

# Family Handbook

## 2023-2024

### **GRASSLAND DAY SCHOOL**

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### **Educational Philosophy of the Program**

Grassland Day School is a Christian education program whose purpose is to:

- \*Share the love of Christ with the children and families we serve
- \*Build learning over the preschool years to ensure children are academically, socially and emotionally prepared for Kindergarten
- \*Use developmentally appropriate practices to instill a love of learning and school in children

### **Standards**

Grassland Day School is a non-licensed Program adhering to Tennessee State Guidelines for church exempt programs with the exception of our 3-day Twos, Threes, PreK, and PreK 2 classrooms, which are licensed through the Tennessee Department of Human Services.

## **The Program**

Your child will participate in a variety of learning center activities, which include art, blocks, puzzles and manipulatives, science, music and dramatic play. Social skills are developed through sharing, taking turns, thinking, reasoning, and solving problems. The program is centered on our belief in God and is committed to helping each child grow physically, socially, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Chapel and/or Enrichment are held daily and in each classroom we take time daily to share God's word in a way children can understand.

## **Policies**

The program operates from late August through mid-May and serves children ages 14 months to 6 years of age. Regular hours are 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with a staggered drop off and pick up. We follow the Williamson County School schedule for days off or early dismissals. If WCS dismisses for inclement weather or other official reasons, GDS will do the same. At times, WCS will have delayed starts of one or two hours. When this occurs, we will follow the same protocol. A one hour delay will mean a 10:00 start for us and a two hour delay will result in an 11:00 start time. Dismissal time will remain 2:00 p.m. **For WCS Late Start Mondays, GDS will open at REGULAR TIME, 9:00 a.m. For WCS Early Dismissal Wednesdays, GDS will close at REGULAR TIME, 2:00 p.m.**

**In the unfortunate event that GDS is unable to secure approved staff or substitute staff, we reserve the right to cancel a class. Cancellation would be communicated to parents at the earliest possible opportunity. Please know that administration does everything possible to avoid this situation.**

**Tuition and Fees - Tuition is determined on an annual basis. For your convenience, the annual tuition amount is payable in nine equal installments. Tuition payments will be due the 1st day of the month, August 1- April 1. Tuition will be paid through auto draft using Brightwheel. Any prepaid tuition is refundable after accounts are settled upon withdrawal.**

Registration fees are required upon enrollment. These are non-refundable.

Additional fees will be assessed under the following circumstances:

1. If tuition is not received prior to or on the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month, an additional \$10 will be charged as a late fee.
2. If a child is not picked up promptly at the end of the day, a fee of \$10.00 will be added if the parent has not arrived by 2:10 p.m.
3. As a non-profit organization, GDS is heavily reliant on tuition collection in order to meet our monthly operating budget. **If tuition is more than one month past due, we reserve the right to discontinue service until the balance has been resolved.**
4. A Supply Fee will be assessed for each child. This is a one-time charge per year and will be charged August 1<sup>st</sup>. **Children enrolled 1-2 days/week will be charged \$50. Children enrolled 3-5 days/week will be charged \$75.**
5. A change to a child's enrollment (e.g. dropping days or changing days) **requested after May 15<sup>th</sup> will result in a \$50 charge.** Staffing decisions and program planning require accurate head counts.
6. A removal of a child from enrollment before school begins but after June 15<sup>th</sup>, will result in a fee equal to one month of the child's tuition.

**Discounted fees** - There is a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> child discount applied to tuition. Any family with four children enrolled simultaneously will receive the 4<sup>th</sup> child enrollment free of charge.

There are limited scholarship dollars available to families. There is an application process to be considered for these funds. Contact the director for more information.

**Withdrawal** - Written notice is required one month prior to removing your child from the program. The notice must be given to the Director, not the child's teacher. In addition, one month's tuition will be assessed after withdrawal in order to allow time to fill the open spot.

**\*Any pre-registered student withdrawing from the program after June 15<sup>th</sup>, will be required to pay August tuition.**

**Absences** - As a courtesy, please notify the school whenever your child is not going to be in attendance. You may simply send a message using Brightwheel.

**Drop-In Days** - Drop in days are not allowed. Your child may attend school only on the days they are registered to attend.

**Documents on File** - Each child's file must contain the following:

1. A registration form for the current year.
2. An immunization record. **PLEASE NOTE THE NEW DHS POLICY- If you choose not to immunize your child, you will be required to submit a Medical Necessity Release OR a Religious Exemption Form. Please contact the office for a copy of these forms.**
3. An emergency medical release form.
4. A signed financial agreement.
5. A family and health history.

6. A transportation agreement.
7. A kindergarten acknowledgement.
8. Signed confirmation of receipt of Family Handbook & Acknowledgement of Standards.

