

PARENT HANDBOOK



1401 E. Liberty Lane

Phoenix, AZ 85048

480-460-0081

www.godsgarden.com

REVISED and AMENDED June 2017



Dear Families,

Welcome to God's Garden Preschool and Child Development Center! As an outreach of Horizon Presbyterian Church, God's Garden is dedicated to providing a positive and supportive Christian learning environment which nurtures spiritual, physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth through a child-centered, discovery based curriculum.

Please set aside time to read the materials outlined in the Parent Handbook so you may become familiar with our program and the policies and procedures at God's Garden Preschool.

Please contact us any time in the future with any questions. We believe in community and strive to make every family feel welcome and supported here at God's Garden. We have an open-door policy. All families are encouraged to visit, volunteer, talk with teachers and staff, and/or observe in the classroom as often as possible. We look forward to meeting and working with you and hope that you will become active in our program.

Warm Regards,

Michelle Rhodes, PhD

Director, God's Garden

480-460-0081

directorgodsgarden@horizonchurch.com

www.godsgarden.com

For the latest news, "Like" us on Facebook!

GOD'S GARDEN CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

God's Garden Preschool and Child Development Center offers Preschool Programs and Pre-Kindergarten classes for children ages 2-5. The Preschool Programs operate between the hours of 8:45a.m.-1:45p.m. with extended care until 2:45p.m.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The values and beliefs of Christianity permeate God's Garden daily in a variety of ways. Primarily, the school environment reflects the Christian faith as adults model and teach values such as self-esteem, hope, faith, caring and sharing, forgiveness, honesty, obedience, responsibility, thankfulness, patience, love, joy, and fairness. In addition, basic Bible teachings such as creation, Noah's Ark, the birth of Jesus, the birth of Moses, Easter, prayer, love, trust, and hope are used to support and extend the various thematic units. Prayer is said to start and end the day, as well as before snack and meal times. Finally, chapel is led bi-monthly by our director, pastor, teachers, or volunteers from Horizon Church. The Horizon Church oversees the planning of the chapel curriculum. Parents are invited to participate.

MISSION

As an outreach of Horizon Presbyterian Church, God's Garden is dedicated to providing a positive and supportive Christian learning environment which nurtures spiritual, physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth through a child-centered, discovery based curriculum. Our students are our first priority and we believe that each child's development is fostered by an ongoing partnership between staff and parents. Our goal is to provide each child with the readiness skills, social capabilities, and love of learning necessary to successfully enter the primary grades.

- Encourage independence, foster growth of healthy self-concept, and develop a sense of responsibility
- Nurture feelings of empathy, encourage cooperation, honesty, respect, and altruism
- Promote receptive and expressive language skills, and encourage emergent literacy
- Stimulate curiosity and knowledge about the world
- Strengthen motor skills and increase awareness of health and safety
- Support growing abilities to communicate ideas through the visual arts, drama, construction, music, and movement
- Enhance imagination, spontaneity, and originality
- Inspire a lifelong love of learning

CURRICULUM

God's Garden utilizes a child-centered, discovery based curriculum. Our Program incorporates the High/Scope Preschool Curriculum, which focuses on active learning through play. Adult-child interaction is an integral component of the High/Scope Curriculum. In the High/Scope curriculum, children and adults share control and teachers follow the children's lead. Children learn best when pursuing their own interests and goals, therefore, students are encouraged to make choices about materials and activities for much of the day. Within this environment, they explore and discover, ask and answer questions, solve problems, and interact with classmates and adults. As a natural outcome, they engage in "Key Experiences" (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation). These key experiences are grouped into the following 10 categories and provide the basis for the God's Garden preschool skill objectives and assessment:

Creative Representation
Language, Literacy & Reasoning
Initiative and Social Relations
Movement
Music
Classification
Seriation
Number
Space
Time

CORE CENTERS

The space and materials at God's Garden are carefully selected and organized to promote active learning. Supplies are frequently rotated and are arranged to allow for independent access and clean-up. The classrooms are divided into the following activity-specific core learning centers:

Fine Motor
Art
Music/Movement
Blocks
Sensory Table
Dramatic Play
Nature/Science
Math
Writing
Toys

AGE REQUIREMENTS

Children must be two; three or four by August 31 in order to be eligible for their prospective 2's or 3's Preschool class, or 4's Pre-K classes. Some flexibility is shown up to September 30 or later for special situations. Children do not "move-up" a class when they have a birthday mid-year.

