

GSDS Family Handbook

2023-2024

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Good Shepherd Lutheran Day School

"Guiding Children in Faith and Knowledge"

Dear Families,

Welcome to Good Shepherd Day School! We are so glad you chose us to be your partner in the education of your child. We take our job very seriously and want to make sure that you feel supported in your role as your child's primary caregiver and advocate.

To help create strong staff/family partnerships, we have created this Family Handbook so that you understand what our respective roles and responsibilities are at Good Shepherd Day School. When we each understand our roles and honor the processes that are outlined in this handbook, we will be better able to establish a relationship of mutual respect and understanding that underlies the education your child receives here.

Please take the time to read through this manual prior to your first day and keep it handy as your child moves through the program. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me or a staff member for clarification.

We hope you find your child's education here at Good Shepherd Day School to be one that prepares him/her not only for school, but for life!

Sincerely,

Krista Monroe

Director, Good Shepherd Day School

General Program Information

Mission Statement

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Day School's mission is to serve God and our community by teaching and practicing the values that are important for being a successful, spiritual, and intellectual member of our society. Our goal is to be a premiere early learning center in our community by offering a unique educational experience for children, families, and staff. We will accomplish this by grounding our program in our Christian faith and values, as well as our belief that all children learn best when adults acknowledge their individuality, joy of life, and curiosity about the world they live in.

Vision Statement

The school is part of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church's youth ministry outreach. Our vision is to aspire to create a place where children, families and staff are excited to come to every day. We want these people to find that they can grow physically, cognitively, spiritually, creatively, socially, and aesthetically.

Primarily, we are energized by God's love for all people. We strive to give each child an early start in learning about the Christian faith and its values to build a self-confident, loving, and moral child and future-adult.

We also look to the future world our children will live in and aspire to address those critical skills they will need to be healthy, happy, and successful in life. These skills go beyond basic academics and include problem identification and solving; creative thinking; critical thinking; respect for diversity and multiple perspectives; communication skills; emotional intelligence; social problem-solving skills; taking on challenges and risk assessment; self-directed and engaged learning; sensitivity to the environment and resource conservation.

Our Philosophy

The philosophy that guides the staff of Good Shepherd Day School is built on respect for the uniqueness of each child and each family. Every child is hard at work: curious, watching, imitating peers and adults, exploring with all senses, experimenting socially, physically, and intellectually, and constructing her and his understanding of the world. Parents and educators are the roots and the branches providing support.

Good Shepherd Day School offers a program that is guided by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices with young children. Children “learn by doing” in an environment which encourages the development of a joy for learning. The play environment encourages positive development across a wide range of domains while building self-confidence, independence, and self-discipline. We provide opportunities for discovery, learning through concrete experiences, imaginative free play, observation, and positive peer and adult interaction.

Our Curriculum

At Good Shepherd Day School, we blend various research-based approaches to early childhood education, including the much-celebrated Reggio Emilia Approach, the Piagetian based High Scope curriculum, the writings of Lev Vygotsky, the intuitive genius of Maria Montessori, and the child-sensitive RIE philosophy (Resources for Infant Educators). We incorporate the Florida Birth Through Five Standards and VPK guidelines to make sure all readiness skills are addressed. Our VPK classroom utilizes *Creative Curriculum* and *Handwriting without Tears*. Underlying all of what we do is a grounding in our Faith that God made each of us unique and with a special purpose to exercise those talents. We celebrate these natural talents and gifts that each child has in multiple ways throughout the day.

Our Staff

Research shows that the most important component of quality childcare is the staff. Good Shepherd Day School staff members have specialized training in early childhood, child development, or related fields. Staff members are committed to providing age-appropriate experiences in an accepting, warm environment. The Director, Krista Monroe, holds a BS in Elementary Education (Social Sciences, English Language Arts) and master’s degree in educational Leadership, leading the staff in the development of the overall program. The Director and Staff participate annually in a minimum of 10 hours of staff development, which can include local, state, and national workshops and programs. Ultimately, beyond education and experience, the best staff will always be those who hold a passion for educating young children in a loving, respectful way as we strive to do daily.

Enrollment Information

Enrollment Eligibility

Good Shepherd Day School offers classes for children 20 months to 5 years of age. We admit students of any race, color, national, ethnic, and religious origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. We do not discriminate based on race, color, national and ethnic or religion in administration of educational policies, admission policies, and other school administered programs.

Children with special needs will be considered for enrollment based on the school's financial and physical ability to accommodate for the special need and the parent's ability to support the school. On occasion, consideration to the gender makeup of a classroom will be given to maintain a reasonable balance of boys and girls.

To apply, parents must complete an electronic *Waiting List Application* (found on GSDayschool.com).

Registration Information

- All families interested in enrolling in Good Shepherd Day School are encouraged to take a tour. Tour schedule and availability is listed on our website.
- There is a \$50 non-refundable Waiting List fee due at the same time you turn in your Waiting List information form. This fee will be applied to your registration fee if you are accepted into the program.
- Waiting list families will be notified of availability in order of the date when they submitted the wait list form.
- Once you have received confirmation of availability for your child, please return the completed "Enrollment Packet" along with applicable registration and supply fees. Tuition will pull from the card on file on the 1st of each month.
- VPK eligible students must submit their VPK "Certificate of Eligibility" from Hillsborough County, along with their "Enrollment Packet". Registration and supply fees apply only to VPK students who wish to add on extra morning hours.

DCF Childcare Licensing regulations state that all children **must have on file** the following current information, which is due upon enrollment:

- * Hillsborough County Child Enrollment form
- * Well Child Physical form (yellow colored form)
- * Immunization record with expiration date and doctor's signature (blue form)
- * "Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment" form
- * "Alternate Nutrition" form
- * Disclosure of Discipline Policy form
- * Acknowledgement of receipt of the brochure titled "Know Your Child's Day Care."

Re-enrollment Procedures

Good Shepherd Day School's school year runs August to May. Families currently enrolled will complete a re-enrollment process in December for the next school year. Parents who wish to re-enroll their child must complete a ***Desired Program Application*** every January to secure a spot for the following year and pay the Re-Registration fee. **Registration fees are non-refundable.** This process allows us to determine fall vacancies. During the summer, current and future families will be given a new Enrollment Packet to fill out with current information for the new school year.

Parent Enrollment Agreement

Parents are required to sign a Parent Enrollment and Conduct Agreement and a Pledge of Financial Commitment which become the contract between the parent(s) and Good Shepherd Day School regarding payment of fees, services, and responsibilities. The contract is valid for a year after signing.

Suspension and Withdrawing from the School

If you choose to withdraw your child from the Good Shepherd Day School, you must provide written notification of your intention to dis-enroll no later than the 15th day of the last month of your child's attendance. Families will not receive a refund for any unused days the month their child is in attendance.

