



First United Methodist
PRESCHOOL

Family Handbook 2023-2024





Celebrating our 44th year of excellence in early childhood education.

Established in 1979, First United Methodist Preschool enrolls children from ages two months through five years. We welcome children and families of any family structure, gender orientation/identity, race, religious belief, or national heritage. Special needs children are accepted based on the preschool's ability to meet specific individual requirements.

Welcome to our program! We are delighted to have you and your family join us on this exciting journey of early education and growth. We embrace a play-based philosophy that forms the foundation of our curriculum. We believe that play is the key to unlocking a child's imagination, curiosity, and overall development. Through carefully designed play experiences, we aim to create a nurturing and stimulating environment where children can explore, discover, and learn at their own pace.

This handbook serves as a guide to help you understand our approach, values, and the various aspects of our program, ensuring that you and your child feel supported and empowered every step of the way. Together, we can create a joyful and enriching early learning experience for your little one.

First United Methodist Preschool

1201 Lavaca Street, Austin, TX 78701 | Phone: 512-478-5709
Email: preschool@fumcaustin.org | Web: www.fumpaustin.org

Hours of operation: 9 am – 2 pm, Monday through Friday
Before School Care (M-F): 8:15 am – 9:00 am | After School Care (M-Th): 2:00 pm-2:45 pm
A list of holidays and closures can be found on the last page of this document.

Discover. Create. Connect.

There's a great big world out there, and we help children make sense of it.

Discovery. As experienced teachers, we embrace children's natural curiosity and enhance it with experiences to learn about the world around them, be it in the classroom, be it in the great outdoors, in our downtown neighborhood, and beyond.

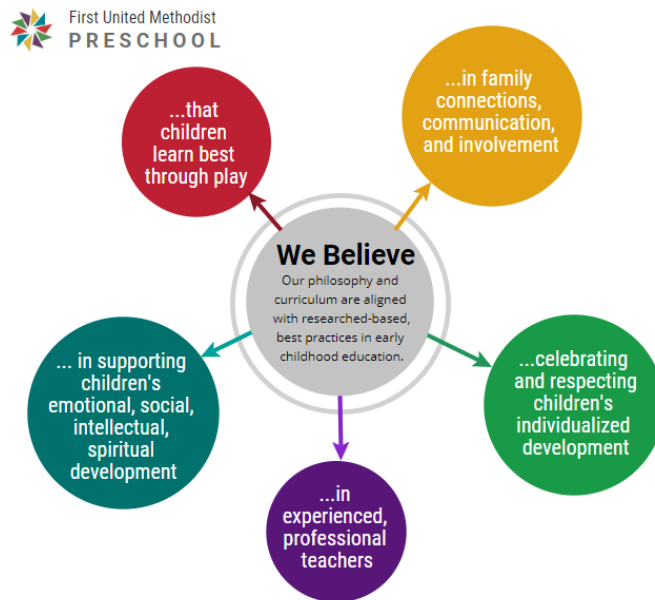
Creativity. Children are active, hands-on learners. Therefore, we provide environments and experiences to develop creativity and imagination through experimentation, exploration, and expression. As a result, children are empowered to question, think, and problem-solve.

Connection. Our low teacher-to-child ratios allow for deeper connections from child to teacher, child to child, and child to the learning environment. We observe each child's natural development and build a curriculum around their specific interests and abilities.

Based on the best practices of child development research, we develop the whole child who can take on that great big world confidently and prepare them for lifetime success.

Mission Statement & Philosophy

First United Methodist Preschool strives to create an atmosphere of love and acceptance in which each child can develop socially, emotionally, physically, spiritually, and intellectually.



Classroom Curriculum

First United Methodist Preschool follows a developmentally appropriate, play-based curriculum. Teachers observe children and note their individual developmental levels of physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and language development. Based on the results of those observations, teachers create and implement activities and experiences for children to play, create, move, experiment, and express themselves. The classroom curriculum is built on the premise that children are active learners and should have the opportunity for choice, independence, and hands-on learning. Therefore, the curriculum balances indoor and outdoor play, active and quiet play, and large and small groupings.

Goals for Children

- **Physical:** for children to develop fine and gross motor skills through organized and incidental learning experiences such as outdoor play, sensory play, manipulatives play, writing readiness, etc.
- **Cognitive:** for children to develop cognitively and intellectually through organized and incidental learning experiences that encompass: conceptual learning, reading readiness, math readiness, and imaginative play.
- **Social and Emotional:** for children to develop self-competence and self-regulation skills, to become accustomed to being part of a group, to develop peer relationships, and to learn and practice conflict resolution skills.