CLASS SIZE

Teacher-child ratios are closely aligned to the recommendations from National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Ratios for 2-year-olds are 1:5 with a maximum of 10 children, ratios for 3-year-olds are 1:8 with a maximum of 16 children. Ratios for 4- and 5-year-old are 1:9 with a maximum of 18 children. A Degreeed/qualified lead teacher plus at least one teaching assistant will instruct each class.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The Preschool Programs operate between the hours of 8:45a.m.-1:45p.m. with the opportunity to enroll in additional enrichment classes and extended care (Stay and Play) before school from 7:45-8:45a.m. and after school until 2:45p.m. The regular academic school year operates from August through May with the opportunity to enroll in the Summer Program in June and July.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

God's Garden preschool classes follow the Kyrene School District Calendar for all school holidays and breaks. God's Garden will be closed for the following holidays:

- Labor Day
- Fall Break
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the Friday following Thanksgiving
- Christmas Break
- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Spring Break
- Good Friday

*There is also no school during Teacher Staff Development Days and Parent-Teacher Conferences

CLASSROOMS

God's Garden offers Preschool classes to 2-year-olds and 3-year-olds and Pre-Kindergarten classes to 4- and 5-year-olds. The number of classes offered varies by year due to the needs of the community.

2's TODDLER PROGRAM

Our teachers provide a warm, loving, and safe environment where the little ones feel comfortable to explore and create independently and at each one's own pace. Our toddlers learn about God's love, friendship, sharing, and independence. Through child-centered play and modeling by the teachers, they learn important skills such as verbal and non-verbal communication, creative representation, and problem-solving. Numbers, colors, and shapes are introduced and explored through fun songs, games, art, and stories.

3's PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

The 3's program is designed to encourage development of social skills such as making friends, playing cooperatively, and communicating with peers and adults. Colors, shapes, numbers and letters are explored through games, songs and art. Free-choice time allows them to practice independence, decision-making, cooperation and problem-solving skills. Activity and art centers encourage imaginative play, exploration, creativity and development of fine motor skills. Daily 'jobs' are rotated to help the children build self-esteem and develop a sense of responsibility and control in the classroom.

4's PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

The focus of our 4's program is preparation for kindergarten. Our program is child-centered and focuses on reinforcing social skills such as cooperation, making choices, problem-solving, taking turns in a group, conflict resolution, and making friends.

Four-year-olds are ready for letter and number recognition, writing of letters and numbers, phonemic awareness, sorting and classifying. These skills and concepts are learned through a combination of free choice time and small/large group activities. Free choice time encourages independent thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, initiative, imagination, and creativity. Both large group activities (circle time) and small group activities (projects) help to refine skills such as following directions, fine motor skills, and verbal communication. Our teachers help children explore topics through discovery and investigation. Furthermore, our teachers work to promote problem solving and critical thinking skills by engaging in conversations during play.

TEACHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Majority of Lead Teachers must have a Bachelor's degree or higher in early childhood education or related field.
- Majority of Assistant Teachers must have a CDA Credential or higher.
- All teaching staff must have a minimum of a high school diploma or GED.
- Teacher training days may be scheduled during the year.

All teachers must complete the following professional development annually:

- 18 hours of annual training in accident/emergency procedures, recognition of illness, nutrition, child abuse detection, reporting, and prevention, safety, program administration, infant and child growth and development, observation and assessment, developmentally appropriate practice, child guidance and discipline to meet Arizona Department of Health Services Childcare Licensing Requirements.
- at least 3 hours of training on physical activity, nutrition, sun safety, breast-feeding, family-style meals, oral health and tobacco to meet Empower Program requirements (can be included in the 18 hours required by Licensing).

ENRICHMENT CLASSES

God's Garden offers a variety of enrichment classes held after school hours for 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds. Children must be potty-trained to attend. These classes are fee-based and depend upon adequate registration and teacher availability. Registration is for one eight-week segment; payment is due upon sign up. These classes are capped at 15 total children. Early registration is recommended because space is limited. Please see the director for further information and registration forms.

EXTENDED CARE

Stay and Play offers before and after school extended care for children between 2- and 5-years-old. Stay and Play is currently open before school (**AM Stay and Play**) from 7:45a.m. to 8:45a.m. and after school (**PM Stay and Play**) from 11:45a.m. until 2:45p.m. During Stay and Play, children engage in child-centered, free-choice play both in the classroom and outside. Children must be potty-trained to attend. Children must also bring their own lunch to attend PM Stay and Play. This program is flexible, and can be reserved ahead of time, or simply the day of (if space permits). Please note, however, that space is limited, so early sign-ups are recommended! Payment is charged daily. There is a late fee for children picked up after 3:00PM. \$15 fee will be assessed for every 5 minutes late.