If you need to leave suddenly and are not able to give the school notice by the 15th, you are responsible for paying the upcoming month's tuition, plus any outstanding tuition.

If tuition is two (2) months delinquent, the center will unenroll the child. Upon payment of fees, the child may return or be placed on the school waiting list until space is available.

Good Shepherd Day School may cancel the contract if the parent or guardian fails to meet the full contract terms and conditions, if there are violations of policies or regulations as detailed in the Parent Handbook or in the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) Parent Policies and Procedures guidelines as listed in this handbook.

Good Shepherd Day School reserves the right to discontinue services immediately to any child or family who ceases to benefit from the services of the program. When possible, a two-week notice of dismissal will be given by the school to the parents/guardians. The regular refund policy is applicable (see above).

Suspension and Withdrawing from the School continued:

Termination is always a last resort action which is carried out only when the Director and School Board feel that such action is in the best interest of the child, or the other children enrolled. If the school is unable to meet the needs of the child and/or family, every effort will be made to refer the parent to a more appropriate program for their child. The circumstances under which a child may be terminated are listed below.

- The child exhibits extremely aggressive behavior which endangers another child and/or staff.
- The child's health and safety at the school cannot be assured due to circumstances such as impulsive, risk-taking behavior.
- Unwillingness of the parents/guardians to work with teachers in the management of their child's behavior, and/or refusal to follow the school's recommendations for outside support services.
- The child's developmental needs are not being met at the school due to general immaturity. Behavior indicative of a child's immaturity may include severe ongoing separation issues, excessive need for teacher attention, and inability to function independently or with the group.
- The child has individual special needs which require accommodations causing an undue burden on the school. Accommodations related to the toileting needs of a child with a documented delay or disability shall not be considered an undue burden unless it requires consistent one-on-one from a staff member.

Parents may request copies of their child's file through the director and arrange with their classroom teacher to collect personal belongings, photos, and children's work samples.



Good Shepherd Day School 2023-2024 Program Fees

Tuition for the 2023-2024 school year will be paid in 10 monthly installments.

These will be billed August 1, 2023, through May 1, 2024.

Annual and Semi-annual payments will also be accepted.

****Pizza Friday Lunch includes two slices of pizza, fresh fruit, cookie, and juice (Reef)***

Number of Days	Half Day 7:30-12:30	Full Day- 7:30-3:30
5 days (M, T, W, TH, F) <i>*includes Pizza Friday lunch</i>	Mangrove \$ 780 Reef \$747	Mangrove \$950 Reef \$911
3 days (M, W, F) <i>*includes Pizza Friday lunch</i>	Mangrove \$660 Reef \$ 632	Mangrove \$747 Reef \$715
2 days (T, TH)	Mangrove \$487 Reef \$466	Mangrove \$ 594 Reef \$ 568
Full Day Pre-K with VPRE-K- 5 days only <i>*includes Pizza Friday lunch</i>	-----	\$663
Extended care (3:30pm-5:00pm)	\$20.00 per day	\$125.00 per month

Please note that classroom assignments and requested schedules are awarded based on the order received, classroom availability, and age group capacity.

Children must meet the following age requirements: Mangrove children must be 2 by December 31st, unless approved by administration based on staffing/ ratios Pre-K 3(Reef) children must be 3 by September 1st and be fully potty-trained Pre-K 4(Reef) children must be 4 by September 1st, and fully potty-trained.

Program discounts and fees:

Parish member discount:	15% discount applied to all half and full day rates only.
Sibling/Military discount:	10% discount applied to one child's tuition. Parent must fill out the <u>request for military discount form</u> in order to receive discount.
Board member discount:	10% discount applied to tuition.
Volunteer coordinator discount:	5% discount applied to tuition.
Waiting list/ Application fee:	\$50.00 one-time, non-refundable fee applied to registration fee.
Annual supply fee:	\$250.00 due with first tuition.
Annual registration fee:	\$250.00 non-parish member, \$150.00 parish member. Per child: non-refundable, due upon registration.
Late tuition fee:	\$50.00 fee for credit card / ACH issues not resolved by the 5 th .
Late pick-up fee:	\$5.00 for every 5 minutes late per child.
Drop-in fee:	\$50.00 for Half Day, \$60.00 for Full Day. \$20.00 for PM Only (if space permits)



Good Shepherd Day School Calendar 2023-2024

August:

- August 9th: OPEN HOUSE 3:00 p.m.-5:00p.m.
- August 10th: First Day of School

September:

- September 4th- GSDS Closed in observance of Labor Day
 - September 12 @8:30am FroGs Meeting
- September 27th: Jack Hartmann Back to School Concert 10-11am
families and siblings welcome!

October:

- October 10th@8:30am FroGs Meeting
- October 16th: GSDS Closed Fall Conferences
- October 31st @ 10:00 am- Halloween Trunk or Treat

November:

- November 14 @8:30am FroGs Meeting
- November 10th: CLOSED in observance of Veteran's Day
- November 16th-17th: Classroom Thanksgiving Feasts
 - November 20th-24th: CLOSED Fall Break

December:

- December 12 @8:30am FroGs Meeting
- Polar Express & Holiday Pajamas (TBD)
 - GSDS Christmas Pageant (TBD)
- December 25th-January 5th: CLOSED Winter Break



January:

- January 8th: First day back of spring semester
 - January 9th @8:30am FroGs Meeting
- January 15th: CLOSED in honor of Martin Luther King Day
 - January 19th: Gasparilla event (playground time)

February:

- February 13th @8:30am: FroGs Meeting
- February 14th: Classroom Valentine's Day parties
- February 15th & 16th Valentine's with Dad at Drop-off
- February 16th: GSDS will remain open (HCPS closed)

March:

- March 4th: GSDS will remain open (HCPS closed)
 - March 11th-15th: CLOSED Spring Break
- March 19th: Local Elections-closed for safety/Spring Conferences
 - March 27th-28th: Agape Feasts @11am(lunch)
 - March 29th: CLOSED in observance of Good Friday

April:

- April 9th @8:30am FroGs Meeting
- April 22: Earth Day Event (playground time)

May:

- May 6th- May 10th: Staff Appreciation Week
- May 9th & 10th: Mother's Day Celebration at drop-off
 - May 14th @8:30am FroGs Meeting
- May 17th: Pre-k4/VPK Graduation Celebration (TBA)
- May 24th Last Day of School Water Day(playground time)

**Calendar is subject to change at the school's discretion. In the event of an emergency situation, we will follow the closure of Hillsborough County Public Schools.*

Policies and Procedures

Accidents

Good Shepherd staff does their upmost daily to make sure the learning environment is safe. However, because children are just learning to use their bodies in space and are in close contact with each other, minor bumps and bruises will occur.