Admissions

Registration for 2024-2025 begins in late January. Available placements will be filled according to children’s birth dates and schedules and in the following order:

1. Children of FUMP and FUMC staff members
2. Currently enrolled FUMP families
3. Previously enrolled FUMP families
4. FUMC families not currently enrolled in preschool
5. Members of the community not currently enrolled in the preschool

The choice of days is determined by seniority, and seniority is based on a family’s length of enrollment. Class placement is based on children’s birth dates and days of attendance. The Director determines the final placement.

Our ratios are as follows: 1:3 - Infants | 1:4 - Ones | 1:5 Twos | 1:6 Threes | 1:8 Fours

Tuition, Fees, and Deposits

Monthly Tuition Rates			
	M-F	M/W/F	T/TH
Infants	\$900	\$570	\$420
Toddlers	\$865	\$560	\$415
Preschoolers	\$785	\$495	\$360
Before School Care	\$75	\$65	\$55
After School Care*	\$60 (M-Th)	\$55 (M/W)	\$55

***No After School Care on Fridays**

Listing of Fees and Special Events

The preschool provides several events/services to children and families for an additional cost and monthly tuition and fees.

August	Prorated August tuition 3-5-year-olds prepay vision & hearing School shirts & lunch kits (optional)	January	Regular tuition Registration Fee for 2024-2025
September	Regular tuition Annual Fund	February	Regular tuition
October	Regular tuition	March	Regular tuition Summer registration (optional)
November	Regular tuition	April	Regular tuition
December	Regular tuition	May	Tuition Deposits for 2024-2025 May BSC and ASC tuition

Tuition

Tuition is due on the first day of the month that your child is due to attend. Full payment is due each month regardless of the number of days your child is expected to attend. No adjustments for illness, vacation or transfer, or school closures are made. Days cannot be made up or changed.

Families will receive an electronic invoice for their monthly balance through the Brightwheel App. August tuition is prorated, considering the number of days staff are attending in-service and the number of days children are in attendance. Full monthly tuition is due from September - April. A \$50 late fee will be applied to outstanding balances on the 7th of each month.

Tuition payments can be made through the Brightwheel app via ACH. Personal checks are payable to FUMP and placed in the preschool office's door file pocket. Cash is not accepted. Sometimes, a family may come into financial hardship or need tuition assistance. Each situation is regarded on a case-by-case basis. Please contact the Preschool Director for more information.

Before School Care (BSC)

Children may attend Before School Care from 8:15 am - 9 am on a month-to-month or pre-arranged basis for an additional fee. The number of staff available determines availability, and placement is based on seniority. **No substitutions or alterations to schedules are permitted.**

After School Care (ASC)

Children may attend After School Care from 2:00 pm to 2:45 pm on a month-to-month or prearranged basis for an additional fee. As with BSC, availability is determined by the number of staff available, and placement is based on seniority. **No substitutions or alterations to schedules are permitted. * There is no ASC on Fridays. ***

Registration Fee

A registration fee of \$300 is due with your child's registration form. There is a \$25 discount for younger siblings. **This fee is non-refundable and non-transferable.**

Security Deposits

The security deposit is due on May 1, 2024, and holds your child's place for the 2024-2025 school year. The amount of the deposit is one month's tuition. The deposit will be applied to the last month of preschool (similar to the idea of prepaying last month's rent), no regular tuition payment IS DUE on May 1, 2024. You will be invoiced for BSC and ASC in May. No deposit is due if your child is not returning for the 2024-2025 school year. If your child has registered for the 2024-2025 school year, you will be invoiced for the following year's deposit. **The tuition deposit is non-refundable.**

Reservations for Additional Days/Programs at FUMP

At times, FUMP has empty spots available for children to attend with a reservation in advance. Families can sign up online to use any available spots for their child to attend a full day (\$40 per day) or our BSC/ASC programs (\$10 per day). There is a link on our homepage to access the reservation calendar.

Reservations **must be made in advance** and are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Reservation requests are due by **10 pm SHARP on the day before attendance**. To clarify, families should NOT call FUMP if they are running late for an ASC reservation. Advanced reservations ARE REQUIRED so that we may notify teachers and make arrangements. There is LIMITED availability, as some classes are full and do not have space available. You must complete a new online request for each child and the date of your reservation. NO VERBAL OR EMAIL RESERVATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Withdrawal from Preschool/Reducing Days of Attendance

Sometimes, it becomes necessary for a child to withdraw from preschool before the end of the typical school year in May. Please contact the Director regarding early withdrawal for specific details. The tuition deposit is non-refundable but applicable with one month's notice.