REGISTRATION

Registration for the regular academic school year begins in early Spring (February or March) each year. Current families attending Horizon Presbyterian Church and God's Garden are given priority in selecting class placements. Open registration for the general public begins directly following and will be announced on the website. Enrollment is accepted on an ongoing basis if room permits. Summer Registration is due in April and must be paid in advance to enroll in Summer Camps. No Drop-ins will be allowed.

ORIENTATION - MEET THE TEACHER

We provide visitation times for children and their parents to come and visit the classroom and meet their teachers. These opportunities are scheduled the week before school begins and you will be notified of days and times. An open house is also offered each Spring.

TUITION

Tuition is to be paid monthly August through May for regular academic school year. Cash or checks only are accepted. Tuition rates are available on the website or in the front office. A non-refundable, annual registration fee for preschool is required. Tuition is due on the first of each month and considered late if received after the 5th. All checks should be made payable to God's Garden Child Development Center. The monthly tuition rate is calculated over the entire school year. Some months have fewer class meeting days than other months, but the monthly tuition rate remains the same. Tuition is NOT prorated for vacations, holidays, or absences. Moneys for days missed or vacations cannot be refunded. Registration fees and paid tuition are not refundable under any circumstance.

There is a \$15 charge for late tuition received after the fifth day of the month and/or returned checks, in addition to any charges from banks. If tuition is 30 days late, please contact the Director to set up a payment plan or your child will be dis-enrolled. Children dis-enrolled due to nonpayment and absence from the program for two consecutive weeks may result in the child or children being placed on the waiting list, if space is not available for the child (according to the adult/child ratio outlined by National Accreditation Commission for Early and Education Programs).

Summer Tuition is to be paid weekly June through August for part-time preschool. A non-refundable, registration fee for summer preschool is required. Moneys for days missed or vacations cannot be refunded. Registration fees and paid tuition are not refundable under any circumstance.

SUMMER PROGRAM

God's Garden offers Summer Camps to children between the ages of 2.5- to 8-years-old. Children do not have to attend God's Garden during the regular academic year to enroll in our Summer Camps. Summer Camps are held weekly in June and July and are Theme-based. Themes may include Discover Science, It's a Pirate's Life for me, The Great Adventures of Pete the Cat, and The Wonderful World of Eric Carle. Registration is due in advance. Space is limited.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

A 30-day paid notice is required to withdraw your child. However, if you choose to withdraw your child within the first two weeks of enrollment, the 30 day paid notification policy will be waived. After the start of the third week of enrollment, the 30-day paid withdrawal notification policy will be enforced. All withdrawals must be done through the director.

DISMISSAL PROCEDURE

We reserve the right to end a child's enrollment for violations of policies, procedures, and rules of the school or those of the Arizona Department of Health Services. Causes for dismissal may include but are not limited to: failure to pay tuition, uncooperative or disruptive behavior of the student or the parent.

There are different types of preschool/child care programs because family/child needs differ. If we determine that our center is not meeting your child's needs, we will recommend withdrawing your child and assist in helping you find appropriate placement elsewhere.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

There may be an occasion when a parent has a complaint about a situation. Most problems result from simple misunderstandings and lack of communication. We suggest that you speak with the teacher if such an occasion arises. Any further questions or concerns should be brought up to the director of the center. If any person is not satisfied with the resolution, they may submit their grievance in writing to the Board of Directors.

CHANGE IN STATUS

Parents must notify the school immediately, in writing, of any change in work status, telephone number, address, marital status, custody status, etc. Any custody papers regarding who your child may be released to need to be copied and on file at the school.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Actual arrival and departure times must be recorded every day by the parent or person designated to bring/pick up the child in the Sign In/Sign Out Book. Parents must notify the school of all absences. Parents are responsible for accurately filling out required forms (Registration Form, Parent-Participation Agreement, Emergency Form, and Immunization Record) and keeping them updated. Anything of educational interest pertaining to the unit of study to be shared with the class is welcome. Please check with the teacher in the class. Assistance is needed with parties, special events, and fund-raisers. Parents are invited to share hobbies, work experiences, special interests, and talents. Please make prior arrangements with the teacher. Fund raising help is handled by Board of Directors. A Parent Information Center is maintained on bulletin board or specified place in each classroom. There is Parent representation on the Board of Directors and on the Parents Committee.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

“The parent is the child's first teacher.”