**These forms must be completed and submitted on Brightwheel prior to starting the program.** The child's teacher may require additional forms for classroom use at her discretion.

**Keeping You Informed** - We regularly distribute materials designed to keep you informed of happenings with your child and their classroom. This includes monthly calendars, newsletters and important parent notices. Please check Brightwheel everyday for notices so that you will stay informed. You may also check our webpage located at [www.grasslanddayschool.com](http://www.grasslanddayschool.com) and your Brightwheel app.

In the event of very important announcements or emergency situations, you will be alerted through our mass-call system, One Call Now and Brightwheel. In your paperwork, you will provide the best number for us to use with this system.

**Staffing Changes** - In the event of any staffing changes within your child's classroom, parents will be informed via Brightwheel or personal contact by the Directors. If an immediate permanent replacement is not determined, a current and qualified interim staff member such as the classroom assistant teacher will be placed with children until a suitable permanent teacher is found. All efforts will be made to provide as much consistency as possible for the children.

**Conferences** - Children will be assessed each Fall and Spring by their teacher(s) using a developmental checklist. Parents will be notified of a conference time to meet with the teacher concerning their child's progress. This is an excellent time to get to know your child's teacher better and to voice any questions, concerns or praise you might have. Parents may certainly decline these particular conferences but will be asked to sign a document stating such.

**Arrival** - We will continue using the car line for drop off. **To minimize wait time in the car line, children enrolled in PreK or PreK 2 will begin drop off at 8:50 am. Children enrolled in the 1s, 2s or 3s class will join the car line at 9:00 am. If you have children in multiple classes, please go with the OLDEST child enrolled.** Doors will remain locked until 8:50 am to allow for teacher preparation and staff prayer time. Parents and children should remain in their vehicles in line. Parents must sign-in their child each morning. **The state requires sign-in and sign-out by an approved adult. We will be using Brightwheel to expedite this process, so EVERY ADULT DROPPING OFF OR PICKING UP WILL NEED TO HAVE THE BRIGHTWHEEL APP.**

**Departure** - We will continue pick up inside the building, giving parents the opportunity to speak briefly with teachers. **Children in PreK and PreK 2 will dismiss beginning at 1:50 pm, and children enrolled in 1s, 2s or 3s class will dismiss at 2:00. If you have children in multiple classes you will pick up the oldest child enrolled first.** A \$10 late fee will be charged beginning at 2:10 p.m. and will increase at 2:30 and/or after multiple late pickups. We would ask that all families please be respectful of this policy. Our teachers have extensive cleaning procedures and preparations for the next school day to adhere to before they may leave. This is very difficult to do with a child still in the room. Of course, grace will be extended due to extenuating circumstances. Please notify the school if you will be late to avoid any upsetting events for your child.

Please note that we are required to contact Child Protective Services if a child has been left in our care for more than 30 minutes beyond closing with unsuccessful attempts at reaching parents, guardians or other contacts listed on the approved pick up list.

GDS will not dismiss your child to anyone other than those listed in the Approved Pick Ups section in Brightwheel. If you know you are going to be changing your child's transportation routine, you must notify the director and make the changes on the app. **Approved individuals will have their own code through Brightwheel AND must present a legal photo I.D. that may be requested prior to the child being released.**

GDS reserves the right to NOT release children to individuals whose behavior, as deemed by a reasonable person, places the child at imminent risk. The course of action taken will be as follows: if a parent is one whose behavior is non-compliant, the other parent is to be called. If the other parent cannot be reached, the emergency contact will be called. GDS will hold the child until a responsible adult arrives to pick him/her up. **If the child is forcefully taken from GDS, the police will be contacted and given the license number and description of the vehicle used to take the child.**

Parents must provide written notification of any pending legal or domestic situation that could affect the safety and welfare of your child. If there are any legal limitations regarding the access of your child, make sure that GDS has a copy of any documentation with which we may be required to comply.

**Transportation** - GDS does not provide transportation. Parents must transport their child or they may elect to form carpools. Please inform the office if you are involved in a carpool and which parents will be picking up your child. Carpool parents must be listed as an approved pickup and be connected in Brightwheel.

**Food** - Parents provide lunches for children. Each child's container should be labeled with the child's name. Send in foods that are easy to eat and do not require a lot of opening- **Bento-style lunch boxes are highly encouraged..** Avoid sending foods that could pose a choking hazard such as **whole grapes, olives, or hot dogs (please cut into fourths).** **\*\*PER STATE POLICIES, POPCORN IS NO LONGER ALLOWED TO BE SERVED OR EATEN AT PRESCHOOL\*\*** Please include in your enrollment forms AND notify your teacher in writing of any food allergies. We ask that you not send in food that will need to be heated or microwaved. We are unable to heat or prepare any lunch box items. Place all food, drink, and utensils in the child's lunch box. We ask that you do not send sodas or candy.