Preparing for the First Day of School

We have several events to help introduce your family to your child's teacher and FUM Preschool:

1. **Visit our website:** The [FUMP WEBSITE](#) is the fast track to all the information you need about our program. In addition, you will find the [Family Handbook](#), [frequently asked questions](#), and other [family support/resources](#).
2. **Classroom Visits:** You and your child will visit their new classroom to allow your child to meet their teacher and see the classroom space before school begins. During this visit, teachers will focus on connecting with your child and showing them their new classroom. There will be limited time for conversation with your child's teachers; family concerns should be discussed privately at another time rather than during the classroom visit. Please consult our ["SAYING GOODBYE"](#) brochure for more information.
3. **Family Orientation:** The best thing you can do for your child to help ensure a successful preschool experience is to attend family orientation! We will hold virtual family/teacher meetings to share information/policies specific to that classroom.
4. **Set up your Family Portal:** FUMP uses Brightwheel, a child care management app, as our primary communication tool with families. You can view/pay your invoice within the family portal and amend/review your child's information, such as authorized release adults.
5. **Purchase a nap mat:** We prefer a bedroll with a pillow and blanket sewn into the mat for easy transport. Not applicable for children still using a crib.

If you require an interpreter, please let us know. We are happy to facilitate arrangements to include your family in getting acquainted with our program.

Arrival and Departure/Parking:

Families may park in the FUMC lot, using available spaces or double parking behind staff. Families are encouraged to turn off their vehicles while in the building. NEVER allow a child to enter the building or classroom without connecting with your child's teachers by sight or verbal acknowledgment.

Teachers will release children to known authorized adults only. Any person unknown to staff will need to report to the preschool office with their identification for verification, and they will receive an Approved Pickups form.

When bringing your child to preschool, make sure your child is secure in the knowledge that you have kissed them goodbye, that they are loved, and that someone will pick them up after preschool. Your child may display separation anxiety upon your departure. The teachers will comfort and talk with your child if this happens. Children typically settle into the day quickly, but we will contact you if they are still in distress after 30 minutes. Please consult our ["SAYING GOODBYE"](#) brochure for more information.

Teachers use the time before 9:00 am for preparation, so please do not bring your child early. Pick-up from preschool is between 1:45-2:00 pm. To assist in the transition from school to home, your child's teacher may "close" some learning centers to help departure go more smoothly. Please call the preschool if you are unavoidably detained. Our staff has work-related and personal obligations after 2:00 pm. There is a late pick-up charge after 2:00 pm of \$1 per minute. Late fees will appear on your next tuition invoice. Your consideration and assistance in this matter are appreciated.

Preschool attendance and arrival times are NOT mandatory. However, a courtesy Brightwheel message to the teacher is appreciated when your child is absent from preschool.

Items / Toys from Home (i.e., special toys, blankets, etc.)

All toys should be left at home or in the car when you bring your child to preschool. Please speak to your child's teacher regarding security blankets, pacifiers, and special items. The preschool teachers will assist in this transition.

Family Participation and Communication

First United Methodist Preschool is an inclusive environment in which the diversity of each child and family is welcomed, respected, and incorporated into the environment. We strive to make families feel connected to their child's preschool experience. Families are incorporated into the program through individual classroom activities and networks, school-wide gatherings and events, and invitations to FUMC-sponsored events. Communication is essential for a successful program. Our staff is prepared to work with you so your child may have the best possible experience at preschool.

- To stay on top of current events at FUMP, we recommend that you check your email/messages before each day your child attends preschool. Also, email/messages are the best way to communicate with the office as well, as we check both throughout the day.
- The preschool office will send ENews regularly, informing families of the many activities at FUMP. Please read these carefully.
- Special notices, changes, and general family information from your child's teacher or the preschool office are occasionally distributed to you via email or the Brightwheel Parent App, so please remember to check daily. In addition, any change in preschool policies will be announced through Brightwheel.
- Families can update their contact information via the Brightwheel family portal or by emailing the preschool office at any time.
- Families are encouraged to share classroom or program concerns with the Director via appointment, email, or telephone.
- Families should refrain from posting photos online of school events to respect the privacy of enrolled families. Some families have not given their written consent to photograph their children.
- FUMP embraces an open-door policy for family visits at any time.
- FUMC campus and buildings have video surveillance in use.
- TDFRS Child Care Licensing requires each staff member to receive annual child abuse and neglect prevention training. All FUMP staff members are state-mandated reporters and are required to immediately make a report when suspecting that a child has been abused or neglected.
- Child care licensing mandates schools to increase family awareness of child abuse and neglect issues. Some examples of abuse and neglect are: leaving a child alone or in a vehicle unattended, not securing a child in a seat belt or booster seat, unexplained marks or bruises, shaken baby syndrome, and frequent child hygiene issues. The statewide Abuse & Neglect phone number is 1-800-252-5400 if you need to report any suspected abuse or neglect. FUMP promotes prevention techniques such as developing family guidance techniques, understanding the benefits of nonviolent discipline techniques, understanding and meeting children's emotional, physical, and developmental needs. FUMP also assists in identifying and locating additional support. FUMP will seek the assistance of appropriate community organizations when child abuse and neglect matters arise. Families of a child who is the victim of child abuse or neglect should seek information from Child Protective Services at http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_protection or through The Texas Attorney General's Office at <https://www.oag.state.tx.us/victims/childabuse.shtml>
- Drugs and smoking are prohibited on our campus.
- Firearms are not permitted in licensed child care centers, except for law enforcement officers and certified security guards. Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a child care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal activities are subject to harsher penalties.
- Pest control services visit our campus on a quarterly basis, on the third Thursday of that month.