Providing quality education and care for your child requires close cooperation of families and God's Garden Staff. We feel a strong partnership with the parents is very important. After all, parents are the most important person in your child's life! Together, as significant adults in your child's life, we promise to work with you to become the bridge between home and school. We would like you to be an active partner in our program. God's Garden has an open door policy. We welcome and encourage you to visit and/or volunteer at any time. To strengthen the bridge between home and school, we highly encourage parents to communicate daily with teachers about their child's progress, development, special events, or any changes in your child's life. We also welcome the opportunity to communicate with you about any concerns that you may have. We encourage parents to become involved in the program by regularly communicating with your child's teacher, attending parent/child activity nights, special events and other volunteer activities, and by joining the Parents Committee and/or Board of Directors. Please speak with your child's teacher, the school Director, or the Church Pastor about ways you can participate.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

God's Garden Preschool is governed by a Board of Directors. The Board is comprised of a combination of God's Garden parents and Horizon church members. The Board of Directors oversees the continuing operation of God's Garden Preschool. The Board plans, develops and establishes policy, and assess the performance of the school. The Board is also responsible for promoting Christian education in the community. The Board encourages personal faith in Christ and the building of Christian character.

PARENTS COMMITTEE

The Parents Committee serves as a forum for parents to raise questions, share ideas, organize school events and fundraise for special needs. Events include Harvest Festival, Ice Cream Social, Easter Parade, Bike Safety Days, Water Days, Parents Night Out, Teacher Appreciation, and our highly anticipated annual “Transportation Day”.

SCHOOL/HOME COMMUNICATIONS

Frequent and clear communication between school and home is vital. We send monthly newsletters and weekly lesson plans in addition to a variety of flyers and announcements as needed. These items will inform you of the learning activities that are taking place. Other forms of frequent communication are established by teachers based on the needs of individual children. It is essential that you check and read through all communications offered to you through your parent mailbox and email. Vital information is sent home this way as it is impossible for the teacher to personally communicate everything to each individual parent.

It is one of our goals to have close communications with parents. We also recognize that because of your interest in the welfare of your child, you will, on occasion, wish to confer with the teacher or director. Conferences may be arranged upon request. Parent conferences are regularly offered to discuss your child's adjustment and progress. Parents are free to view their child's file. If parents have questions or concerns, they should speak first to the child's teacher and then to the director if necessary.

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE POLICY

It is our hope that the climate of the classroom will promote love and respect for one another. Positive child guidance will be used in the classroom to teach children democratic life skills including respecting others and one's self, working together in groups, solving problems using words, expressing strong emotions in acceptable ways, and making ethical and intelligent decisions. Our goal is to work with all children to help them develop self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, and cooperation. In addition, our goal is to encourage the children to become creative, independent, responsible, and socially capable adults. This involves learning to make responsible choices, and accepting the consequences of such choices during early childhood development.

The following examples of positive child guidance will be used in our classrooms:

- At all times a child is treated with love and affection. Warm hugs, encouraging words and praise are ways we let children know we love them.
- Positive reinforcement and redirection are used to eliminate potential difficulties.
- We listen to children because they are important.
- The environment is designed as a place for children.
- Children will be encouraged to be creative, independent, and responsible members of the community.
- Teachers engage in clear supportive communication and conversations with children.
- Teachers expect behavior that is appropriate for the developmental level of the children in the classroom.
- Teachers model appropriate behavior, coping skills, and conflict resolution to help children learn how to behave appropriately in our society.
- Teachers help children engage in conflict resolution strategies. Children learn how to work together with other children.
- Teachers expand understanding and encourage children to think critically.
- Teachers provide children with opportunities to develop the classroom community through participation in decision making about classroom rules, plans, and activities.
- Teachers anticipate and take steps to prevent potential behavior problems.
- Teachers help children learn to appropriately express their feelings, and let them know that they are heard and understood. Teachers help children talk about their own and others' emotions. They provide opportunities for children to explore a wide range of feelings, and the different ways that those feelings can be expressed.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences are an important component of family involvement. Family involvement in early education can lead to positive benefits for children, such as increased school attendance, higher academic performance, and improved attitudes about school. Parent-teacher conferences provide opportunities not only for parents to learn about their children's progress in school, but also for teachers to gain insights into their students' home and community lives. Parent perspectives on student strengths and needs, learning styles, and learning opportunities outside of school can help teachers shape their instructional methods in the classroom.