First Aid procedures are followed when caring for an injured child. For minor accidents, parents are notified at the end of the day in writing or in person, detailing the nature of the injury, the incident and any first aid that was administered. A copy will be provided for the parents if requested. The original is maintained in the child's file. Confidentiality is maintained if more than one child is involved. For more severe accidents, see the section titled **Emergency Medical Care** below.

Absences and Late Arrivals

The school day at Good Shepherd Day School starts at 8:30 for all children. We ask you to arrive at the school by 8:15. If your child will be late or absent, please notify the school before 8:00 a.m. by telephone to allow for accurate planning for snacks and activities. It is important that your child arrives on time to receive the full benefit of the curriculum and the day's planned activities. *When children arrive late, it is difficult for them to "jump in" to whatever part of the day is happening in the classroom without a transition time.* When you arrive at the school with your child, please allow some time to spend with a little routine or a special goodbye moment and to give your teacher any important information about your child's morning. Regular attendance gives your child a sense of predictability and security.

Arrival Procedures

Parents will enter through the main lobby gate and take their child to their classroom. The teachers will sign the children in and out of the attendance log. Parents are to notify the teacher of the child's arrival before leaving and communicate any special needs for the day.

It is the parent's responsibility to supervise and protect children from traffic and other hazards during arrival and departure.

Assessment

Good Shepherd Day School is strongly committed to authentic assessment of each child in our program. Throughout the year, we will be busy overseeing your child and documenting his/her progress. As teachers, our knowledge of each child helps us to plan appropriately a challenging curriculum to tailor and meet each child's strengths, needs and interests. Assessment is defined as the process of observing, recording and documenting what children do, know and understand. All information collected is held in a confidential manner. Conference days are offered twice per year for each family to discuss their child's progress and develop goals together.

We use these steps in our assessment process:

- Collect facts-all information secured in file folder or electronic page
- Analyze and evaluate the collected data on a regular basis
- Use what we learned to plan for individual child or group
- Results are used to support curriculum goals and individual learning
- Results may be used to identify children in need of referral services

Under the direction and supervision of the director and assistant director, the staff at the school are involved in the assessment of children and receive ongoing training and teaching resources to support their understanding. Assessment information included in each child's individual portfolio may include:

- Parent/teacher conference documentation, plans of actions, etc.
- Use of developmental checklists, social inventory, anecdotal records, progress reports, samples of work, drawing, paintings, writing, stories, block building, etc. Photos included to support their work.
- Family Questionnaire documenting family culture, experiences, and language needs
- Project Work – documentation panels displayed throughout the environment
- All educators, specialists, and consultant's documentation

Babysitting

The Good Shepherd Day School board strongly discourages the use of current staff for babysitting. If family and staff members agree to some sort of babysitting arrangement, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and its administration personnel are not responsible for the staff's behavior, including supervision and treatment of a child, and will not be held liable for anything that occurs off the church grounds.

Birthdays and Holiday Celebrations

Parents must notify the teachers of their child's classroom one week in advance of bringing in any kind of birthday treat because by Florida State law, we must give the families of the rest of the children in the class notice that there will be a snack and what the snack will be. Please use the Birthday Treat form located on our website for staff to display for the rest of the families.

We invite you to bring in a cooking activity or healthy snack to celebrate your child's birthday. Cooking activities: a banana split, fruit smoothies or one of your child's favorite foods. Donating a book with your child's name to the classroom serves as a lasting reminder to all of your child's special day.

For many families, holiday celebrations are a time to get together with family and share traditions. With the many cultures represented with the families at our school, we have developed the following philosophy on holidays:

- We primarily focus on those holidays and celebrations with a Christian origin.
- We want the children in our program to be exposed to as many different cultures and their celebrations as possible and may, without demeaning or trivializing them, recognize and honor different cultures and their traditions.
- Please fill out the Holiday Food form in your enrollment packet to allow your child to participate in the events you select.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Employees of Good Shepherd Day School are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. If the staff have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is neglected or abused, they are required by law to report the suspected neglect or abuse to the Florida Department of Children and Families. Employees of GSDS and of the church all have undergone complete local, state, and national screenings that would disqualify them from working with children. Regular volunteers must sign an Attestation of Good Moral Character that states they have done nothing that would disqualify them from working with children.

Classroom Observers and Visitors

Good Shepherd Day School participates in the local professional early childhood community. From time to time, you may see observers in the classroom: intern students, professionals, and prospective parents. Observers are required to schedule their observation time and check in with the school staff. These observers will remain under a staff member's constant supervision and not be left alone with any child.

If the school is involved with an outside program to come in and conduct a study that your child is a candidate for, you will be given detailed information regarding the study and a written permission slip for you to fill out from the persons completing the study. You are not required to give your child permission to participate and you also have the right to withdraw your child during the study at any time. We will not allow your child to be left with a student or faculty member without supervision of a school staff. If one-on-one research is requested for the study, the students must have your permission to sign the child out to conduct this study and then sign the child back in after they are done for the day.

Clothing, Jewelry and Items from Home

Your child will play, climb, paint, glue, and get covered in sand and water while in the program. We ask that you dress your child in outfits that will allow him/her to fully experience all the activities that we provide at our school.

Shoes should be sturdy and closed toed (sandals that provide foot and toe protection are allowed). **NO CROCS OR FLIP-FLOPS PLEASE!** Children also have occasion to fall while playing in the playground, so long pants provide protection from scraped knees and comfort while sitting on the floor.

If the staff notices that your child is having a difficult time participating in the daily activities due to clothing or shoes, they will bring it to your attention and ask for an alternative.

Each child must have at least one extra set of clothing at the school; this is to ensure your child can change after water play or a potty accident. Please mark all your child's clothing with permanent ink or name labels. This includes hats, gloves, coats, underwear, socks, pants, shirts, and sweaters.

We encourage children to take care of their clothing, but we cannot take responsibility for clothing or other personal items that are lost at school.

The school maintains extra "loaner" clothing. They are clearly marked with permanent ink. If your child is wearing "loaner" clothing at the end of the day, it means that there was a need to change your child and there were no extra clothes available. We ask that you wash and return these clothes, so we have them if the need arises again. If you have clothing to donate for extras, please inform the staff.

We do not encourage jewelry on children at school. These items can injure your child while they are playing, and all instances of injury are at your own risk. Children often lose jewelry or even give these items to other children; the school does not take any responsibility for any damaged, lost, stolen, or given away jewelry.

Clothing, Jewelry and Items from Home continued:

If your child needs a special “lovey” or blanket from home, we will attempt to have the child keep it in his/her cubby and use it primarily for nap times or when they just need it for comfort.

We do encourage children to bring books from home. These can be shared with the whole class during daily story time. If your child wants to bring something, have them bring a book to read or an interesting rock or another natural item that can be incorporated into the classroom.

