *please try to have your child's car seat by the door closest to the sidewalk* for safer exit/entry, as well as ease for staff members assisting your child
- *NEVER pull out of the carpool line to get around the vehicle in front of you!* If you are choosing to use carpool, then you must wait and follow this important procedure unless directed otherwise by a staff member; We have a line of traffic that exits along side of carpool, as well as children and staff members that are walking next to the vehicles—*PLEASE USE CAUTION!*
- *Monitor your speed in the parking lot at all times! Sometimes it can seem as if you are not going as fast as you truly are; Please keep your speed to 10 MPH or less while in the parking lot and be mindful of those walking in and around the vehicles; Trying to get in the carpool line before it closes is not a reason to speed through the parking lot. Young children are not able to predict your movements.*
- *Children walking outdoors with parents are not permitted to play on the wall or throw objects down the hill to carpool. This is a distraction and poses an unsafe situation*
- *Parents parking must park in a marked parking space. Please do not park along the curb, as this is a fire lane.*

- *Staff members will be outside to direct both walkers and drivers. Always remain patient and alert. Walkers are expected to use the crosswalks.*
- *Umbrellas are not permitted to be brought into the school by the children, and especially not during carpool—they pose a safety hazard; If your child has an umbrella, please be sure it remains in your car*
- *If someone other than you will be picking your child up through carpool (i.e. a grandparent, neighbor, family member, etc.), please help us to be sure that they understand all carpool procedures.*
- *As always, our goal is to provide a safe, effective carpool for the parents, children and staff.*

Failure to abide by these rules and safety guidelines could result in a loss of carpool privileges. If at any time you witness something that causes concern during carpool times, please be sure to contact the school office so that it can be immediately addressed. Likewise, if you have questions or concerns about carpool procedures, please let us know.