Parent-teacher conferences at God's Garden are held twice per year in the Fall (October/November) and early Spring (February/March). Parents can request additional parent-teacher conferences at any time.

ASSESSMENT AND DOCUMENTATION

Assessment is ongoing and is conducted in order to learn about a child's current knowledge and understandings, skills, interests, and dispositions. Naturalistic assessment, including observations and portfolios, and anecdotal records and other forms of documentation will be used in our classrooms along with a Developmental Checklist (i.e., HighScope COR) and a Summary of Developmental Progress to monitor each child's progress over the school year. Including multiple forms of assessment and documentation in the classroom provides a comprehensive, in-depth picture of the learning progress of an individual child.

Students will be assessed multiple times throughout the school year to assess their individual growth and progress. Assessments will be shared with parents during Parent-Teacher Conferences. However, parents are welcome to ask about their student's progress at any time throughout the school year.

SCHEDULE FOR ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Children should arrive no more than five minutes before the session begins. It is important that the teachers have time to prepare the classroom and needed material before each session. Please sign your child in and out with full first and last names and make sure that an adult is aware of his/her presence before you leave. Each child must be signed in and out by a parent or person who is authorized by the parent as listed on the registration form. **Full signatures are required by the Arizona Department of Health Services** (no initials, please). A child will be released only to his parents or to persons authorized by the parent. In the event that it is necessary for someone other than a parent to pick up the child, written documentation is needed. Any person other than a parent must show a picture ID before the child is released. At dismissal, your child should remain inside the building until he/she is called for by his/her parent or other authorized adult.

LATE PICK-UP POLICY

A child picked up 15 minutes or more after the end of class session is considered a late pick-up. Occurrence of a late pick-up will result in a verbal reminder and the child will be placed in our extended care program until the parent arrives. Parents will be responsible for paying any Stay and Play fees.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

The State of Arizona requires that your child be immunized. An immunization record and health form must be on file with our office by the first day of school and kept current. It is extremely important that these sheets are kept current, so please notify us through an updated copy of the doctor's record each time your child receives a new immunization.

MEDICATION

We cannot administer medication of any kind without written authorization on the Parent Medication Consent Form. All prescription medication must be in the name of the child receiving the medicine. All medication must be in the original container. Also, the first dose of a new medication needs to be given at home where you can check for and monitor any reactions. A written doctor's authorization may be required at the discretion of the Center. **DO NOT LEAVE MEDICATIONS IN YOUR CHILD'S CUBBY OR TOTE.** Parents are responsible for delivering medicine to and picking it up from the Director. If your child has a severe allergy requiring an Epi Pen, please let the Front Desk and your child's teacher know right away.

ILLNESSES

Sick children should be kept home to prevent spreading germs to their classmates and teachers. Young children who have not built up immunity are very susceptible to sickness and disease. High fevers, rashes, sharp stomach pains, ear infections, severe congestion, etc., should be checked by your doctor. If you are unsure as to what illness guidelines we follow, please ask your teacher or the director. Children need to be fever free and symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school. If antibiotics are required, your child needs to be on them for 24 hours before returning to school. Also, the first dose of a new medication needs to be given at home where you can monitor any reactions.

If your child becomes ill while at school, you will be notified and parents are expected to pick up an ill child **WITHIN ONE HOUR** after notification.

If your child has contracted a communicable disease, please contact the school so other parents may be notified. If your child is exposed to a communicable disease by one of his/her classmates, you will be notified and told to be on the lookout for specific symptoms. All contagious childhood diseases such as chicken pox, measles, mumps, lice, etc., have specific exclusion dates which have been established by the Arizona Department of Health Services. These exclusion dates must be complied with prior to re-admission to school. If you have any questions, contact our director.

We appreciate knowing about hurts, bruises and/or emotional upsets that occur away from school. You may be asked to sign a slip describing an injury that happened away from school. Keep us informed on significant home events. This allows us to deal sensitively with all situations. If an accident occurs at the center you will be informed.

Parents are required to notify the center in the event that a child will not attend due to illness or personal reason.

INSURANCE

God's Garden meets the state standards for liability insurance. Parents are expected to maintain other forms of insurance on their child.