- [DFPS CHILD CARE MINIMUM STANDARDS](#) are available to families to review online, and the most recent licensing inspection report is posted in the preschool office. Further, families may contact the local child care licensing office at 512-834-3195 or reference their website at [CHILD CARE LICENSING](#).

Changes to the Family Handbook and preschool policies will be sent via email to families and staff.

Family-Teacher Conferences

Family-teacher conferences will be held in September and April. The fall conference is a time for teachers to learn more about their children and share information about their child’s transition to their new classroom. The spring conference is to share developmental achievements, preferences, and recommendations for specific needs. **The conferences will be virtual, and there is no regular preschool these days.** However, if you would like an additional conference during the school year, the teacher can arrange one at any time.

Technology-Free Zone

At FUMP, we do not have computers, tablets, or televisions for children’s classroom use. Teachers use devices for family communication and to capture photos of the children’s activities and development.

Staff/Family Private Child Care Arrangements

If a family chooses to employ a FUMP staff member for private child care (“babysitting”), the family, staff member, and Director are required to complete, sign, and date a hold harmless document to be kept on file in the preschool office. The document must be completed for each staff member and must be renewed annually.

Inclement Weather

In most instances, FUM Preschool will follow AISD’s decisions for opening and closing preschool during severe weather. If AISD has a delayed opening, please check your messages/email for updates.

Emergencies

If a child is sick or injured: Families should arrive within 30 minutes of being notified by the staff when their child is sick or injured. In most cases, the child will be in the office until the family arrives. However, there are some instances when your child will remain in their classroom.

If a child is seriously injured or ill: EMS is called immediately, and a FUMP staff member performs any necessary first aid until EMS arrives. The family is notified after EMS is called. If the child is transported, the teacher will accompany the child, and the rest of the class will be supervised by the teaching assistant or other FUMP staff.

School-wide emergencies (evacuations, storm drills, etc.): The preschool has a comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plan for emergencies. Further, the preschool holds monthly fire and severe weather and intruder drills quarterly. Please direct any specific questions to the Director.

Off-site evacuation locations: In the event of an evacuation, the preschool would relocate to one of these locations, depending on the nature of the threat.

[Tarrytown United Methodist](#)

2601 Exposition Blvd., 78703

Telephone: 512-472-3111

**closed Mondays*

[St. John’s United Methodist](#)

2140 Allandale Rd., 78756

Telephone: 512-452-5737

Health

The State of Texas Department of Family and Regulatory Services and the City of Austin Health Department have set forth health policies that regulate childcare programs. FUM Preschool is required to follow state mandates. We will make no exceptions. Children must have the proper medical forms on file to attend preschool. We also expect families to provide

written updates of immunization records to the preschool office promptly. Additionally, FUMP provides vision/hearing screening for all 3- 5-year-olds.

We ask for the cooperation of families in maintaining our excellent health standards. Should a child have any contagious disease, please notify the preschool so other families can be alerted that their child may have been exposed.

A courtesy email/family app message to your child's teacher when your child will be absent due to illness is appreciated. Families will be notified when children develop symptoms of illness during the day. Please make every effort to pick up your child within 30 minutes of the initial phone call. If a medical emergency occurs and the family is unavailable, the child's physician and/or emergency contact will be called.

Families are asked to keep their child home when the child:

- Has a temperature of 99° or higher
- Has had a fever within the last 24 hours
- Has red or discharging eyes
- Has had an upset stomach (vomiting or diarrhea) within the last 24 hours
- Has a rash (until cleared by a doctor)

Please do not send your child to preschool with symptoms masked by medications such as Motrin, Tylenol, etc. Sick children should not enter the school. If you have a sick child with you, call the office and request a staff person to bring your child to you.

Preschool personnel will administer no medicine except for emergency first aid. Families should apply insect repellent and sunscreen before arrival at preschool. Diaper cream may be brought to school and labeled with the **child's first name, and the last initial** will be applied by teachers as needed.

