

# Northwood Christian Church Preschool

## Policy Handbook



2425 Harvest Lane  
Springfield, OR 97477

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## Introduction

This policy handbook contains the operational policies of Northwood Christian Church Preschool, independent of the Church policies and procedures that govern all ministries of the Church. The principles, guidelines and procedures that direct the conduct of the Preschool's administrative matters described herein are intended to guide the personnel, budget, and other operational affairs of the Preschool ministry, consistent with national professional standards for programs that educate young children.

A separate document, the Northwood Christian Church Preschool Parent Handbook, contains all information pertaining to the program's curriculum and instruction, which is not reiterated in this document. Together, the two handbooks provide the necessary structures and systems to operate the Preschool ministry under the larger governance structure of Northwood Christian Church.

## General Information

The Northwood Christian Church Preschool was established in 2000 as a ministry of the Church in service to children and families of the congregation and community. Our primary purpose is to provide a quality faith-based, developmentally-appropriate program for preschool-age children.

### Preschool Mission

***The mission of Northwest Christian Church Preschool is to cultivate in our youngsters, through God's love for them, a genuine love for their peers, family and teachers that makes being together a joy and delight. In turn, as we spend time together, our intent is to nurture the children's love of learning in an environment that encourages authenticity, exploration and self-expression.***

To this end, the Preschool Ministry Team and teaching staff agree to the following **goals for all participants** in its programs:

- To acknowledge that each child and parent brought to Northwood Preschool is unique, special and a gift from God.
- To demonstrate God's love to others in a consistent and observable manner.
- To create a safe, loving, age-appropriate educational program in which each child's uniqueness is celebrated, and all children are nurtured and thrive.
- To establish strong partnerships between Preschool staff and preschool parents, guardians, relatives and other caregivers.
- To maintain clear and open communication among all contributors to Northwood Christian Church and its Preschool – the pastors and church staff, the Preschool Ministry Team and teaching staff, and parents and children.
- To strengthen communication with and understanding of the Preschool with the Northwood Christian Church body.

Accordingly, our **goals for children** attending the Preschool are:

- To know they are beautifully and wonderfully made, unique, special, and that Jesus loves them.
- To have a positive experience and success as young learners and citizens of the Preschool community.
- To grow in understanding of God's love and a servant heart through Preschool chapel, age-appropriate faith-based learning activities, and caring and competent adult role models.

Children thrive when **parents** are involved in their education, especially during the early years. Parent involvement is critical to the preschool's understanding of the needs and interests of each child, as well as success in off-site learning experiences (e.g., field trips) and fundraising. Accordingly, the Preschool strives to maintain strong communication with and involvement of parents in the program, as well as serve as a resource for their support and education. We are also committed to keeping the program affordable and accessible. Current and formerly served families and church members have first priority in enrollment.

For **staff**, we strive to provide an atmosphere that will attract and retain well-trained personnel, since continuity in high quality staff promotes consistency in effective teaching and learning. To promote staff satisfaction, the preschool provides a well-appointed and maintained facility, limits class size, offers staff development funds and activities, and annually appropriates funds for needed materials, supplies, toys and equipment. Staff input is sought in making all decisions affecting the preschool's policies and operations.

Finally, the preschool strives to maintain a sense of cooperation and open communication among **members of the Northwood congregation**, local professional partners in the education of young children, as well as families in the Eugene-Springfield and neighboring communities.

## **Organization**

The Preschool is one of many ministries of Northwood Christian Church. Its operation is governed by the Church Board and committees, including Personnel and Stewardship. The Preschool's goals, objectives and activities are advised by the Preschool Ministry Team, comprised of current or former teachers representing other church ministries, a preschool parent, and a member representing the Church congregation.

Day-to-day operation of the Preschool is managed by the Preschool Coordinator, in continuous collaboration with the staff. Together, the paid staff serves as an action team committed to shared problem-solving and decision-making in the best interests of the children and families we serve. At this level of governance, we address all issues regarding program design and delivery, personnel and budget before referring them for a remedy to either the Preschool Ministry Team or Church governance structures.

The Preschool staff also works collaboratively with its Ministry Team. At its monthly meetings, the Coordinator and staff inform the Team about its progress in meeting the ministry's goals and objectives, and seek its advice about the challenges they encounter. These meetings are also a forum for discussion of shared responsibility between staff

and the Ministry Team, including curriculum and children's chapel, personnel and budget, and fundraising. Suggestions for program, personnel, and other matters arising within the Ministry Team are addressed directly with the Preschool staff at its monthly meetings.

All policies and activities of Northwood Preschool comply with Church policies and guidelines established by the pastorate, Board, and committees. The Preschool Coordinator or designee attends meetings and reports as requested to the Church governance structure.

## **Budget**

Northwood Preschool ministry operates with self-generated, designated funds. The primary source of income is tuition and registration paid on a per student basis. This revenue is the basis of the annual budget planned and presented each Spring to the Church Board and congregation, along with the budgets of all other church ministries. Operating income covers all expenses of the Preschool operation, including staff salaries, materials and supplies, and church rent. As a zero-based budget, the ministry does not accrue funds into a reserve budget, although certain unspent funds may roll over into the following year.

Operating income is augmented by fundraising dollars generated by the Ministry Team, the Preschool staff, preschool parents, and members of the Northwood congregation. Fund-raising targets are set at the beginning of each year, and project ideas are planned to generate the needed funds. Once the Church tithe on fund-raising dollars is paid, purchasing for targeted projects may proceed. Any remaining funds roll over for future fundraising targets.

Primary oversight and management of the Preschool budget is the responsibility of the Preschool Coordinator, in collaboration with the church financial officer and bookkeeper. Decision-making about budget matters, both operational and fund-raising, is a collaborative process involving the Preschool staff, Ministry Team, and church Stewardship Committee.

## **Facility**

The Preschool is located in the Education wing of Northwood Christian Church, at 2425 Harvest Lane in Springfield, Oregon. Facilities include classrooms designed to house the preschool, the fellowship hall in which indoor play and special events are conducted, and a fenced outdoor playground with age-appropriate play equipment. The Preschool also has access to other facilities of the church as needed. Ample parking is available for parents who bring their youngsters to class.

The Preschool office is located in the Fireside Room hallway adjacent to the office of the church bookkeeper. All administrative and business-related concerns (e.g., schedule changes, tuition questions) should be directed to the Preschool Coordinator or church bookkeeper respectively. The Preschool's housing, utilities, and liability insurance are supplied by Northwood Christian Church. A monthly payment of \$200 is budgeted to help defray these expenses. The Preschool also tithes 15% of its fundraising income each year to the Church.