LICENSING

God's Garden Child Development Center is licensed and regulated by the Arizona Department of Health Services located at 150 N. 18th Avenue, Suite 400, Phoenix, 85007-3244, phone 602-3642539, website www.azdhs.gov. Inspection reports are available upon request from the Center's Director.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In case of serious injury or sudden illness, emergency help will be provided by calling the 9-1-1 emergency number. The parent or person designated on the Emergency Information and Immunization Record Card will be contacted as soon as possible. A staff member who is first aid and/or CPR certified will be with the children at all times.

FIRE DRILLS

In keeping with state law, our school is inspected periodically by the Fire Marshall and is fully equipped with the necessary chemical extinguishers required by law, as well as a fire monitoring system. Fire practice evacuation drills are practiced once a month as required by the state.

PESTICIDE APPLICATION

A notice will be posted at least 48 hours in advance of pesticide application.

FIELD TRIPS

All field trips are "in house".

TRANSPORTATION

God's Garden does not provide transportation of any kind. God's Garden is not responsible for car pools established among parents. Please inform the teacher in writing of car pool arrangements to assist the teacher with dismissal time. The driver of the car pool must be listed on your child's registration form. The driver is responsible for signing in and out.

CLOTHING

Please send your child in comfortable clothes that can get dirty. Even though we try to be careful and use washable paints, etc., many of our activities are messy. You can help your child to be self-sufficient and independent by selecting clothing he/she can manage with little help. Please plan to store an extra set of clothing at the beginning of the year for your child to be kept in the backpack. "Accidents" can happen, especially at this age, and a change of clothing would be helpful. Please place the clothes in a clearly labeled bag. Labeling each item of clothing, especially jackets, is very helpful.

BACKPACK

We recommend a tote bag or backpack for each child. Print your child's name on the outside of the bag so it is visible to the teacher and assistants. Inside please store a climate appropriate change of clothes and diapers and wipes for 2's.

TOYS FROM HOME

Except on designated Show & Tell Days we request that children NOT bring toys from home. Books may be brought in to share at story time. If a child insists on bringing something to the center, tell him/her that he/she must ask permission to do so from his/her teacher. We cannot be responsible for playthings brought from home.

SNACK POLICY

Snacks are provided by the parents on a rotation basis. Classrooms are required by ADHS Licensing to supply at least 2 healthy snack components daily. Snack Menus are posted weekly and include but are not limited to string cheese, yogurt, goldfish crackers, cereal, graham crackers, veggie sticks, pretzels, fresh fruit and vegetables and 100% juice. Water is offered as a first choice for thirst daily. 100% Fruit juice is offered only at snack times, no more than twice per week. Snacks are served family-style. Staff are required to sit, participate, and interact with children during snack time. Please sign up to donate snacks if you can. Our classrooms are NOT Peanut-free, unless needed. Please be sure to list any food allergies on your child's medical information card. If your child has an allergy, accommodations will be made.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Your child's birthday is a very important day! School friends enjoy sharing the event. If you wish to provide a special treat, we ask that you notify the teacher in advance. If your child has a summer birthday, plan to celebrate his/her half-birthday. **State law requires that all baked goods be store-bought and packaged. Please make sure all treats are store-bought and nut free.**

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND OUTDOOR PLAY

Physical activity and movement are integral to the growing child. Engaging in physical activity promotes gross motor skills (large motor movements like kicking, running, throwing, etc.). Every child will have the opportunity to participate in outdoor physical activity daily. God's Garden plans at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity. God's Garden limits screen time to 15 minutes or less per week for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds, with no screen time available for 2-year-olds.

SUN SAFETY

Too much exposure to the sun can be dangerous. Overexposure to the sun is the leading cause of skin cancer, premature aging, and cataracts. Children can be easily sunburned during outdoor play. Children are especially susceptible to the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation, which is a primary indicator for developing skin cancer later in life. God's Garden is committed to your child's health and protecting them from the sun's rays during outdoor play activities. We will not apply sunscreen to children while in our care at God's Garden. Parents are encouraged to apply sunscreen prior to arriving at our facility daily. Please provide a hat, sunglasses, and/or long sleeve clothing for your child to wear when outdoors.

PLAYGROUND POLICIES

Parents and children may spend time on the playground before or after school. Parents are responsible for supervising children during this time. Parents are also responsible for cleaning up toys/bikes that were used and to sweep up any sand or rubber chips that have been dislodged during play. The playground is used for Stay and Play between 11:45AM and 2:45PM daily.