All classroom items for children under three years of age will be monitored for choking hazards, per the licensing mandate.

Employees are not required to submit their vaccination records to maintain the privacy of their health records.

For more information regarding communicable disease mandates for child care centers, please reference the DFPS website [MINIMUM STANDARDS](#).

Covid Protocols

If a Covid test is positive, isolate at home. Your child may return to school:

- after a 10-day isolation period AND
- when fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, AND
- all other symptoms are resolving.

Children may return on Day 6 if symptoms have resolved and they can wear masks **effectively**. If your child cannot wear a mask, you should continue isolation through Day 10 and when fever/symptoms are resolved. Children will be sent home if they cannot mask effectively during this period.

See the chart at the end of this document for more information.

Additional Steps after a Covid exposure

- All families and staff will be notified that an individual was positive for Covid (the name will remain anonymous).
- Preschool staff will "Test To Stay" and continue masking and self-monitoring for fever and symptoms for ten days.

Class Closures: Your child's class is subject to closure if TEACHERS are not available due to isolation with Covid.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Our disinfecting/sanitizing solutions are DSD and NuQuat.
- Handwashing is the school's first line of defense. If handwashing is unavailable, teachers will use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Children will be closely monitored during this use, and teachers will keep hand sanitizer out of their reach while not in use.

Preventing the Spread of Covid

- The teachers and staff are trained on state requirements and best practices for managing Covid in early childhood programs.
- The preschool determines if and when a child is sent home.
- The preschool requires immediate pick up by a family member (within 20-30 minutes) if there are any signs of illness.
- The preschool follows CDC guidelines on disinfecting areas exposed to Covid

Allergies and Asthma

Food allergy symptoms are most common in babies and children but can appear at any age. While any food can cause an adverse reaction, eight foods account for 90 percent of all reactions: peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, milk, fish, shellfish, wheat, and soy. Symptoms appear as vomiting and/or stomach cramps, hives, shortness of breath, wheezing, repetitive cough, shock, trouble swallowing, swelling of the tongue, weak pulse, pale or blue coloring of skin, dizziness or feeling faint, anaphylaxis, a potentially life-threatening reaction that can impair breathing and send the body into shock; reactions may simultaneously affect different parts of the body (for example, a stomach ache accompanied by a rash).

Families must submit a FOOD ALLERGY PLAN or ASTHMA PLAN signed by their child's physician/allergist.

Families should schedule a meeting with the child's teacher and Preschool Director to determine the type and level of care the parent is seeking for their child. The meeting will include:

- the nature of the allergy/asthma, signs, symptoms, medical management of the situation,
- recommendations for managing the presence of the allergen at FUMP, classroom ban, school-wide ban (applicable signage)
- medications to be stored and/or administered at FUMP,
- first aid training for staff regarding response procedures and medication dispensation.

After the meeting:

- all children's allergies/asthma will be posted in the classroom and the preschool office.
- the staff will take a copy of the written plan on field trips.
- all staff will be notified of the details of the plan,
- any necessary and/or related training will be conducted,
- and all substitute teachers and parent volunteers will be informed of the child's allergy/asthma.

The Director may also obtain a verbal and/or written confirmation of the requests from the child's physician. The preschool reserves the right to prohibit specific foods from a preschool classroom, area, or entire campus if a child's allergist/pediatrician deems it necessary.

Snacks / Lunch

FUM Preschool is committed to good nutrition as an integral part of the experience. The children not only benefit physically but also learn the principles of good nutrition. Families provide lunch and morning snacks for their children. All containers sent to preschool should be easy for your child to open, fostering independence. [LUNCH KITS](#) are available for purchase in the preschool office. FUMP recommends that families provide a cold pack in their child's lunch to ensure the proper temperature of food brought to preschool. Families are encouraged to use BPA-free plastic storage. Water is served at meal and snack times, and families are asked to provide a water bottle. Child care licensing states that no foods brought from home can be shared at preschool (DFPS Reg 746.3309).

Whole foods rather than processed foods are encouraged. Send such foods as sandwiches, cheese, fruits, vegetables, and pasta in your child's lunch. Foods such as candy, cookies, cakes, pudding, Go-gurts, or salty chips that contain excessive amounts of sugar, salt, food additives, and preservatives are discouraged. Children under two years old need fat for energy, growth, and proper brain development. Fat should not be limited in their diet. For additional guidance, please reference our [COOL SCHOOL FUEL](#) page.