## **Enrollment Policy**

Northwood Christian Church Preschool conforms to the calendar of the Springfield School District. Classes begin in early September and conclude in mid-June each year. Hours of operation are 8:45 to 11:15 a.m., Monday through Friday.

Children of church members, returning students, and children of former preschool families receive first priority in Spring enrollment for the subsequent year. Open enrollment continues thereafter until class sizes are achieved. The Preschool Coordinator is primarily responsible for student recruitment and registration.

Group size is limited as follows: 3-year-old class size is limited to 12 children; the multi-age class size is limited to 14 children; and the 4-year-old class size is limited to 16 children. Once class size is achieved, a waiting list is developed from which vacancies may be filled.

## **Tuition and Scholarships**

The Preschool program is funded primarily through registration fees and tuition, and secondarily through annual fundraising. An annual registration fee of \$100 is paid at the time of pre-registration; \$50 is applied toward June tuition.

Tuition is based on the number of days children attend Preschool, as follows:

- 3s and a multi-age class attend Tuesday and Thursday, with \$85/month tuition.
- 4s attend class on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, with \$110/month tuition.

Tuition is assessed monthly, and is due by the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month. Refunds are not made due to illness, holidays, inclement weather, or other legitimate conditions beyond the control of the Preschool.

Limited scholarships (four at any point in time) are available for families needing temporary financial aid (two months). A scholarship reduces by \$25 the monthly tuition of one child. Parents seeking a scholarship complete a brief application available from the Preschool Coordinator; another application must be completed by parents seeking extension of the scholarship beyond the two-month period. Scholarship applications are approved by the Preschool Ministry Team, after which applicants are informed of the Team's decision. Scholarships do not apply to registration fees.

Because the Preschool operates on a zero-based budget (expenses equal income), all parents are expected to pay tuition monthly. In the event of extreme hardship, the church bookkeeper and Preschool Coordinator will consult with the Senior Associate Pastor regarding a payment plan that differs from the monthly schedule. Consultation with the Stewardship Committee of the church will be made in the event parents fail to make even partial tuition payments for three consecutive months. This consultation will involve the classroom teacher, and weigh the benefits of the child attending preschool versus the expense of carrying unpaid tuition. The Stewardship Committee will advise the Preschool Coordinator if a letter seeking payment and/or correspondence clarifying the exceptional nature of this circumstance should be sent.

## **School Closings/Delayed Openings**

When Springfield School District cancels classes due to inclement weather or other emergency situations, the Preschool follows the same schedule. Parents should take note of announcements of closings and/or delayed openings made on local television and radio stations. Parents are also expected to exercise good judgment when driving from outlying areas in inclement weather, even if Springfield schools are open, since safety is the foremost concern in the event of snow, freezing rain, high winds, and/or flooding.

## **Bi-Annual Parent and Staff Survey**

Parents and staff are asked to complete a survey regarding satisfaction with the Preschool program and operation in November and April. This information helps to assess how effectively the program is meeting the needs of children and parents, as well as to identify needed modifications of policies, procedures and the program itself.

## **Regulations**

Preschool policies comply with the regulations of the Lane County Health Department pertaining to the inoculation of children in preschool, day care, and public school programs. Parents are therefore required to submit up-dated immunization records before classes begin in September, and as appropriate during the year. The Preschool reviews individual immunization records and submits summary report data to the health department each Winter. Parents are solely responsible if they do not immunize their youngster for religious and/or medical reasons, and will receive a letter from the county health department if records are incomplete for individual consideration for exemption.

## **Non-discrimination Policy**

The Northwood Christian Church Preschool does not discriminate on the basis of race/color, national origin, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, age, mental or physical disability, cultural heritage, or sexual orientation in enrolling students and employing staff.

## **Inclusion in the Classroom**

The Preschool curriculum provides for all children, including those with identified developmental disabilities and special needs. Upon parental request, the Preschool Coordinator makes appropriate referrals to resource providers in the local community. Modifications are made in the Preschool environment, staffing patterns, curriculum and instruction in order to promote full participation of children with special needs.

## **Print Materials and Web Pages**

All print materials and web pages related to Northwood's Children's Ministries programs, including the Preschool, are reviewed and approved by the Director of Children's Ministries for consistency and quality. **No pictures of children currently enrolled in Church programs** are used in brochures, handbooks, and web pages for their safety and protection.

## **Personnel Policies**

Presently, teachers of the Northwood Christian Church Preschool are expected to be on-site from 8:00 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday. This provides one hour per day for set up and clean up before and after classes, which are held from 8:45 to 11:15 each day. Teacher assistants are expected to be on-site from 8:30 to 11:30 each work day, and may record the full four hours of work time as the need arises. Staff members are also expected to attend all staff and parent meetings during the school year. Teachers are also expected to attend monthly Ministry Team meetings. Compensation is provided for meetings outside regular school hours.

### **Application**

Position openings for Preschool employees are advertised locally, stating the job requirements, qualifications of applicants, and closing date for submission of the application and supporting documents. Consistent with Church policy in this regard, a Search Committee is formed to review applications and interview applicants.

Each applicant is required to complete an application, submit three letters of recommendation and transcripts of all completed college work, and arrange for an interview with the Preschool Coordinator and Search Committee. Candidates are also asked to observe in the classroom as part of the interview process. Once the Search Committee has selected its preferred candidate, the Preschool Coordinator notifies the individual and prepares the work contract. The Coordinator also informs other applicants that the position has been filled. All personnel forms must be on file before an employee can begin working at the Preschool.

### **Background Check Requirement**

All staff must complete a Criminal Background Check to screen for any criminal activity that may prevent a person from being employed at the Preschool. This documentation must be on file in the employee's personnel file before entering the classroom for work.

### **Health Exam/Immunization Records**

All staff must obtain a written form from an examining physician indicating the date of their last physical examination and current immunization records. A negative TB test from the past 3 years is also required.

### **First Aid & CPR Certification**

All staff must complete a Child First Aid Training course and Infant/Child CPR course to work at the Preschool. Documentation of this training is also kept in the employee's personnel file. Renewal of both is required every three years.

### **Preschool Staff Orientation**

The Preschool Coordinator is responsible for orientation of staff to the program with the assistance of the Lead Teacher. Orientation occurs within the first two weeks of employment, and includes:

Distribution of the Staff Handbook and Parent Handbook and review of their contents.