SMOKE-FREE CAMPUS

God's Garden is committed to providing a smoke-free environment for children and staff. Smoking and the use of tobacco products are prohibited on site. This applies to all employees, parents, visitors, contractors, subcontractors, volunteers, and other guests in the child care buildings, grounds, or properties.

God's Garden is committed to supporting the efforts of the Arizona Smokers' Helpline (ASHLine) to help staff and parents quit tobacco. In Arizona, 1.2 million residents use tobacco. Tobacco is known to cause many kinds of cancer and chronic illnesses. Quitting tobacco will lessen the risks of lung, throat and mouth cancers and decrease the risk for other chronic diseases. If you or a loved one need help with quitting smoking, please contact ASHLine at 1-800-55-66-222 to speak with a "quit coach".

TELEPHONE CALLS

Please feel free to call God's Garden at any time. Keep in mind that the teachers are busy working with children and that the best times for them to speak with you are before or after school or during a scheduled appointment. You may leave a message with someone at the front desk, who will pass your message to your child's teacher.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO CALL THE CENTER WHEN:

- Your child or children are not attending school due to illness or sickness.
- You have any concerns regarding your child or children.
- You have an emergency that delays you from dropping your child off on time or picking your child or children up on time. Please keep in mind that a fee will be assessed for late pick up.

TOILET TRAINING

Independent toileting skills are required for those beginning classes for threes and older. In the 2 year-old class, daily records are kept and teachers communicate regularly with parents on the child's progress.

POTTY TRAINING GUIDELINES FOR 3'S CLASS AND OLDER

In order to provide a learning environment conducive to meeting the needs of the majority of the children, and be in compliance with Arizona State regulations, the God's Garden Board of Directors has established the following:

1. The three year old classroom is not licensed for diaper changing and our staffing plan does not allow for it. All children are required to be completely potty trained and wear underwear to school.
2. Occasional accidents may occur. Parents are required to provide an extra set of clothing in the child's backpack for their convenience.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

We will make every effort to work with the parents of children having difficulties at God's Garden. We are here to serve and protect all of the children. Children displaying a challenging behavior which has been determined to be upsetting to the physical or emotional well being of another child may require teachers, families, and other professionals to work as a team to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child's inclusion and success.

The director may ask the parent(s) of any child who attends the center to meet for a conference. The problem will be defined. Goals will be established and the parent will be involved in creating approaches toward solving the problem. When needed, referrals may be made to other community resources.

When the previous attempts have been followed and no progress has been made towards solving the problem, the child may be referred to a more appropriate setting. A child may be considered for immediate expulsion if the child causes serious injury to others or to himself/herself. Every effort will be made to link parents and children to community resources when applicable.

BITING AND OTHER AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS

Even though biting is a developmentally natural behavior; it is of great concern to staff and parents alike. Biting others may begin when an infant first discovers the effect of his new teeth, or as a form of communicating with other children for some toddlers, or as a form of expression for a preschooler who loses control and acts out his/her feelings. We will do everything possible to eliminate biting behaviors in the classroom including arranging consultation with experts in the field to advise teachers in intervention techniques.

As children move from biting to using their large muscles to express themselves, it is not uncommon for them to scratch and hit their friends at school. Teachers recognize that scratching and hitting are a natural progression in the learning process and that children, like adults, do get angry. Teachers encourage children to express their anger, to use their words, discuss problems, explore feelings and engage in conflict resolution techniques.

In cases of patterns of severe or excessive biting, scratching, or hitting by a child, the Teacher or Director will schedule a conference with the parent/guardian to address the issue. We will work with families to solve this problem on an individual basis with the best interests of the child, family, other children, and the center in mind.

*If the injury results in broken skin, the parent of the injured child will be advised to seek medical attention as soon as possible.

SEPARATION ANXIETY

God's Garden understands that it takes time for young children to adjust to a new setting and separate from parents. A degree of crying is to be expected at first. However, if crying persists for twenty consecutive minutes or more on any given day, the parent may be called. If crying persists for more than three times in any given four week period, a conference will be held with the teacher, parent, and Director to discuss intervention techniques and a future plan for the child.