**Allergies and Preexisting/Diagnosed Conditions** - Parents or guardians are responsible for ensuring that GDS staff has been informed of any allergies or preexisting/diagnosed conditions that their child may have. This information should include information about the condition or allergy type, known triggers and treatment. **Any conditions must be accompanied by a treatment plan from your child's physician.** This should be documented in the proper areas of enrollment forms and health history. Parents/Guardians are also responsible for equipping the GDS office with any rescue devices such as epi-pens, inhalers, etc... Please provide any physician instructions or other details concerning administration of these devices or other special instructions. Failure to comply with these requests can result in the dismissal of your student.

GDS will provide allergy friendly seating during lunch to try and prevent cross contamination of lunches. We will also place a sign in the child's classroom to remind staff that an allergy is present in the classroom.

**Birthdays** - A birthday is a very important day for your child. We welcome your help in celebrating your child's birthday. Please notify the teacher in advance if you would like to bring a simple treat for their class. Please do not hand out party invitations at school unless there are invitations for the entire class.

**Clothes** - Parents should provide all diapers or pullups. Washable play clothes are recommended for weekday activities. It is required by the Fire Marshall that all children wear footwear that is close toed and strapped to the back of the foot with either a sandal type strap or as a fully enclosed shoe. Please do not send your child to school in flip flops or dress up play shoes as these would be extremely unsafe should we need to evacuate the building.

*Children should bring a seasonally appropriate change of clothes in case of accidents. Please label each article with their name and keep them in their bag.*

**Per state requirements, children are not permitted to wear teething necklaces, pacifiers or any item around their neck or attached to clothing.**

**Toys** - No toys may be brought from home unless requested by a teacher in writing or unless special arrangements have been made with the teacher. Special blankets or soft animals for rest times are welcome and should be labeled with the child's name and be stored in the child's schoolbag.

**Outdoor Play** - The children at GDS go outside everyday, weather permitting. Be sure to send appropriate sweaters, jackets, gloves, hats, etc. **Please label all items with your child's name.** If a child is sent without proper cold weather attire or refuses to wear what has been sent, we reserve the right to keep that child indoors.

**Field Trips** - Field trips are an occasional part of our program. Parents will be notified at least one week in advance of a planned field trip. Children must be transported and accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult on all field trips. If a parent chooses not to go on the field trip or make other arrangements for their child, the child will not be able to come to school that day. A signed permission slip is required for each child prior to the field trip and there may be additional fees outside of the monthly tuition to cover the admission costs or special snacks.

**Personal Safety Curriculum** - GDS will be teaching Threes and Pre-K classes a personal safety class using a state sponsored curriculum. An informational meeting will be held each year prior to the start of this program.

**Telephone Policy** - Our phone number is (615) 791-4519. We ask that you contact us through this number rather than the church office. We have voicemail and messages will be checked and returned regularly.

**Emergency & Safety Procedures** - Minor accidents do happen even in child-safe and secure areas. If any accident occurs, the accident will be documented and the parent will be notified. It is very

important that you sign your child in each day and keep us up-to-date with current home and cell numbers by which you can be contacted in the event of an emergency. **At least one parent or emergency contact must be reachable at all times in case of an emergency or unexpected early dismissal.**

Doors are locked each morning at 9:15 a.m. following morning arrival and remain so until 1:45 p.m. for security purposes. Anyone needing access into the building should ring the doorbell located by our main entrance and someone will promptly respond.

Tornado, Fire and Intruder drills will be performed at GDS in a non-threatening manner. Parents may view our emergency plans online, at anytime on the GDS website or on the message board in the school lobby.

**Health and Safety** - Children who have a contagious illness or exhibit signs of illness may not attend. If your child has had any of the following symptoms, he/she should be kept at home:

1. A fever ( $>100$  degrees F) or has had one in the past 24 hour period. **Must be fever-free for a 24-hour period without the use of medication.**
2. A cold with heavy nasal discharge.
3. A frequent, uncontrollable or disruptive cough.
4. Overly fussy, cranky and generally not themselves.
5. Symptoms of a possible communicable disease. (ex: influenza, pink eye, rash, staph, strep, chickenpox)  
**A medical release must be obtained from a physician before returning to school in confirmed cases of communicable conditions.**
6. Vomiting or diarrhea occurs within 24 hours of school start time
7. Headache, chills, body aches or fatigue
8. Known cases of Head Lice (**child must be nit free and also have a note of clearance from a physician or Health Dept, before returning to school.**)
9. Open wound that is still oozing fluid, bleeding or shows any sign of infection.