1. Review of job descriptions and personnel policies.
2. Review of job application and required documentation (immunization, first aid/CPR training, letters of reference).
3. Review of child abuse and neglect prevention plans and non-monitored contact with children policies.
4. Review Preschool policies (organization chart, staff meetings, trainings, and supervision/evaluation; non-discrimination, confidentiality and disclosure policies; and referral policies and procedures).

### **Lead Teacher Qualifications and Duties**

- Earned Bachelor's degree and/or teaching certificate in Early Childhood Education and a minimum of 2 years successful teaching (part- or full-time) in an EC setting
- Successful training and teaching experience in early literacy and numeracy
- 3 professional references
- First aid and CPR certification
- Clearly stated educational philosophy consistent with the Northwood Christian Church Preschool mission, goals, and curriculum
- Commitment to faith-based early childhood education, strong church attendance and involvement
- Pay range for lead teacher: \$13.00 to \$16.00 per hour, based on qualifications and experience

**Responsibilities:** In consultation with the Preschool Coordinator,

- Design and deliver the year-long curriculum and daily learning experiences for children 3-5 years old, including faith-based activities.
- Plan and implement an appropriate classroom environment.
- Serve as a mentor to new staff as needed and role model for teacher assistants.
- Conference with parents at least twice each year.
- Observe and document children's work and development.
- Participate in all staff training meetings and parent/staff meetings during the year.

### **Teacher Qualifications and Duties**

- An Associate's degree in Child Development or Early Childhood Education, and a minimum of 2 years successful teaching (part- or full-time) in an early childhood setting
- First Aid and CPR certification
- 3 professional references
- Clearly stated educational philosophy consistent with the Northwood Christian Church Preschool mission, goals, and curriculum
- Commitment to faith-based early childhood education, strong church attendance and involvement
- Pay range for teacher: \$10.00 to \$12.00 per hour, based on background and experience

**Responsibilities:** In consultation with the Preschool Coordinator and Lead Teacher,

- Design and deliver the year-long curriculum and daily learning experiences for children 3-5 years old, including faith-based activities.
- Plan and implement an appropriate classroom environment.
- Serve as a mentor to new staff as needed and role model for teacher assistants.

- Conference with parents at least twice each year.
- Observe and document children's work and development.
- Participate in all staff training meetings and parent/staff meetings during the year.

### **Teacher Assistant Qualifications and Duties**

- Completion of a high school diploma or equivalent
- Completion of at least one Early Childhood Education course in curriculum or behavior management, or equivalent (e.g., public school training as instructional assistant)
- Previous Pp-2 teaching desirable
- 3 professional and personal references
- Valid First Aid and CPR certification
- Rate of pay: \$8.50 to \$9.50 per hour, based on background and experience

**Responsibilities:** In consultation with the classroom teacher,

- Assist with art projects and activities (helping to set-up and organize the materials)
- Supervise children at play, help set limits, help children solve conflict, and express needs in appropriate ways consistent with the classroom management system established by the teacher
- Assist in maintaining the physical environment with clean-up, repair of books and toys, organization of materials, and keeping the classroom neat and orderly.
- Assist in classroom routines
- Assist in providing a family friendly environment
- Assist in the observation and documentation of children's work and development

### **Probation Period**

All staff serve on a probation period for six weeks, during which the physical and psychological competence and performance of prescribed duties when working with children is evaluated by the Preschool Coordinator. Input from the supervising teacher is also provided for the probation evaluation of teacher assistants.

If deficiencies in performance are identified, the church Personnel Committee chair is advised. If these deficiencies present a clear and immediate danger to children, the individual is removed from the position immediately. Shortcomings that require training and/or supervision are addressed through a plan of assistance developed and executed by the Preschool Coordinator for the subsequent two weeks. If performance improves, the employee enters a second, six-week probationary period; if performance is not satisfactory, separation from employment will be considered in consultation with the Personnel Committee chair.

### **Absentee Policy**

Absenteeism due to illness in educational settings is more problematic than in many other workplaces. On the one hand, employees are constantly exposed to a wider variety of "germs" that children bring to school with them, and may be ill more frequently than is typical elsewhere. On the other hand, absenteeism adversely impacts program consistency and children's adjustment to the daily program. Therefore, staff members are encouraged to maintain good physical and mental health to insure regular job

attendance. When staff must be absent for illness, family illness, or other unavoidable circumstances, the following policies apply:

**Obtain a Substitute.** It is the staff member's responsibility to cover his/her teaching assignment with an approved substitute on the list maintained by the Preschool Coordinator. (If the staff member is too ill to make these phone contacts, the Coordinator should be contacted immediately to secure a substitute.) By contract, salaried staff has 5 days paid days per year for illness and other approved absences. Hourly staff notes the absence on their timesheets. It is not assumed that the teacher assistant who works regularly with the classroom teacher substitutes as the teacher when she is absent; this option must be approved by the Preschool Coordinator. When the teacher assistant is permitted to substitute as the classroom teacher, the assistant must obtain a substitute assistant for that day.

**Leave Plans.** Teachers must maintain a substitute folder that contains a class list, lesson plan(s), daily schedule, emergency plans and exits, and location of pertinent items including snacks, names of teaching assistants, and other important details.

**Notify the Office.** Teachers and teaching assistants must contact the Preschool Coordinator when they are absent and provide the name of the substitute. The Coordinator welcomes such calls in advance, whenever possible, at home or cell.

## **Expenses**

Efficient use of preschool resources requires general oversight of expenses incurred by teachers and teacher assistants by the Preschool Coordinator. Teacher input is sought prior to major purchasing of regularly used materials (e.g., construction paper, tempera paint, glue, etc.) in August prior to each school year. Other specific teaching supplies should be anticipated and requested at the beginning of each month for purchase at that time. Teachers and teacher assistants may make occasional purchases of supplies needed on short notice, but should make prior mention to the Coordinator in case the supplies are already on hand. Receipts for short notice purchases should be submitted according to guidelines established by the church bookkeeper.

Another expense incurred by teachers is the cost of traveling to and from field trip sites. The Preschool discourages teachers from transporting children on field trips to limit personal liability in the unlikely event an accident should occur. Some teachers enjoy riding with parent volunteers who drive to and from field trip sites, while others prefer to drive themselves which is compensated on a per mile basis by the Preschool.