Further, according to minimum standards for childcare centers, 90% of fatal choking occurs in children under four. Therefore, we reserve the right to remove any food brought to school that could be deemed a choking hazard. Some choking hazards are whole grapes, dried fruit, popcorn, and hotdogs cut into rounds or any chunk of food larger than can be swallowed whole.

Infant and Young Toddler Care

Our babies and young toddlers are a very special part of our program at FUMP. Our primary concern is loving and responsive care. There are many routines but few schedules. Each child's need for comfort, stimulation, nourishment, and sleep are met as they are manifested. We do not follow prescribed schedules in the classroom; we respect and follow children's natural cues of hunger/satiety, sleepiness/wakefulness, and respond accordingly to maximize trust and minimize stress for the child; the core developmental need of a child under 18 months. Please see our [RESPONSIVE CARE](#) brochure for more information about our approach.

Child Care Licensing specifies many safety practices regarding infants 2 – 12 months (CCL 746.2400-2431). Please note the following practices in the infant classroom:

- Infants will ALWAYS be placed to sleep on their backs until they can roll over on their own. NO EXCEPTIONS!
- Infants may not sleep in restrictive devices, such as car seats, bouncy seats, etc. If the infant has fallen asleep in such a device, they will immediately be placed in a crib.
- Cribs must be free of all items except a fitted sheet. Blankets, bumper pads, pillows, and stuffed toys (including Wubbanub pacifiers) are prohibited.
- Sleepsacks may be used in place of blankets as long as they have sleeves or armholes in the garment.
- Infants who are swaddled are to be held at all times. A swaddled infant may not be placed in a crib or restrictive device.
- Blankets/cloths must not be placed over a child's head, crib, or restrictive device at any time.
- Infants must be held while taking a bottle until the infants can hold the bottle without assistance. Bottles will not be propped at any time.
- Choking hazards must be removed from the classroom.
- Safety straps must be used with all equipment with straps present: swings, bouncy chairs, high chairs, changing pads, etc.
- Written feeding instructions must be updated monthly for infants not yet eating table food.

Families of breastfeeding children are welcome to send breast milk with their infant to preschool. Also, breastfeeding mothers may use the adult rocking chairs in the infant classroom or Room 103 in the education building. Families can find more information about [BREASTFEEDING](#) on our website.

Birthdays

Simple recognition is given to each child on their birthday. Families may bring a set of disposable party plates and cups for snacks or lunch. We serve the food that the children bring from home. In addition, we will recognize the child's special day with a birthday sticker that they may wear throughout the day. NO FOOD WILL BE SERVED to the class, as children have allergies or special diets. Please do not send invitations for parties to preschool to be passed out unless everyone in the class is invited. No gifts are to be exchanged at preschool. **DUE TO CHILD CARE LICENSING MANDATES, PLEASE DO NOT BRING BALLOONS TO PRESCHOOL.**

Outdoor play

Children play out of doors as long as temperatures and wind chill readings are above 32 degrees; however, outside playtime can be adjusted/amended at the teacher's discretion. Children play at the Capitol Grounds regularly, while infants and toddlers go on buggy rides around the Capitol Grounds. PreKindergarten Field trips and related transportation will be announced 48 hours in advance.

Clothing

Children should wear comfortable, washable play clothes to move easily and are free to play and explore. Please bring multiple changes of clothes, including shoes. Clothing should be simple enough for the child to manage alone. We discourage heavy belts, complicated snaps, straps, etc., which the child cannot work themselves. If your child wears diapers, make sure the clothes have leg snaps or are easy to change. Please remember that any clothing worn to preschool will be subjected to paint, glue, outside elements, etc. **Play clothes are best.** Please be sure your child's shoes fit correctly. We prefer closed-toe, closed-heel shoes as they are best for climbing, playing, and field trips. **Crocs, flip-flops, rain boots, and western boots are inappropriate for preschool activities.**

Animals

Some teachers may have classroom pets. Our staff ensures that all pets are properly cared for and that any necessary vaccinations are up to date. In addition, when children come into direct contact with animals, teachers will ensure that children wash their hands appropriately.

Summer Programming

FUM Preschool has a seven-week summer program, spanning from early June through late July/early August. The dates for the summer terms are published in March, and registration is held after Spring Break. The tuition is determined by the number of weeks in each term. Before School Care and After School Care are offered as a part of the summer program. During our summer program, children will participate in sprinkler play each day during playground time on our upper playground, which has a protective solid-surfacing material.

Church Sponsorship

First United Methodist Preschool is an integral part of First United Methodist Church of Austin and an important mission of the church's programming with young children and their families. First Church is pleased to sponsor the preschool and welcomes a visit to acquaint you with its many programs and services. Please contact the church office to learn more.