**Parents/Guardians are responsible and required to notify GDS of any communicable conditions as soon as possible so other families may be notified. Your child will not be named in notifications.**

Families will be provided specific guidelines for COVID management, if needed. These may change over the course of the year, per recommendations by the State and Health Department.

If your child becomes ill during the day, he/she will be isolated from the group and you will be called to pick him/her up immediately. The child will not be able to return to school until he/she has been free of fever, vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours. In the event of exposure to a contagious disease within the group, you will be given notice. Please know that much consideration and evaluation is put into the decision to send a child home. If it is deemed that the parent should be contacted, then it has been determined through lengthy observation that the child is either potentially contagious or has been displaying behaviors that are not usual for that child. We feel that it is always better to err on the side of caution both for the comfort of the child and to prevent potential further spread of illness.

The number of days and hours that children are allowed to be in the facility are strictly stipulated by state regulations. Therefore, we cannot allow children to "make-up" sick days at different times

throughout the year. If your child misses a day due to illness, we are very sorry, however, there is not a method by which we can legally and fairly ensure that every child can be afforded to make up such days.

**Dispensing Medicine** - The **GDS teachers and Director are not authorized to dispense any medication to your child**, other than rescue medications pre-arranged with physician instructions. **This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicine.** If your child requires regular medication, you must come to the school and administer it. Remember - if your child requires medication for an acute illness, he or she should be kept at home.

Please advise the Director and your child's teacher if your child has an allergy that requires the use of an "epi pen". i.e. bee stings or food allergies. An epi pen should be kept in the office in the event of an emergency. A form for the proper administration of the medicine must be completed and kept with the epi pen.

**GDS staff are also not allowed to provide or apply sunscreen to a child.** Due to the increasing number of allergies to this product and the time consuming manner for appropriate application we unfortunately cannot provide this service. All sunscreen should be applied before arrival each day. Reapplication must also be done by a parent.

First Aid- All faculty and staff have been properly trained and retain a current certification in both universal first aid and CPR procedures. First aid supplies as well as an AED defibulator (approved for pediatric use) are located within the building.

**Potty Training-** We believe that potty training occurs when a child is developmentally ready and is a process. Our staff are happy to work alongside parents to support success in training while children are here at school. Consistency is crucial. The 1s and 2s classrooms are equipped to change diapers, but the 3s and PreK classrooms are NOT equipped. **We encourage training BEFORE school starts in August if your child is in the 3s or PreK class. IF your child is still in process of training we ask that you contact your teacher to work out a plan for the classroom.**

### **Settling Conflicts**

Parents shall be encouraged to meet with the teacher/staff member first to discuss any concern or complaint regarding their child's education and or social/emotional/spiritual/physical development. This shall be documented by the teacher and given to the director. In the event you are unable to resolve the problem in this matter, please consult the directors.

**Dismissal of a Child** - GDS reserves the right to dismiss from the program any child if he/she is unable to participate in group experiences in a manner which benefits the child and those around him/her or if fees have not been paid. If a situation involving the child and/or parents of the child becomes such that the relationship is not beneficial to the school, child and/or parents, GDS reserves the right to dismiss the child and terminate the relationship.

### **Behavior Management**

In the event that a child displays inappropriate behavior on an ongoing basis, the director will observe the classroom and the child's behavior, then set up a meeting with parents and staff and develop a



specific program—agreed to by all parties—to implement during daily programming. In the event that such efforts do not improve behaviors, disenrollment of the child may occur. One week's notice will be provided for disenrollment, unless the inappropriate behavior jeopardizes the health or safety of other children or members of the school's staff. In such cases, immediate disenrollment or suspension may occur.

### **Biting**

Child care experts agree that biting is not uncommon among young children, primarily because of their lack of communication skills. Children who engage in this behavior usually stop through the guidance and direction of family and teachers. Our staff handles biting incidents by redirecting children from the situation. If another child is bitten, we immediately wash the site with soap and water, complete an Incident Report, and notify the parents. If biting behavior continues, a parent conference will be scheduled to discuss ways to work toward correcting the behavior. Disenrollment may occur if there is no improvement in the behavior.

*Thank you for choosing Grassland Day School. We are excited to partner with you, your child and your family as we provide an early childhood Christian education filled with excellence that will meet the spiritual, social, emotional and relational needs of your child. We want your child to develop a solid spiritual and educational foundation that will last a lifetime. We strongly value partnering with parents and firmly believe that a partnership must include teamwork and team decision-making in the best interests of the child. We are passionate about making an academic investment with biblical values in each child.*