## **Professionalism**

The care and education of all young children is taken very seriously at the Northwood Christian Church Preschool. Each individual staff member is part of a team whose main goal is the well being of the children. All staff members are expected to present themselves in a professional and caring manner, which includes due respect for others – children, parents, preschool staff and other church employees, and members of the congregation and community. All children, parents, staff members and visitors should be treated with kindness, friendliness, patience and respect while remembering that attention is devoted to children during scheduled class time. Additional guidelines governing staff interaction with children are included in the final section of this handbook.

## **Confidentiality**

Information contained in a child's record, shared by parents, or obtained by observation in the classroom is privileged and confidential. Unauthorized removal of records or unauthorized divulgence of parent, children, staff, or program confidential information is expressly prohibited Preschool policy. Violation of this policy is egregious and will result in discharge without additional warning.

Staff is expected to observe professional ethics at all times and never discuss children, families, or staff elsewhere. Observations made in the classroom and all information discussed at staff meetings/trainings are to be kept in strict confidence. If staff knows some of the children or families personally, they must keep those relationships separate from work at the Preschool. In the latter regard, staff must strive diligently to show no favoritism to returning students or children they know outside of the work setting.

## **Disclosure**

Just as information about children and families must be kept in strict confidence, the same principle requires disclosure of certain information among Preschool personnel. Teaching assistants are obliged to report information of potential importance to the teachers they serve, and teachers are obliged to do the same to the Preschool Coordinator. All information pertaining to health, safety, referrals, and matters potentially involving third parties must be reported immediately to the Preschool Coordinator. Likewise, all communications with persons outside the Preschool involving the children and families we serve are managed by the Coordinator, in the interest of insuring confidentiality and limiting liability. This includes referrals to and communications with children's service providers, health care providers, government agencies, public schools, attorneys, and law enforcement.

## **Performance evaluation/professional Development**

Northwood Christian Church Preschool provides opportunities for staff to strengthen their knowledge and skills in curriculum, instruction, classroom management, and subject matter appropriate for young children. The preschool utilizes teacher and teacher assistant self-assessment as a prelude to identifying the professional development activities each staff member pursues each year.

After preparing the self-assessment in January of each year, the teacher or assistant is observed by and then conferences with the Preschool Coordinator. At that time, one or two individual professional development goals and activities to meet those goals are identified, so that the Coordinator can search out suitable materials, resources, workshops or training activities to support the staff member. The Coordinator and teacher or assistant again collaborate in reviewing these options and selecting those most suitable.

To the extent possible, the Coordinator provides on-site support that also meets the requirements of Child Development Associate for teaching assistants. In mid-May, the Coordinator and teacher or assistant review the individual's goals and progress toward meeting them, attaching a progress report to the annual performance self-assessment placed in the personnel file.

Some funds in the Preschool budget are dedicated for staff development. To the extent possible, each staff member will use their allocated funds for appropriate materials, to attend learning experiences, and/or to pay for child care to attend professional growth activities. Teacher materials purchased for professional development are the property of the Preschool, and are catalogued in the resource library (see below).

### **Staff Trainings, Meetings, & Family Events**

Staff trainings are held twice a year, once in Fall and again in Spring, on days that Springfield Public Schools are closed for teacher training and/or parent conferences. Staff is required to attend both of these full day trainings designed to enhance the Preschool's collective teaching effectiveness with young children.

Staff is expected to attend three parent-teacher functions during the year: Open House prior to the start of school, and twice for parent-teacher meetings in Fall and Spring. Teachers are also required to hold parent-teacher conferences with parents who request them once in Fall and again in Spring. Special events, field trips and fundraising activities that include parents are also planned during the year, in which staff is expected to participate at least once each year.

Finally, teachers are expected to attend monthly meetings of the Preschool Ministry Team. Staff representation and participation in policy formation, goal-setting, and decision-making is critical to the representative processes followed in the education profession.

### **Resource Library**

Beginning in 2007, the Preschool's operating budget allocates funds to development of a teaching resource library for its employees. For the present time, materials selected by teachers and teaching assistants are reviewed by the entire staff to determine their utility for working with the children we serve, then purchased and housed in the Preschool Coordinator's office. Such materials might include:

- Curriculum guides and activity books for preschoolers
- Child development
- ESL learners teaching and learning
- Mainstreaming preschoolers with special needs
- Information on child care surveys and studies
- Books, videos, and articles on early childhood education
- Home based family day care information
- First aid and safety
- Child abuse and neglect
- Parenting and foster care

### **Resignations, Dismissals, Grievances**

All employees' annual contracts expire at the end of each school year, and are renewable based on: 1) continuing enrollment to sustain the position; 2) prior satisfactory performance and compliance with Preschool policies; and 3) the employee's expressed intent to continue employment at Northwood Christian Church Preschool. Contracts are completed and signed by May 31 for the following year.

Employees are expected to give prior notice of intent to resign from employment at the Preschool. If possible, working through each 10-week cycle of the school year, and terminating employment at Christmas, Spring, and Summer breaks, is highly desirable for the benefit of consistency and stability in for children in the classroom.

Any employee of the Preschool may be terminated by the Coordinator, in consultation with the Northwood Christian Church Personnel Committee, for gross negligence in performing required duties as follows:

- Shaking, striking, humiliating or otherwise abusing a child, or withholding food from a child as punishment.
- Unauthorized removal of property from the Preschool and/or Church.
- Unauthorized removal of records or unauthorized divulgence of parents', children's, or the Preschool's confidential information.
- Leaving children unattended and/or unsupervised.

Teachers are counseled for other deficiencies in performance and a plan of assistance is developed to help the employee resolve it. Preschool employees who believe a plan of assistance or termination of employment are unfair may state their grievances in writing and submit them to the Preschool Coordinator. The Coordinator prepares a written recommendation to accompany the grievance, and passes these documents to the Church Personnel Committee for a final decision.

## **GENERAL STAFF INFORMATION**

### **Parent Communication**

Parent communication and involvement in their children's education, including the preschool years, is critical to students' academic success. Therefore, teachers and teacher assistants are encouraged to interact freely with parents when they drop off and pick up children each day. Most of these brief interactions should be positive and encouraging. Behavioral or other problems should be reserved for a conference time, after discussing the need for and content of this conference with the Preschool Coordinator.

Staff members are also expected to follow specific parent instructions or requests that are determined to be within the scope of our program. However, Preschool staff should not agree with a parent to 1) withhold snack or restrict playtime to enforce a punishment at home; or 2) administer OTC or prescribed medication to youngsters while at Preschool. The Preschool Coordinator may be asked to discuss these exclusions with parents, if preferred.