Guidance

One of the main objectives of FUM Preschool is to help children develop self-regulation and self-discipline. Our guidance techniques offer children clear expectations and options to create a positive environment. To encourage this, we attempt to practice guidance, which:

- shows each child understanding and patience.
- redirects the child when necessary to another activity.
- sets reasonable limits.
- is consistent, loving, and firm.
- helps the child talk about misunderstandings rather than hurting another child.
- is individualized and consistent for each child.
- is appropriate to the child's level of understanding, and
- is directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which includes at least the following:

- Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only on unacceptable behavior.
- Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily using clear, positive statements.
- Redirecting behavior using positive messages.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment.
- punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training.
- pinching, shaking, or biting a child.
- hitting a child with a hand or instrument.
- putting anything in or on a child's mouth.
- humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child.
- subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language.
- placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed.
- withholding active play from a child is prohibited.
- requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods for the child's age.

Occasionally, a child's behavior becomes a chronic issue and is unresponsive to the teacher's attempts to alter the behavior through positive guidance techniques. FUMP may follow any of the steps below to address the situation. **Families are expected to comply with requests in an expedient manner.**

- hold a conference with the family, teacher, and Director to discuss the situation.
- ask the family to keep the child home for a specific time.
- ask the family to have the child examined by a pediatrician at the family's expense.
- ask the family to have the child evaluated by a child guidance professional at the family's expense.
- ask the child's established therapist to observe the child in the FUMP setting, gain insight into classroom dynamics, and provide teachers with additional assistance with classroom behaviors at the family's expense.
- ask the family to provide a classroom aide for the child at the family's expense.

When all else fails, the preschool reserves the right to request the immediate withdrawal of a child/family.

Biting

Although not all children bite, biting is considered a normal stage in a child's development. Here are some common reasons for biting: **Teething.** First, toddlers are often cutting teeth, and it can be painful. Chewing on something relieves the itch and stops the pain momentarily. **Sensory Exploration.** Toddlers are very good at using all of their senses to learn about the world. The "oral mode," a vital style of learning for infants, continues into toddlerhood. They bite everything, not just their peers. **Cause and Effect.** Children are eager explorers. They are constantly studying cause and effect. Biting produces a predictable response. Often, the response is dramatic: there is a lot of noise/attention from adults. **Self-Assertion.** This is the most common reason children bite. It's a way to express frustration when they don't yet have the language skills.

The preschool staff takes action to reduce the number of biting incidents, including providing access to teething toys, providing numerous sensory exploration activities, providing opportunities to explore cause and effect, and offering toddlers options/alternatives to reduce frustrations. Families are not told the name of the child who bit their child. Families of the biter are informed and work together with the teachers to prevent further biting incidents. We recognize how upset families may be when they learn their child has been bitten; however, we also acknowledge that biting is a normal component of child development. Despite our concerted efforts to prevent biting incidents, they are bound to occur. No child is ever excluded from our program **solely** because of biting.

Toilet Learning

Toilet learning is an important task in child development. We take a developmental approach with milestones, just as our philosophy underscores. There is no predetermined age at which children must be toilet trained and out of diapers. Your child's teacher will work with you through this transition, and communication is essential for the child's success. The preschool has a [FUMP TOILET LEARNING](#) handout on this topic for families to read and discuss with their child's teacher.

Grievances

Forming cooperative, supportive relationships at FUMP is a key value of our program. At times, issues arise, and further communication is needed to clarify and resolve the matter. Failure to handle differences and concerns can disrupt harmony among families and staff and affect the well-being of children. We encourage families to use conflict resolution steps when problems arise, such as talking directly to the appropriate individuals, identifying the problem, working together to devise possible solutions, implementing the agreed-upon solution, and giving feedback to see if the solution worked. Unfortunately, there may be times when this process fails. Therefore, the following procedures are established for expressing complaints. If you have a concern about a staff member and/or classroom incident:

1. Talk to the teacher in charge when the problem arose. The lead teacher must be informed if this person is a teaching assistant.
2. If the problem is not resolved, talk with the Director. More than one meeting may be necessary to understand your concern's depth and allow the Director to address the problem.
3. If the issue is still unresolved, please submit your concerns in writing to the Preschool Director stating your desire to issue a formal grievance. **(Email is not considered adequate at this level)** Please include the incident's specific date, time, people, and place. The Preschool Director will return a written response within ten school days. Both documents will be forwarded to the FUMC Associate Pastor for information purposes only (there will be no FUMC action at step #3).
4. If the matter is still unresolved, you may write your concerns to the FUMC Associate Pastor, stating your desire to issue a formal grievance. **(Email is not considered acceptable at this level)** Again, please include the incident's specific date, time, people, and place. Letters will be considered by the appropriate committee or designate, and a response will be given within two weeks. Any decision of the associate pastor or designate is the final resolution of the matter.