Communication Process

Regular communication between family and teacher is extremely important to our staff and the philosophy of our program. We achieve this in several ways:

- Good Shepherd Day School Family Handbook
- Church/school web site
- Parent conferences at least twice per year with your Primary Caregiver
- A parent bulletin board is in each classroom.
- Daily greeting and good-bye of all children and parents
- Weekly, or if needed, daily discussion with parents on child’s progress/concerns
- Message board – posted at the entry/lobby for upcoming events and reminders to parents
- Parent app for weekly communications, photos and reminders
- Parent resources – materials available on a variety of topics as well as resources in the community available in the school office
- Friends of Good Shepherd (FrOGS) meetings to plan events that have a positive impact on the lives of the children, families, and staff.

Complaint Process

If you, as a parent/guardian, have any complaints or concerns regarding Good Shepherd Day School, we require you to follow the school’s process to address these issues. These complaints or concerns can be regarding any of the following:

- Allegations of unlawful discrimination regarding actual or perceived sex, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, mental or physical disability, or age or based on a person’s association with a person or group with one or more of these.
- The physical condition of the school and the materials therein.
- Services that your child receives while attending the school.
- Interactions that you’ve had with a staff member or other parent/guardians.
- Any other issues that you feel have a negative effect on the children at the school.

Complaint Process continued:

All complaints are to be addressed to the Good Shepherd Day School Director. Both are responsible for receiving, investigating, and resolving the complaint. Under no circumstances should a parent with a complaint involve teaching staff or other families in the situation.

Any complaint that you present to the Director in person or in writing will be investigated and the Director will respond in person or in writing to the plan of action. All documents and other evidence you feel necessary must be submitted to the Director if related to the allegations of the complaint. You may file an appeal in writing within 15 days upon receipt of the Director's response to the Pastor for further resolution if you find you do not agree with the decision of the Director.

Conferences

Conferences days are scheduled twice in the school year. During the conferences, you will meet with your child's teacher to discuss your child's strengths and appropriate developmental goals.

Confidentiality

Children's records are considered confidential. Children's records are available to the director, assistant director, teachers, and agency inspectors. All assessments are shared with parents. Copies of assessments are available upon request.

In accordance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines, children's school records are kept in a secure area and released only to designated parties and parents. Child and family information is also computerized with access by password only. Additional access to the file must be approved by the parent with a written permission form. Legal requests for children's records will be handled by the church's legal services.

We also ask that all parents keep confidential any knowledge they have about another child or family that could be interpreted in a harmful or discriminatory way.

Departure Procedures

Parents will enter through the main lobby gate to pick up their child. Upon pick up, the teacher will sign your child OUT on the attendance log.

Your child learns the routine of the day and when his/her classmates are picked up in relation to when you arrive. If you think that you may be late in picking up your child, please call your classroom teacher or the school immediately, so we can reassure your child.

Pick-up time should be 12:30 for half-day program attendees; 3:30 for full day attendees; and by 5:00 for extended day attendees. **Parents are asked to be respectful of the staff's need to close the center at 5:00 p.m.**

If your child is picked up late, you will be charged a late fee. The fee is \$5.00 for every 5 minutes late, per child. At dismissal/ closure time, staff would begin to call from your child's authorized list to find an adult, if they had not heard from you. If no authorized adult can be found, the Police Department will be called.

At pick up time, take a few minutes to allow your child a chance to clean up what he/she was working on or to show you the painting or discovery of the day, and if your child's teacher is still here, to discuss how their day went. When your child is signed out, you acknowledge that you are now responsible for him/her.

Please supervise your child(ren) closely on the playground if you do choose to spend some time there at the end of his or her day.

Please make sure a staff member in the room recognizes your arrival or departure. If you are unable to pick up your child, he/she will be released only to adults (18 years or over) designated on the emergency release form or other adults designated in writing in advance. Please inform all designated adults that photo identification is required, as well as proper child safety seats.

Please do not let your child leave the school without you, even if there is someone waiting for them in the front office or parking lot; please keep them with you always.

Children will be released only to a parent or other persons designated on the *Emergency Contact Form*. Parents must provide **permission in writing** for any additional pick-up designees.

Those parents who may have pending custody conflicts should consult with an attorney regarding legal protection for their children. Parents must provide us with any court orders so that we can enforce your legal rights, should the need arise.

Emergency Evacuation

Our Emergency Plan provides for response to all types of emergencies. In the event of an emergency, which would require evacuation of the school, children will be evacuated to a designated safe area. Parents will be notified of the emergency and the location and condition of their child as means of communication permit.

Depending on the circumstance of the emergency, we will use one of the following protective actions:

- ***Immediate evacuation:*** Students are evacuated to a safe area on the grounds of the facility in the event of a fire, etc.
- ***In-place sheltering:*** Sudden occurrences, weather or hazardous materials related, may dictate that taking cover inside the building is the best immediate response. The emergency relocation site is either in the school kitchen or in the church sanctuary, depending on the location and nature of the emergency.
- ***Evacuation:*** Total evacuation of the facility may become necessary if there is a danger in the area. In this case, children will be taken to a relocation facility. We currently have 2 available, they are:
 - Emergency Relocation Facility A at **The Tahitian Inn**
 - And Emergency Relocation Facility B at **LA Fitness**

If it ever becomes necessary to relocate, a sign will be posted on the door stating which facility we've gone to (A or B). **If you're not sure how to get there, please ask for directions before there is an emergency.**

- *Modified Operation:* May include cancellation/postponement or rescheduling of normal activities. These actions are normally taken in case of a severe weather or building problems (such as utility disruptions) that make it unsafe for children, but may be necessary in a variety of situations.

Please listen to ***Bay News 9 or WUSF FM*** for announcements relating any of the emergency actions listed above. We ask that you not call during the emergency. This will keep the main telephone line free to make emergency calls and relay information. You can call your classroom teacher as an alternate number in an emergency event.

The form designating persons to pick up your child is included in the enrollment packet and these people will be contacted in the event you cannot pick up your child in an emergency event.

Emergency fire drills are held monthly, using either primary or secondary escape routes.

Emergency Contact/Pick-up Information

It is the parent's responsibility to make sure emergency contact/ pick-up information is provided as requested and kept current throughout the school year.

Parents are asked to advise the school staff of changes of address, phone number, emergency information, class schedule, or any family information that might affect the child's well-being while at school.

Emergency Medical Care

In case of accident or emergency concerning a child, the director or director's designee will promptly take such measures as are, in his/her judgment, in the best interest of the child. A staff member with a valid first aid or CPR certificate shall treat a child with a physical injury. In the case of a serious injury, parents will be contacted to transport the child to a medical facility. Parents will be notified using the emergency information provided on the enrollment form. If the parent(s) cannot be located or the injury requires emergency medical treatment, will obtain needed emergency services by calling 911.