HELPING CHILDREN ADJUST TO SCHOOL

You can help your child adjust to school in the following ways:

1. Make going to school a pleasurable experience: foster enthusiasm for learning.
2. Build up in your child a wholesome, friendly attitude toward teachers and other school personnel.
3. Make your child feel secure and wanted at all times.
4. Explain to your child the necessity for fire drills and orderly, safe evacuation.
5. A few practice sessions at home using your smoke detectors may be helpful.
6. Express interest in your child's interests and achievements in the school program.
7. Come to school when he or she invites you for special occasions.
8. Use the classroom lesson plan to listen to your child as he or she relates his or her daily school experiences and discuss them with him or her.
9. You can assist in language development by reading from books, comic strips, and newspapers. Go to the library with your child and check out books. If you show you are interested in reading, your child will be too.
10. Try to be as consistent as possible in your child's routines. For example, drop off and pick up at the same time of day whenever possible.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Many parents have wondered what is going to happen to their child at school. What will he/she learn? Will all his/her problems be solved? How will he/she act? You might expect all, some, or none of these things to be true in your child. They are all examples of normal behavior!

1. Your child may come home very tired and irritable or all keyed-up the first few weeks. Give him/her attention quickly and put him/her down for a nap.
2. Your normally lively, outgoing child may be very quiet at school. Don't push him/her. Let him/her absorb it all at his/her own pace.
3. Your child may pick up new language or behavior at school and some of it may be distasteful to you. Do not immediately blame it on the school. These things may be learned in any play situation. Do not make an issue of it, but discuss it with your child and/or the teacher.
4. Your child may suddenly not want to go to school. Don't jump to hasty conclusions; look for the reason. Talk it over with him/her and the teacher.
5. Your child may suddenly want you to stay again in the middle of the term. He/she may be looking for extra support and security. Were you away? New baby? Feel free to meet his/her needs.
6. Your child may come home very unhappy one day. Console him/her; help him/her to measure up to an unhappy moment. A day at school is not always a completely happy situation; neither is life. Part of growing up is learning to accept frustrations.
7. Your child may come home covered with paint, but glowing about the wonderful time he/she had. Don't scold about the spills, but ENJOY his/her creativity. Please, dress him/her in "messable" clothes. The paint washes off, the joy remains.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

All families want their children to be successful in school. At God's Garden, we prepare children for kindergarten and beyond. We teach children their letters, numbers, shapes, and colors. We also teach them to follow rules, make good choices, solve conflicts, and to be respectful.

But Kindergarten Readiness means more than teaching children just the basics. Kindergarten Readiness means that children are prepared to engage in higher order thinking. Higher Order Thinking involves the learning of complex judgmental skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution. It is beyond rote memorization and regurgitation of information.

Higher order thinking includes understanding facts, inferring from them, connecting them to other facts and concepts, categorizing them, manipulating them, putting them together in new ways, and applying them as we seek solutions to new problems. This also includes abstract concepts, schemas or mental representations, visualization, inferences, idea generation, insights, creativity, and analytical intelligence (i.e., making judgments, evaluating, comparing, contrasting, critiquing, explaining, and examining, etc.). These concepts are difficult to learn and to teach, but they are easier to learn if children are exposed to these concepts at early ages.

At God's Garden, teachers not only help children learn basic skills like letters, numbers, shapes, and colors, but they also engage children in conversations that promote higher order thinking. These conversations are critical to helping children learn to create innovative ideas and concepts that are necessary for success in school and beyond. They occur during episodes of free-choice play, small groups, large groups, circle time, and outdoor play. They begin at age 2 and continue until they complete Pre-K and move on to kindergarten.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO PREPARE CHILDREN FOR KINDERGARTEN?

Being actively involved in your child's learning is directly related to your child's success in school. So what can you do to prepare your child for school?

- Be your child's first teacher
- Encourage your child to explore
- Give your child time to process information
- Engage with your child
- Encourage your child to find solutions on his/her own
- Provide lots of opportunities for play
- Talk to your child(ren) and often
- Ask lots of questions
- Sing to your child(ren)
- Read to your child(ren) and do it often
- Set and follow a consistent routine – children thrive on structure
- Build a meaningful relationship with your child.



PARENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Date: _____

I, _____, acknowledge receipt of the God's Garden Parent Handbook. I understand it is my responsibility to read and understand the contents of this document. This updated Parent Handbook supersedes earlier versions that have been provided to me by God's Garden as well as any statements made by employees of God's Garden.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Note to parents: If you should have any questions or require clarification in regards to the Parent Handbook please feel free to contact the Director at 480-460-0081 or directorgodsgarden@horizonchurch.com.