Considerable communication between parents and teachers is accomplished through written materials: the Parent Handbook, brochures, monthly newsletters, and the Church web page. It is the general policy of Northwood Christian Church Preschool that parent permission must be given for use of children's pictures in these publications. To the extent possible in external communications (brochures and the web page), pictures of children enrolled in previous years are used to prevent any currently enrolled child being identified or targeted in any way.

**Parent-Teacher Conferences.** Parent-teacher conferences can and should be rewarding experiences, surfacing a good understanding of the child and his or her development. Parent conferences are to be scheduled by the teacher and should be held at least twice a year, once at the end of the fall semester and once at the end of the spring semester. Other conferences should be scheduled upon parent request.

There are several reasons for parent conferences. The first is to report progress. Even though the children are preschoolers, there is a general rate of development at which children mature and learn. Developmental rate in physical, intellectual, social and emotional dimensions is uneven for most youngsters. Conferences are an important opportunity for teachers and parents to understand specific areas of strength in development and readiness for further maturation. Conferences are also sometimes scheduled to discuss behavior. Parents report on such things as the child's attitudes, health, family relationships, interests, and any social factors that may come into play with the child's development. Teachers report on such things as the child's attitude toward school and other children, and progress in his/her development.

**Newsletters.** Monthly newsletters are the primary means of formal, written communication between the Northwood Preschool and parents. The newsletter is informative, positive and attractive in appearance. Spelling and grammar in all correspondence home must be correct. Teachers are expected to contribute program information to the newsletter one week before the end of each month. Office staff proofread and copy the newsletter and provide copies to teacher to be distributed with children's take-home work on the first of each month. Copies are also distributed to the Preschool Ministry Team and made available to the Church governing board.

### **Visitors**

Northwood Christian Church Preschool has an "OPEN DOOR" policy and we welcome parents and others to visit our classrooms at any time. Teachers are notified in advance of scheduled visitors whenever possible. Besides current and prospective parents, we also have student teachers, service providers, grandparents and other occasional "drop in" visitors. At least one staff member must be present in the classroom or on the playground at all times when visitors, including parents and approved substitute teachers, are present.

Staff is expected to summon the Preschool Coordinator and/or Senior Associate Pastor in the event that a person not identified by parents on registration forms as an "approved alternative care provider" or visitor is on-site. Under no circumstances is a child to be released to a visitor without the expressed permission of the parent for that day.

### **Monitored Child Contact**

For the protection of all children and each staff member, staff always work in teams and avoid being alone with children, individual or in groups, except in open sight or within earshot of passersby.

### **Transportation**

The Northwood Preschool does not provide transportation. Parents are responsible for transporting children to the Preschool via walking, bus, or personal vehicles.

Motor vehicle related injuries are the greatest threat to a child's life. To reduce the chances of injury, the following policies and procedures are provided to all parents and staff:

- "School Zone" signs are posted near the Preschool because of the proximity of Page Elementary School to warn motorists that they are approaching a school zone. Extra "Walk" signs at the intersection with Harvest Lane provide additional protection for parents and children walking to Preschool.
- Parents park cars in the front Church parking lot and accompany the children into the Preschool at arrival time and notify teachers of child's arrival. Sign-in is required.
- At the end of the class session, parents line up in vehicles to pick up their children, who are escorted by teachers to the cars and obtain the parent pick-up signature. There is a clearly posted one-way traffic pattern in the loading area. Alternatively, parents may park their cars and walk to the Church narthex to pick-up and sign-out their child.

## **Releasing Children**

Only the authorized parent(s) or others identified by the parents can pick up a child at the end of the school day. A signed form listing other authorized persons is on file in the child's folder. This should also be noted by the drop-off person on the sign-in sheet earlier that same day. Under no circumstances except a verifiable parent phone call can a child be released to anyone not on the signed form. Identification should be requested for any person not known to staff at the time of pick-up.

## **Field Trips**

Teachers may take children on walks nearby Northwood Christian Church, since the Preschool has obtained written parental permission for this purpose and off-site field trips. All off-site field trips must be known to parents at least 2 weeks in advance to secure parent drivers and chaperones. When leaving the Church premises, staff must inform the Church secretary of the departure time, destination, names of staff persons on the trip, and expected return time. At least one staff person should carry a charged cell phone, leaving the number with the Church secretary for emergency contact. Teachers are responsible for planning and organizing classroom field trips. Many teachers find that planning all yearly field trips at the beginning of the year is helpful, and announce the field trips for the year with tentative dates, times and locations to the parents at the beginning of the year. This allows parents to make plans and increases the teacher's chance of getting enough field trip drivers.

The Church van is not used for Preschool field trips. Teachers are discouraged from transporting children on field trips to limit their personal liability in the unlikely event that an accident occurs. Parents transport children in personal cars, providing a copy of their driver's license and auto insurance before departure. All children under the age of 4 or fewer than 40 pounds must be in a car seat. Children 4 and older and over 40 pounds must wear a seat belt. Emergency medical forms and health assessments for each child must be taken on the trip. A first aid kit must be in each vehicle.

## **Holidays**

As a faith-based preschool program, Northwood Preschool celebrates Christian holidays with enthusiasm. The Christmas season has a major impact upon the lives of young children, and the Preschool teaches about the birth of Jesus prior to the annual Christmas program to which parents, families and congregation members are invited. We also celebrate Easter, focusing particularly on Jesus' sacrifice for humankind on the Cross and our salvation through His resurrection. Our teachings are designed for the level of understanding of preschool-age children.

Other holidays are also celebrated as milestones of the calendar year in our general society. Civil holidays are marked with recognition of the occasion and persons associated with that date. Halloween, Thanksgiving, Black History Month, Valentine's Day, and similar holidays provide an opportunity to celebrate the expression of common religious and civic virtues (e.g., generosity, gratitude, justice, love) in a positive and constructive way.

## **DAILY Maintenance**

It is the responsibility of each staff member to keep the Preschool and Church facilities neat, safe, clean, organized, attractive and appropriate for children. Teachers are expected to have the classroom ready each day before the children arrive. Teachers also encourage children to clean up after themselves in the restrooms, making sure that the water is off, sinks and counters are wiped off, toilets are flushed, and there is no paper on the floor. Food garbage should be properly disposed of in the outdoor trash receptacles.