Family Fieldtrips and Special Events

Our field trips are planned as special family events. Families provide their own transportation to the field trip site and are responsible for their own child. We encourage you to join us on as many fieldtrips as possible!

Good Shepherd Church and its representatives are not responsible for any injury or death that results from going to or from a field trip, during a field trip, or because of having attended a field trip.

Some field trips require an entrance or participation fee that each family is responsible for paying.

In addition, we may also have special guest speakers or children's program coordinators to give a special presentation. These are supervised by the classroom teachers, and children are never left in their care. Some guest speakers and events may require a fee. We will let you know well in advance how much it is.

We do invite select outside vendors to give optional extra-curricular classes (music, dance, theatre) outside of your child's regular hours. For these, you would sign-up and pay for the classes directly with the vendor. Credit on your account does not apply to these vendors/classes. Teachers do not supervise these vendors, but we make sure the company they work for has them screened prior to coming to our school.

Food Allergies

Good Shepherd Day School is a nut-free school. We ask all parents to find an alternative to peanut and other nut products for their child's lunch. Food allergies must be documented by the child's physician. A medical plan and emergency contacts must be provided in case of an allergic reaction. For safety purposes, allergies will be posted in the child's classroom. Reasonable accommodation will be made for children who have food allergies to eat in an area that does not come into direct contact with a potentially dangerous food.

Guidance and Discipline Policy

Good Shepherd Day School is a place where children are respected as they learn about the world around them. Teachers who work here understand that their job includes:

- Teaching children about socially acceptable behaviors: how to make and keep friends; how to take turns; how to ask for things; those touches should be gentle; how to begin to share; how to be generous and thoughtful; how to resolve conflicts with others in an appropriate way.
- Teaching children about how to respect the learning environment: taking care of equipment; taking responsibility for cleaning up toys and messes; how to be safe and take safe risks.
- Teaching children how to become emotionally literate/intelligent: helping children understand their own feelings and understand the feelings of others; how to describe how their feelings using appropriate words; how to handle strong feelings in an appropriate, non-aggressive way.
- Teaching children to respect diversity: respect for how people look, dress, eat, speak; that bullying is not acceptable.

Guidance and Discipline Policy continued:

As children learn social-emotional skills, it is expected that teachers use positive discipline and guidance techniques always. These strategies include:

- Using logical and natural consequences in appropriate situations.
- Discussing the behavior with the child, kneeling to speak to them.
- Using physical touch to reassure or guide children as needed.
- Telling children what to do, instead of what not to do.
- Redirecting a child's behavior to a situation where they can practice their need to do the behavior in a safe, acceptable way.
- Using the classroom room arrangement, equipment, activities, and schedule as management and prevention tools.
- Using teaching strategies to teach social-emotional skills like reading stories, playing group games, role-playing, peace corners.
- Using signals for transitions: bells, songs, games, etc.
- Team teaching: supporting each other's efforts when using guidance.
- Using intensive individual interventions that are developed in partnership with the families of children who have severe behaviors and any outside personnel (if needed)
- Using the language of acceptance and understanding, **Active Listening**, to develop positive relationships with children and their families.
- Allowing children to have "time away" or "cool-off time" if they are unable to participate safely or appropriately with others.
- Using teacher proximity to manage behavior, particularly on the playground.

Prohibited Teacher Behaviors

The following teacher behaviors are not allowed at Good Shepherd Day School:

- Time out (as defined as a teacher-controlled amount of time a child sits apart from the group).
- Withdrawal of a planned meal as a form of consequence or punishment.
- Withdrawal of physical activity time.
- Withdrawal of educational activity time.
- Isolation from the group at activity time or mealtime.
- Isolation of a child in a closet, cabinet, or other confining space.
- Using derogatory, disrespectful language such as "You are bad", "You are a brat", "You are a pain", "You are evil", "You are an ugly person".
- Any threat of physical punishment, either verbally ("You are going to get a spanking") or physically (raising your hand or other body part in a threatening manner).
- Any actual physical punishment including hitting, pinching, biting, slapping of hands, pushing, kicking.

- Disrespectful language of a child's parents/caregivers, their culture, ethnicity, or heritage as a way of manipulating a child or shaming a child.
- Language that is shaming something about a child that they cannot control such as appearance, smell, ability/disability, or speech.
- Using Barriers to Communication (as defined in Teacher Effectiveness Training by Thomas Gordon), such as sarcasm and name calling.
- Yelling or screaming across the classroom or playground as a regular way of communicating to children about their behavior.
- ***Physical restraint is only permissible when a child is uncontrollably harming other children/adults, harming the school property/equipment, or harming him/herself. Physical restraint should be stopped if it is obvious that too much force is needed to restrain the child without causing the child harm. All occasions of physical restraint should be reported to the director and to the parent.***

Teachers who ***routinely use*** (as defined by daily or weekly, or in many situations, or instead of the use of positive guidance strategies provided during orientation training) these behaviors, or any other behavior that is observed to be inappropriate in developing children's healthy social-emotional skills, will be counseled by the administration, with possible immediate termination, if a child's health or safety is threatened.

School Expectations for Children:

- No Hurts: Children are physical explorers of their environment, including each other. We teach children to touch each other nicely (no hitting, pushing, kicking, biting, etc.). We also teach the children that words are for getting needs met, not for bullying or taunting. The teachers, equipment and learning environment also have a right to have "no hurts". If someone is breaking the rule, the children and teacher discuss the rule and look for alternatives.
- Stick Together: To maintain supervision, safety and provide learning experiences, the children are expected to stay with their classroom group.
- Have Fun! If someone is not having fun, that means their needs are not getting met. Teachers will explore with the children what needs they have and find acceptable ways to get them met so they have positive feelings about their school day.

Biting and Extreme Aggressive Behavior Policy and Procedures

At Good Shepherd Day School (GSDS) the children's safety is our primary concern. Therefore, we look at repeated and unresponsive extreme aggression by a child to another child or teacher as a safety issue.

The following guidelines are to help everyone concerned with a child who demonstrates aggressive behavior. It outlines the steps that are normally taken in response by the school to maintain the safety of the people who come to GSDS.

GSDS Definition of Normal Aggressive Behavior and Extreme Aggressive Behavior

Aggressive behavior is behavior which is demonstrated by a child that causes either physical or psychological harm to another person. It is natural and normal for every young child at some point to use aggressive behavior on occasion. Children try aggressive behaviors because they either lack verbal or social skills to solve social problems get their needs met, or because they are trying out behaviors to see if it is socially acceptable in the school setting. The teachers at GSDS have been trained to handle most types of typical aggressive behavior, and most the time, children respond to these guidance strategies.