We recognize that some issues or concerns may remain after all steps in the process have been completed. In cases of unresolved issues, please note that the best resolution may be to move on. Families can withdraw, and the preschool reserves the right to ask a family to withdraw at any time.



2023-2024 Calendar 	**NO SCHOOL
† August 11 & 14, Fri & Mon	Class Visits/Parent Orientation
August 15, Tue	First Day of Preschool
September 1, Fri	All School Picnic
September 4, Mon	Holiday/Labor Day*
October 2, Mon	Vision/Hearing for 3-5YO
October 5 & 6, Thur & Fri	Parent Conferences*
November 3, Fri	Staff Development*
November 20 - 24, Mon - Fri	Thanksgiving Holiday*
December 20, Wed	Last Day of Fall Classes
January 8, Mon	Staff Development*
January 9, Tue	Preschool Resumes
January 15, Mon	Staff Development*
February 16, Fri	FUMP Music Fest
February 19, Mon	President's Day*
Feb 29 & March 1, Thur & Fri	School Portraits
March 11 - 15, Mon - Fri	Spring Break* <input type="text"/>
March 29 & April 1, Fri & Mon	Easter Break*
May 2 & 3, Thur & Fri	Parent Conferences*
May 17, Fri	All School Picnic
May 23, Thur	Last day of Preschool
May 24, Fri	Staff Development *
June 3, Mon (Tentative)	Summer Program Begins



Our Philosophy and Beliefs

We believe...that children learn through play.

- Children naturally learn through what they see in the world. Teachers create a developmentally appropriate environment for each child to play, create, move, experiment, and express themselves.
- Children are active learners and have opportunities for choice, independence, and learning through play with authentic materials in direct, hands-on ways.
- Children's activities, materials, and classroom curriculum are selected based on individual children's development: physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and language.
- Children are provided a balance of indoor/outdoor time, active and quiet play, and individual, small, and large groupings.
- Children need routine and continuity in the classroom and with adults. We create consistency in the classroom through predictable schedules and activities and limiting transitions and enrichment activities.

We believe...in supporting children's physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and language development.

- Children express a range of emotions as a natural part of their development. We identify and acknowledge these emotions and create opportunities for children to express them in healthy, constructive ways.
- Children model what they see; teachers treat children and other staff with respect, kindness, and empathy.
- Children learn to participate in group activities, get along with peers, and develop trust in other adults. We support this task by creating opportunities for meaningful interactions with others, nurturing friendships, and teaching conflict resolution skills at every age.
- Children develop a sense of accomplishment and an enhanced sense of self-esteem through competence and mastery of tasks. Children are provided opportunities to grow in independence and self-reliance through routines and activities.
- Children develop a sense of what it means to be a spiritual being and grow in their faith and community. Through Chapel, we teach that God loves each of us and has created a world we care for, and we are to love and care for those around us.

We believe...in respecting individual differences in children's growth and development.

- Children learn best in one-on-one and small groups with peers and adults. Low child-to-teacher ratios are maintained.
- Children move through predictable developmental stages at their own rates. Children are provided support and encouragement and are not hurried through processes related to those milestones. Arbitrary age requirements are not imposed for milestones such as toileting, specific academic skills, etc., but rather celebrated by the adults around them.
- Children express creativity and self-expression through open-ended projects and experiences. Creative, child-directed play is encouraged in many forms, such as drawing, painting, music, building, and role-playing.

We believe...in experienced, professional teachers.

- The teacher's roles in the classroom are facilitator, nurturer, caregiver, and supporter of children in a consistent manner with the school philosophy.
- Teachers are early childhood professionals in the classroom who support and implement school philosophy, curriculum, and policies consistently yet flexibly.
- Teachers maintain open communication with families through various means: at arrival and departure, through lesson plans, electronic communications, and formal and informal family conferences.
- Teachers attend high-quality training in curriculum, age-appropriate guidance, dealing with special populations, health and safety practices, and other early childhood issues and topics.
- Teachers conduct themselves professionally and courteously with families, children, co-workers, and the church community.

We believe...in family communication and involvement.

- The diversity of each family and child is welcomed, respected, and incorporated in an inclusive environment.
- Families receive frequent, ongoing communication from teachers regarding their child's developmental progress and classroom activities through various modes of communication.
- Families are incorporated into the program through a system of individual classroom activities and networks, preschool gatherings and events, invitations to First United Methodist Church fellowship and worship opportunities, and notifications of local community events.
- Families support the preschool through volunteer opportunities, annual giving, committee and classroom projects, and Advisory Board service.

Thank you for choosing First United Methodist Preschool!