## **Storage**

Teachers are responsible for keeping their classroom storage cabinets clean and orderly. Teachers are encouraged to store materials in plastic storage containers with lids rather than cardboard boxes. When using the TV/DVD, staff is to return it to the location from which it was taken. Equipment used in the Fellowship Hall and on the playground must be properly stored at the end of each school day. This is the shared responsibility of all staff.

## **Telephone**

The Preschool telephone is for business purposes during class time. Staff may not receive telephone calls while they are in the classroom except in an emergency. Telephone messages are taken in the front office and delivered to staff at the end of the class session. Cell phones are not to be answered during class time except in emergencies.

## **Photo Copier**

The staff is permitted to use the copy machine for Preschool purposes in the main Church workroom and, if necessary, the copier in the Church office. Copying should be done before and after class time.

## **Laminator**

The Preschool laminator is available for preparing materials intended for multiple uses. Before using, staff members are trained on its use, and should always notify a colleague when using it so that there is a "back up" for remembering to turn it off. Leaving the laminator on and letting it run completely out of paper will damage the machine.

## **Video Policy**

Videos are rarely the best choice for teaching important concepts and ideas. Videos are shown to children only when it is used as a supplement to the thematic unit, in a way best illustrated by electronic means. The video must be rated G, educational in nature, and previewed by teachers to identify whether brief portions are as useful as the video in its entirety. Teachers may show an educational video for no more than 20 minutes per day, or an approved full-length feature that is no longer than 60 minutes one day per week. Before showing a video, it must be approved by the Preschool Coordinator, based on how it relates to the lessons for the week. Parents must be notified in advance when a video is to be shown. Concerns voiced by parents will be considered before the video is shown.

Somewhat in contrast, a persuasive case can be made for making videos of preschool children and activities for a variety of purposes (e.g., teacher in-service, parent programs). In the event that staff or parents undertake a video project, a brief proposal should be prepared and reviewed by the staff and Ministry Team, describing the activity, time frame for taping, and audience for the product. If approved, permission slips signed by parents agreeing for their children to be involved must be obtained. Children whose parents do not sign permission to be taped may participate in the activity, but must be edited from the final product. All videos produced within the Preschool are for internal uses only.

## **Health and Safety**

A number of policies exist to insure the health and safety of children and staff at Northwood Christian Church Preschool. These are described below.

### **General Health and Safety Guidelines**

All staff is informed and alert to the health of each child, known allergies, or special medical conditions. In addition, all staff is alert to the whereabouts of all children and account for them at regular intervals during class time, especially during periods of transition.

### **Toilet Training**

The Preschool does not provide a diapering area for children who are not fully toilet trained. Except for children with documented special needs, children are required to be fully toilet trained at the time of enrollment for their own health and that of the other children. Of course, toileting accidents do occur in the preschool years, so parents are expected to keep a change of clothing in their child's backpack for such an occasion. These accidents are resolved discretely.

## **Nutrition**

The Northwood Preschool tries to promote healthy attitudes toward food and teach children about good food choices. Since parents provide snacks for the whole class from time to time throughout the year, the Preschool encourages care in the selection of food that is low in fat, sodium, sugar, and preservatives. Refrigeration is available, as needed, for the snacks that parents supply. Children are not required to try every snack supplied, nor to finish snacks they do not like. Under no circumstances is food used as a reward or punishment at Northwood Preschool.

Parents record their child's allergies or medical conditions requiring dietary restrictions on registration forms completed early in the year. This information is passed on to teachers, and parents confer with the Preschool Coordinator to find a reasonable accommodation for those days that alternative snacks are needed. These parents are also encouraged to teach the youngster about the foods they should avoid. While young children are certainly not expected to know which foods they may and may not ingest, learning to ask teachers to help identify acceptable foods is the first step toward self-monitoring.

## **Kitchen Use and Safety**

The availability of excellent cooking facilities in the Church is a blessing to all ministries, including the Preschool. As good citizens of the congregation, staff is responsible for keeping the kitchen clean and organized after personal or Preschool use. Although it is appealing to take children into the kitchen when doing cooking activities, it is ill advised. If absolutely necessary, preschoolers should look into the kitchen from the Fellowship Hall, rather than enter the kitchen space itself.

## **Classroom/Playground Safety**

Every caution must be taken to guard against accidents to children and staff. It is the responsibility of every staff person to correct unsafe conditions (e.g., liquid, food, paper, extension cords, etc. on the floor) that could cause an accident. Unsafe conditions and fire hazards that are not easily and immediately correctable should be reported to the Preschool Coordinator. All accidents should be reported immediately and then documented in writing the same day.

For safety reasons, at least 3 paid staff members must remain on the playground when both classes are present. Conversation among adults should be minimal while supervising the playground. One designated staff member should be carrying a charged cell phone for vital communication if an emergency occurs. In the event of a fall or injury, the Preschool Coordinator and/or Senior Associate Pastor should be summoned by phone or in person immediately. If the emergency requires immediate EMT response, staff should phone 911. In either case, written documentation by the child's classroom teacher should be submitted to the Preschool Coordinator after medical attention is obtained and the crisis abates.

## **Fire Rules**

All employees are responsible for understanding their role in a fire-related emergency. Staff must know the location and operation of fire extinguishers, procedures for reporting

a fire to the fire department, and knowledge of all fire exits. At least once each quarter, fire drills are conducted to insure that children and staff know how to evacuate the building.

## **Injury Prevention Plan**

All staff is responsible for maintaining an environment that poses limited health and injury risks. In the latter regard, the Preschool Coordinator and Lead Teacher are jointly responsible for daily monitoring of the indoor and playground environments to correct any obvious problems or hazards. Equipment, supplies and toys are also carefully examined for health and safety concerns. When injuries do occur, the teacher prepares an "Ouch Report" which is copied and given to the parent on the same day it occurs.

## **Universal Health Care Precautions**

All preschool staff and visitors share responsibility for observing universal health care precautions. Staff is expected to wash their hands when arriving at Preschool, before handling food, after toileting self or the child, after play and circle times, and after handling any bodily fluids. Latex gloves are provided for use when assisting with toileting a child, contact with blood, vomit, or nose discharge, and cleaning contaminated surfaces. Disinfectant is used to sanitize all table surfaces before snack time, and to sanitize toys and other objects that children use. Good air quality is insured by maintaining an appropriate room temperature and circulating fresh air each day immediately prior to the children's arrival.