Extreme aggressive behaviors are those behaviors:

- that do not respond to normal teacher guidance
- that require interventions beyond what the teachers and school are capable of
- that are disruptive to the educational flow of the day
- that require a teacher most time one-on-one with a child
- that are frequent and intense (three or more times within five consecutive days or less of attendance)
- that cause physical or psychological harm to the children or adults at the school.

Extreme physical aggression includes, but is not limited to:

- Biting (both breaking the skin and not)
- Hitting (leaving a mark or not; with an object or not)
- Kicking (leaving a mark or not)
- Pushing down or over (that causes injury or not)
- Throwing objects (that causes injury or not)

Extreme verbal/psychological aggression includes, but is not limited to:

- Profanity
- Name calling
- Taunting
- Bullying
- Derogatory remarks about another child's appearance, clothes, family, etc.

GSDS Procedure for Responding to Extreme Aggressive Behavior

1. We notify the parents of both the aggressor and victim regarding the event using an "Incident Report".

2. Parents of both children involved sign and return the Incident Reports.
3. The Incident Reports are kept on file in the Director's office. A copy can be given to either parent upon request.
4. If **two incidents** of extreme aggressive behavior have occurred **within one day** (biting, hitting, etc.) the parent will be called and asked to take the child home within the hour.
5. **If 3 days of extreme aggressive behavior have occurred within five consecutive days of attendance**, a conference with the aggressive child's family will be held within 10 days when they will discuss possible causes/triggers, and possible interventions from both the home and school.
6. A plan of action will be created with the aggressive child's parents, teachers, and Director. The Director may request that the parents take their child to a professional (doctor, therapist, etc.) to have them receive appropriate screening so all parties can better understand the nature of the child's behavior before the plan of action is written. The Director or parent may request that developmental professionals attend the meeting to help with the plan for the child.
7. The plan of action will contain a timeline for all parties to implement the plan of action and for when the child's behavior should decrease in frequency or stop. The timeline will vary per the nature of the aggressive behavior, the age of the child, and other variables.
8. If the behavior gets better, but the child later returns to use extreme aggressive behavior that has the same frequency and severity that led to the first action plan, then the process will happen again. The process can occur no more than a maximum of two times within the child's total attendance at GSDS.
9. If after the period put forth in the plan of action passes, and the child's behavior has either not changed, gotten worse, or the child is beginning a new set of aggressive behaviors, or the family shows no concern and does not follow-through on the agreed plan of action, the family will be called in for a conference within 10 days to begin the child's disenrollment and transition to their new care options.
10. Disenrollment from the center will vary per the family's ability to find alternate and appropriate care for their child.
11. GSDS reserves the right to immediately dis-enroll any child who has such extreme aggressive behavior that a plan of action is not enough to secure the safety of the children and adults of the school.

Health and Safety

It is our goal to keep the children in our program as healthy as possible, but there are times when your child must stay at home when ill. Illnesses are very common when your child first enters a school setting and at the beginning of the year. As your child's immunity increases, the amount of time being ill will decrease.

Every morning staff will check your child's health status upon arrival to the school. This health check is informal, but if your child appears to be showing signs of illness, he/she may not be admitted to the program.

If your child becomes ill while at the school, you or other authorized persons will be called and required to pick up your child promptly depending on the severity of symptoms.

We cannot accommodate requests from parents to keep their children indoors, because we must maintain staff-child ratios. Children will be dressed warmly in cold weather under 60 degrees and will not be permitted outside in the rain, except for under patio/covered areas or with proper rain gear to cover them with. In hot weather, children will be encouraged to play in the shade areas to help keep them cool and water will always be accessible.

The Staff are trained in procedures to maintain a healthy environment through cleaning and hand washing, as well as with universal precautions. However, it is impossible to completely prevent the spread of disease in any setting, though we will do our best to limit it. Keep in mind that many common communicable diseases are transmitted through air and are not preventable if a contagious child is present.

Please notify the preschool office if your child contracts a contagious disease so that parents may be notified of their child's exposure.

Upon returning to school following illness, children should be symptom-free for 24 hours without preventative medication (Tylenol, Imodium A-D, etc.). Children may not attend the program if any of the following symptoms are present:

- A child who has been absent five (5) or more consecutive days due to illness **must have a doctor's note before returning to the program.** **Covid Quarantine does not apply*
- **A child having a contagious condition: such as, measles, chicken pox, mumps, whooping cough, hand/foot and mouth, and streptococcal infections.** Once diagnosed by a doctor, please inform the school. We will notify other parents of the disease and symptoms, while keeping your child's name confidential. The child may return when he/she is no longer contagious, when symptoms are gone or with a doctor's note.
- A child with a **fever** (oral 101 degrees or higher, armpit 100 degrees or higher) cannot be accepted. The child must be fever free **without** medication for 24 hours prior to returning to the program. Your child may return to school before 24 hours when teething caused the fever.
- **Lice, Scabies and Pinworms:** Must notify school. Hair must be washed with medicated shampoo and be free of all nits (eggs) and lice (insects) for 24 hours before returning to the school. Child must be treated with prescription medication for scabies and pinworms and cleared by a doctor to return to school.
- **Eye infection/discharge:** pink eye or other eye infections are highly contagious. The child may return with a doctor's release that he/she is no longer contagious.
- **Rashes:** A doctor must diagnose unidentified rashes or skin conditions and the child may return with a release. If the child is uncomfortable due to a rash (diaper rash included), we may ask that you keep them at home until they have healed adequately and can comfortably participate in the program.

- **Coughing:** A child should remain home with a cough accompanied with a fever or when having difficulty breathing (due to cough or asthma). The child may return when symptoms disappear.
- **Diarrhea:** Loose bowel movements that are not contained by a diaper or underwear, or three (3) very loose stools in one day, requires that the child to stay home until the symptoms clear. If your child is teething, has food allergies or is on medication that may cause a loose bowel movement, please provide this information to the staff.
- **Vomiting:** If your child has forceful vomiting with other symptoms or is unable to eat, you will be notified, and the child may be sent home. Vomiting due to gastroenteritis, stomach flu, is caused by viruses that can spread to others. You must keep your child home until there has been no vomiting for at least 24 hours.

One of the most difficult decisions for the childcare staff is determining when to send a child home from daily activities due to illness. A primary goal is to provide a healthy environment by controlling the spread of disease to provide the best care, while being sensitive to family needs.

Medications

Over the counter and prescription medications will be administered by a trained staff member **only with a doctor's written instruction or as prescribed.**

- Your child's name must be on the original container, and we can only administer medication as directed on the label for your child's age/weight, unless a doctor provides other written directions.
- Parents must fill out a medication form and give the form and medication directly to the staff for proper storage. **Never have your child possess any medication or add medication to a drink.** If you can administer the medication yourself, we encourage you to do that.

We highly suggest that if your child is on a regular prescription medication schedule that you have the pharmacy split the prescription so that the school has one and you have one at home so that the chances of forgetting to take it home or bringing it to school are minimized and your child does not miss a dose.

- If your child has an epi-pen or other medication to treat an allergy, specific instructions regarding symptoms to look for and appropriate administration and dosage from your **doctor must be on file.**
- Topical ointments, such as diaper rash cream or sunscreen, will also need a medication form filled out and signed by the parent/guardian (see enrolment packet for the form).

Handbook update/clarification- January 2024:

When a child is sent home with symptoms we ask for parents to monitor the child for a minimum of 24 hours to ensure the symptoms are improved before the return to school. For example, if a child is sent home on a Monday morning, the earliest they would be allowed to return would be Wednesday, assuming symptoms have cleared up.

The Director can make all final decisions on attendance when considering the health and wellbeing of the other students and staff.

Meals

Children are provided a morning snack, which depending on the classroom, can be from 9:00-10:15am and an afternoon snack between 2:45-3:15. Nutritious snacks consist of two food groups that meet the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program Guidelines. Menus are posted in each classroom and in the school lobby.

Snacks may be provided by parents on special occasions such as a child's birthday; however, they must meet minimum nutritional standards if taking the place of a school sponsored meal and the parent must notify the school at least one week in advance.

Lunch from home should also meet the USDA guidelines and include a representative food from each of the four food groups: dairy, grain, fruit/vegetable, and protein. Chips and sodas of any kind do not constitute a food group and we ask that these be left at home.

Open Door Policy

Good Shepherd Day School maintains an open-door policy. Parents are encouraged to visit the school anytime during hours of operation 7:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

Outdoor Play

Fresh air, sunshine, and exercise are good for children and recommended by pediatricians. Children play outdoors daily unless steady rain or lightning is present. The equipment and grounds are checked daily for safety and cleanliness. Teachers position themselves throughout the playground taking vantage points that allow them the best angles for supervision. Children of all ages can explore and experience the playground while following playground rules. If a child refuses to comply with safety rules, he/she may be asked to sit with a teacher or with a quiet activity until he/she feels ready to resume playing while following school rules.

If you choose to stay a while on the playground during pick up or drop off time, we ask that you supervise your child and expect them to follow all the rules during their time on campus. Parents should not expect teachers to supervise their child while the parent/guardian is present.

Photography

Parents are asked to sign a *Photography Permission Form* upon enrollment. Photographs are taken throughout the school year by school staff for documentation purposes. A professional photographer is contracted to take individual and group portraits in the fall and spring of the school year. Parents will be notified in advance of the date and details.

Potty Training and Toileting

Successful potty training is reliant upon certain conditions: children usually have basic speech skills, bladder awareness and neurological development, and can take off and put on their own clothes. Until your child is potty trained, you must make sure that there are enough diapers/pull-ups and wipes for your child at the school. You are responsible to check daily to ensure that your child will not run out of diapers/pull-ups or wipes.

Once you and your Primary Caregiver agree that your child is showing readiness to be potty trained, we ask that you send in two complete changes of clothing (shirt, pants, underwear, socks and shoes). We find that children learn how to use the potty easier if you avoid Pull-up style diapers and move straight to underwear. If after two weeks your child is not showing progress, we may ask you to consider stopping the potty training until your child shows more readiness. Please work closely with your Primary Caregiver on this issue!

Because of the ages of the children, we serve at the school, **we do not provide separate boy's restrooms or girl's restrooms**. Children are requested to use the restroom closest to the staff member on hand to provide supervision and be available if the child needs assistance.

Children who are in the Reef Classroom, in our PreK 3 and PreK 4/VPK classrooms, must be fully potty trained to attend. Children who have two accidents or more within a week for two consecutive weeks will be asked to either stay home for a few weeks until they are completely potty trained or obtain a medical plan from their doctor that describes their condition and treatments.

Rest Time

Children between the ages of 20 months-3, and those 3-5-year old's who still need a nap, are given a rest time during the hours of 12:30-2:15/2:30pm in one of the classrooms off the playground. We provide a mat, but we ask that you bring a labeled blanket and sheet from home; many children like to sleep with bedding that is familiar to them. The blanket and sheet should be crib/infant size. These should be taken home on a weekly basis and washed. Most families take the bedding home on the weekend, but if this does not fit your laundering schedule, take it home on another evening. Please bring it back for the next school day, so your child will have a restful nap time.

Security

There is a code to access the gate to the school that is given to family members and friends that are approved by the child's parent/guardian. If in the event any suspicious person or activity is noticed, 911 will be called.

Separation Issues

We understand young children often have difficulty with separation. We want to reassure you that we are always ready to talk to you and comfort your child.

Always say good-bye with a kiss, hug and a wave! Be firm, but friendly about leaving. If your child whines or clings, prolonging the good-bye will only make it harder for you and your child. Remember: Be consistent; Follow the same routine – walk in, put away belongings; Always say good-bye.

We are there to help during these transition times and help to comfort your child once you leave. We offer comforting words such as, “I know it’s hard to say good-bye.” Once you have gone through your good-bye routines a few times, your child will get to know what to expect and the good-byes will be less difficult. Should this not be the case, we want you to know that we would call you to let you know how he/she is doing.

Your child will pick up on your confidence about having chosen a good place to him/her to be while you are away. Good feelings are contagious. So, the first step in adjusting to saying good-bye is to be sure you are comfortable with your decision to enroll your child in our program. Please let us know if we can be of further help. We want you to know that separation adjustment is normal and we have the experience of help you and your child ease through this transition time.

Severe Weather and School Closures

The school may be closed due to severe weather, or another local/national emergency as needed. We will follow Hillsborough County Public Schools. The school will also be closed in emergency situations when there is no electrical power, heat, or water for an extended period. *Refunds are not given for days we must close.*

If in the event the school staff is advised to close the school, classroom teachers or volunteer room parents will call the parents in their classroom to let them know either to not come in that day or to come and pick up their child. Please check your **email messages** before returning to school the next day to find out if the school is open.

Show and Tell

Please speak to your classroom teachers about appropriate items and days those items from home may be brought in. We cannot be responsible for the items your child chooses to bring in, so please do not send in anything that is very special or breakable. Also, please do not allow your child to bring in toy guns, swords, make-up, or jewelry.

Smoke-Free Environment

By law, Good Shepherd Day School is a smoke free environment. Per our policy, smoking is not allowed anywhere on the school property during school hours. Thank you for protecting the health of our children and staff.