## **Illness**

To protect children and staff, the Preschool maintains guidelines regarding attendance when ill. Children are greeted by the teacher upon entering each day, who observes any possible health problems. If a child exhibits any of the symptoms listed in the exclusion list below, the Lead Teacher or Preschool Coordinator asks the parent to take the child home.

- Severe cold and fever, sneezing, nose drainage, and coughing.
- Conjunctivitis, an eye infection commonly referred to as "pink-eye". The eye is generally red with some burning and yellowish discharge.
- Bronchitis. This can begin with hoarseness, cough, and a slight elevation in temperature. The cough may be dry and painful, but it gradually becomes productive.
- Rashes that you cannot identify or that have not been diagnosed by a physician.
- Impetigo. This begins as red pimples on the skin, which eventually become small blisters surrounded by a reddened area. When the blister breaks, the surface is raw and weeping. The lesions occur in moist areas of the body, such as creases of the neck, groin, and under the arm.
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea.
- Unusual paleness, fatigue, irritability, or lack of interest.

More commonly, children who are slightly unwell develop more pronounced symptoms as the day progresses. When this occurs, the parent or authorized person is contacted to pick up the child. A quiet area within the Church is set up for the child and a staff member stays with her or him until the parent arrives.

If a doctor diagnoses certain infections, such as an ear or throat infection, and prescribes an antibiotic, the child should be on medication for at least 24 hours before returning to school. If the illness is communicable, a note from her or his doctor is required for return to school. This prompts notification to all parents when a communicable illness has been introduced into the Preschool community. This includes the illnesses listed above, as well as measles, mumps, roseola and chicken pox.

## **Emergency Health Care**

No matter what precautions are taken, unforeseen accidents and illnesses do occasionally occur. The Lead Teacher and Preschool Coordinator immediately determine the severity of the situation, contact the parent/authorized pick-up person, and/ or arrange for transportation by ambulance to the hospital. One staff member (Lead Teacher or Coordinator) accompanies the child to the hospital, medical release in hand. If the parent cannot be reached, the designated person on the child's permission form is promptly contacted. The staff member remains with the child until the parent or alternative pick-up person arrives. Additional details on emergency care and follow-up are provided in the Northwood Preschool Parent Handbook.

## **Other Emergency Situations**

In the unusual event that an emergency (fire, power outage, loss of water or heat) occurs, the Preschool staff retains responsibility of all children on the premises until they are released to a parent, guardian, or other designated person. In addition, unwindowed rooms with locking doors have been identified in which children and staff are housed in the event of an incident endangering youngsters at Page Elementary School, the Preschool, or surrounding neighborhood. Alternatively, if civil authorities so require, children transported to an official evacuation center will remain in the care of Preschool staff until reunited with their parents.

If parents are able to reach the school without danger to themselves or without interference with emergency personnel, they should come to pick up their children. Otherwise, parents should listen on the radio or television for progress reports on the emergency situation and follow official instructions. Children are released only to parents, guardians, or other authorized persons known to the staff. Staff are not released from supervision duties until all children are in the care of their parents or approved caregivers.

## **Child Abuse Reporting**

As professionals in contact with young children and their families, personnel of Northwood Christian Church Preschool are "mandated reporters" required by Oregon law to report children who may be abused or neglected. Thus, it is the policy of the Preschool to report any and all suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect to local authorities immediately by telephone and to provide that same information in writing within 24 hours. The Preschool also cooperates fully in an investigation of the reported incident.

- **Child Abuse** is the non-accidental commission of any act by a caretaker that causes or creates a substantial risk of harm to a child's physical and emotional well being, including sexual abuse.

- **Child Neglect** is the failure by a caretaker, either deliberately or through negligence, to take those actions necessary to provide a child with minimally adequate food, safety, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, or other essential care.
- **Reasonable Cause** means that after examining all the facts in a particular situation, most people with similar training and experience would also suspect abuse and/or neglect.

***The following procedure has been established regarding the reporting and/or recording of suspected child abuse and neglect at Northwood Preschool:***

Any staff person who suspects a child has come to school abused or neglected must immediately report that information to the Preschool Coordinator. It is the responsibility of the Preschool Coordinator to review the basis of this report and, if appropriate, inform the Senior Associate Pastor of the Church and then local authorities.

## **General Classroom Guidelines**

Specifics of the Preschool curriculum are provided in the Parent Handbook, and are not reiterated in this Policy Manual. Instead, the following guidelines are provided to assist staff in delivery of the curriculum in promoting children's physical, cognitive, and social and emotional development.

A high quality early childhood program provides a safe and nurturing environment while promoting age-appropriate physical, social, emotional, intellectual, moral and spiritual development of young children. In effective programs, including the Northwood Christian Church Preschool, observers see:

- Positive, encouraging, and warm interactions among adults and children.
- Planned play activities appropriate to children's age and development from which they are free to choose, such as block building, painting, reading stories, dress-up, and active outdoor play.
- Planned learning experiences that engage children in pre-academic activities related to literacy, numeracy, science, and the visual and performing arts.
- Time for children to interact with one another in a variety of social dimensions (i.e., discussion, informal conversation, group meeting).
- Frequent conversation about Christian principles and beliefs, and their application in today's world.
- Activities that lend themselves to exploration and creative expression.
- A healthy and safe environment for children, reasonable expectations of self-care, and nutritious and healthy snacks.
- Regular communication with parents who are welcome at all times.
- Effective administration that provides needed support, supplies and leadership for quality program design and delivery.
- Ongoing, systematic evaluation, including input from parents and staff that is used to improve the program.

## **Developmentally Appropriate Practice**

Northwood Christian Church Preschool offers a “developmentally appropriate” curriculum that is tailored to the abilities and interests of young children, engages them in experiential learning activities, provides for learners’ choices each day, and promotes exploration and self-expression. In short, teachers think first about the characteristics of young children, and then create environments and experiences aligned with their development.

Young children learn by doing and need to be provided with many varied opportunities to explore and experiment with concepts through play and hands-on activities in the natural environment. Although children develop through a generally predictable sequence of steps and milestones, they may not proceed through these steps in the same way or at the same time. The younger the child, the greater their need for first-hand, sensory experiences. Through play experiences, preschool children constantly refine their skill development and understanding. As teachers observe children’s play and development, they identify the signals for providing new stimulation and challenges. Activities, environment, and materials may need to be adapted to meet children’s individual needs, including modifications for children with disabilities.