Social Media Recommendations

The Good Shepherd Day School board recommends that all families, including extended family, avoid networking with the staff to avoid any possible miscommunication or misunderstanding or misuse. This includes Facebook, Twitter, and other electronic social media. If a family is found to be using social media in such a way that the staff, other families, or school's reputation is harmed, it will be brought to the Board's attention, at which time the incident will be discussed and appropriate response planned and carried out, which may include termination of services.

Sunscreen and Insect Spray Practices

Parents are asked to apply insect repellent and sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher on their children before arrival if desired. GSDS provides sunscreen and bug spray, and the staff apply them when conditions warrant. If you would like to provide your own brands because of a skin condition, please send them accompanied with a doctor's note. Please see the Sunscreen and Bug Repellent form in your packet for information on what brands we use.

Teacher-Child Ratios

Our low child-to-adult ratio enhances the learning environment while providing opportunity for individualized curriculum and teaching. Good Shepherd Day School teacher-child ratios are lower than Hillsborough County legal requirements. However, there will be occasions throughout the day where we may revert to the higher county ratios as staffing necessitates.

Hillsborough County ratios are:

12-24 months old: 1 to 6

24-36 months old: 1 to 11

36-48 months old: 1 to 15

48 months and older: 1 to 20 (VPK Class: 1 to 11)

Transitions

Transitions work better when everyone knows what to expect. By planning transitions, we can help children adjust to new settings and approach new experiences in a positive way.

Transitions happen when:

- Children enter a program for the very first time
- Children go from preschool to kindergarten
- Children move to a different community
- Children attend more than one program

The teachers welcome new children and parents into the program in the following ways:

- Registration and tour of preschool – parent and child
- Open Houses – held before each new school year
- Bridging the home/school experience by bringing in a family photo
- Information obtained on each child included on the enrollment forms – special interests, activities, temperament, check list, etc.

Children who are at the end of their stay with us, typically those who are moving on to kindergarten, have special consideration. We help these children in a variety of ways:

- Prepare for children “moving on” using books, music, and games
- “Graduation” ceremony held at the end of the school year
- All other children leaving the program – a special good-bye is planned to help the children make a smooth transition

Translation Services

Language translation services for conferences or for interpretation of key documents can be arranged through Lutheran Services when possible. Parents or teachers may contact the director or church administrator to plan for this service.

Trial Period To meet your needs and that of your child, the program suggests a trial period. The purpose of the trial period is to assess if the program can meet your child’s individual needs and to find out if this is the best place for your child based on his/her unique needs. Typically, the trial period can last from two to four weeks, depending on your child’s attendance schedule. During this period, we will observe your child and confer with you on a regular basis. Each child and his/her needs will be addressed individually. If we cannot meet your child’s needs, and/or if your child has needs that exceed this program,

then we will assist you in finding other childcare services, as well as provide a community service agency listing.

Volunteer Service Hours

Parents/guardians are a vital part to our program. We expect you to be an active part in your child's school experience through a variety of ways. Research shows that outstanding schools are characterized by strong parent involvement. At GSDS, we view the educational process as a partnership shared by staff and parents to support the mission and vision of the school.

Volunteers are also a major factor in lowering maintenance costs so that tuition can be reinvested back into the children's educational programs. It is with this in mind that GSDS has a volunteer service hours' requirement for all families. You may choose:

- **Option 1:** Complete 10 hours of volunteer service hours by May 15th. Family members must fill out a background check (as per Hillsborough County Licensing regulations) if they plan on volunteering more than ten hours per month.
- **Option 2:** A \$150.00 donation to Good Shepherd Day School for school improvements in lieu of donating volunteer hours.

If you do not fully meet the 10 hours by May 29, 2024 you will be given credit for the hours you have completed and be asked to pay \$10 per hour you are short. Each family is responsible for keeping track of their hours either on the Volunteer hours sheet or other system the school sets up and makes available.

Volunteer Service Opportunities

Children enjoy having a parent work in the classroom and the opportunity to share experiences with them. It gives you an opportunity to see your child interact with his/her peers and learn who his/her friends are. Through your participation in the classroom, you will also learn from our staff about different strategies for conflict resolution and how to support children's learning. Opportunities to help in the classroom are to read stories, help with snack/lunch time, share a special skill, hobby, or interest with the children, or help teachers prepare materials for arts and crafts. ***There is a visitor's sign-in log in the day school office, please be sure to sign-in and out.**

The Friends of Good Shepherd (FROGS) meetings are held regularly at the school. This is a time when school information and events are shared, a professional may do parent training, fund-raising events planned, and it is an opportunity to network with the other parents in the program. All parents are invited and encouraged to attend these meetings.

The Good Shepherd Day School Board is a committee that convenes monthly or as needed throughout the year with several parent representatives from the school. The parent representatives are elected and appointed after an interview and selection process and serve for a minimum three-year term. The parents

who are appointed will advise on issues related to the families and children who attend GSDS and bring back the information to the FROGS meetings as appropriate.

Good Shepherd Day School will also announce special school projects that are school-wide and need parent participation, such as school plays, programs, or feasts; garage sales; fund raisers; cleaning and maintenance days; building days; field trips.

VPK Parent Responsibilities

Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten is a state funded program for children who have turned four years old on or before September 1st of the current school year. Good Shepherd Day School has entered an agreement with the state to provide this service for the 2023-2024 school year/summer. However, because this is a service we are volunteering to provide, we and the state reserve the right to terminate our contract at any time and for any reason during the school year. Please be aware that the VPK program is separate from our Day School program.

The state pays us to give your child 540 hours (180 days) during the school calendar year or 300 hours (40 days) during the summer that are instructional days, meant to prepare him/her for kindergarten. For the school to receive funding for VPK students, the following guidelines must be met.

- Students must attend school for some portion of the day for us to receive our funds. For the school year, the hours are 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM, and in the summer from 8:00 AM to 3:30 PM.
- The school only receives funding from the state when they are signed in as present so you must sign the child attendance and parental choice certificate located in the classroom. Please sign the sheet at the bottom only on the last day of attendance for that month.
- The state will pay for up to, but no more than 20% of a student's days of absence per month. After that, will not get paid for the days missed and we have no other way of recapturing that money to pay costs. Therefore, Good Shepherd Day School has the right to dismiss a child from the VPK program for surpassing the 20% allowed monthly absences.
- The state offers several days of forgiveness for days missed, such as death in the family. It is the parent's responsibility to download the form for their request and have it approved. Once the parents receive permission for the days off, please give the form to the office.
- You may be asked at the end of the month to sign an excessive absence form should your child miss more than the allowed 20%. You will have to send in a signed parent excuse for days 4-5. Days 6-10 must be doctor excused.
- Parents are responsible for all state and school policies relating to the VPK **and** regular school program and any changes that may occur during the school year.
- Parents are responsible for any **additional costs** associated with the program such as extended day, guest speakers, field trips.