Strategies for fostering learning in all curriculum areas include many, varied opportunities for children to:

**Plan:** Building the strong intellectual and social skills for intention and self-regulation involves the ability to plan and execute their learning experiences, especially those we call “play.” Children consider what they are going to do with materials and friends and how they are going to do it, to build a foundation for setting goals for themselves. Planning is also a social experience, in which youngsters negotiate among themselves how an activity will unfold.

**Play:** Another critical aspect of early development involves pursuing issues relevant to their lives and reflecting larger society, in all of its complexity. When children play “house” or “store,” they are mirroring real-life situations modeled by significant adults in their lives. In play, children use materials and make choices in ways that best suit their own personal curiosity and understanding. Through social interactions in play with age peers, preschoolers experience joy in creating meaning for themselves while collaborating with others who may see things very differently. Teachers’ primary responsibility to youngsters’ play is setting up an imaginative and engaging play environment in which they negotiate the unfolding play experience.

**Reflect:** In all aspects of the preschool program, children recall/reflect on things that happened during their experiences, thereby reinforcing or questioning their understandings. Teachers are careful to plan reflection time into every aspect of the class session, so that learners’ prior knowledge is tapped through stories, songs, conversation, activities and free play. Teachers also listen carefully to children’s reflections, since they often contain misunderstandings of the physical or social content of their learning. Such misunderstandings provide the basis for the learning activities to follow.

**Re-visit:** Children practice skills and replay their experiences over and over in many different ways, either confirming their prior knowledge or modifying it based on new discoveries. Teachers observations of children’s reflections use questioning and demonstration of discrepant events to prompt their re-visiting a concept or big idea. Follow-up conversation provides the vocabulary to extend or elaborate children’s thinking.

**Connect:** With the guidance of their teachers, preschoolers create linkages between subject matter knowledge and to areas of skill development. It is the careful integration

of knowledge and skill that prepares youngsters for increasingly sophisticated learning. Thus, reading and writing are skills mastered in order to learn about literature, history, science, geography, and so on. Likewise, numeracy skills help students quantify data in the study of these same subjects.

While on-lookers may not immediately understand the value of the learning activities underway in the Preschool's classrooms each day, teachers are eager to explain the themes being explored, the sequence of free choice and planned activities offered, and the work products children bring home. Teachers are responsible for providing parents with this information on a monthly, weekly and daily basis, so that related conversations and experiences may be planned at home. Equally important, activities are "differentiated" based on individual children's interests, abilities and rate of development so that essential learnings, including pre-academic skills, are mastered by all.

In the latter regard, the Northwood Preschool also differentiates the first learning in a social setting that occurs with 3-year-olds from the more sophisticated learning in which 4-year-olds engage. While the themes and activities with both groups may look similar, the specific activities may differ based on age differences in literacy, numeracy, and/or social interaction. Teachers are also sensitive to our obligation to develop certain pre-academic skills, both cognitive and affective, among preschoolers bound for kindergarten the following year. For these youngsters, the curriculum intentionally incorporates these skills in classes for 4-year-olds from January to June.

### **Artistic Expression**

In 2007-2008, Northwood Preschool is launching a major initiative to promote children's symbolic expression through artistic media. One teacher is named the atelierista (studio artist) responsible for designing art activities related to the thematic curriculum. These activities extend over days or even weeks at a time, with small groups negotiating and creating products that represent their own thinking about the topic being studied. Art products resulting from these lessons will be displayed in the Education wing, and presented as an end-of-year gallery showing. Pictures of projects at all stages of production will also be taken to document cooperative groups at work. The notion of the atelierista is borrowed from the Reggio Emilia preschool philosophy, but Northwood does not subscribe to other aspects of Reggio.

### **Lesson Plans**

Northwood teachers are responsible for posting monthly lesson plans and daily schedules outside their classrooms in a timely manner. The plans are dated and kept on file in the classroom and available to substitutes and the Preschool Coordinator. Teachers are expected to collaborate with each other in development of these plans, and to differentiate activities for 3-year-olds, the multi-age group, and 4-year-olds.

Instructional themes and daily activities are planned consistent with the school's philosophies and curriculum guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice and discovery learning. Teachers plan activities to balance the day/week for the children and to avoid neglect of any one curricular area. This also insures that needed supplies and equipment are available for instruction when it is planned to occur.

## **Children's Friendships**

Northwood Christian Church Preschool is committed to fostering pro-social behavior, including friendship formation, during early childhood. Recent studies have found that some friendships formed in the early years of childhood are second only to family relationships in importance. From such findings comes a heightened awareness of the social and emotional importance of friendships in the early years. Interaction with and acceptance by peers has long-term effects on a child's life.

Enrollment in an early childhood program offers children social experiences that might not be available to them in relationships with adults or siblings. With many friends her own age, a child encounters lots of opportunities to negotiate, compromise, and empathize. At Northwood Preschool, youngsters are encouraged to express opinions and ideas while also respecting others.

Preschoolers develop social competence in three main areas: initiating interactions, maintaining ongoing relationships, and solving conflicts with other children. While some children easily join a group at play, others have difficulty. As adults, we can help young children learn social strategies for entering playgroups or for talking to other children about what they want. Watching for a few minutes and then saying "I'll be the big sister, okay?" works better than "Hey, let me do that!" We need not be too concerned when children frequently change best friends. Friendships may last only for an afternoon of play.

Preschool involvement also offers parents the opportunity to expand children's friendship skills. Children appearing not to have any special friendships at school may benefit from one-on-one time with other children outside of the early childhood setting. Playing together a few times outside of school often gives two children a level of comfort with each other that carries over to their time at school. The Northwood Preschool promotes relationships among parents to encourage this opportunity for children to form meaningful friendships with peers.

## **Observation/Documentation of Children's Growth and Development**

At Northwood Preschool, classroom experiences are presented in a developmental sequence and place learning in the context of play and meaningful activities. The mark of a superior teacher is the ability to select materials and interact with children in ways that motivate children to learn through their own play. The art of teaching is founded in a thorough understanding of child development, coupled with careful observation and documentation of a child's responses to materials and interactions.

All Northwood Christian Preschool staff participates in on-going assessment of children in classroom activities. Staff is expected to use various observation and documentation tools. Under the supervision of the Preschool Coordinator and Lead Teacher, all staff provides:

- Clip-board comments or notes home on children's conversations and interactions. (Concerns about children's behavior are not sent home in writing. Instead, the Preschool contacts parents in person or by phone to discuss behavioral issues.)
- In-put into children's portfolios.

- Written observations completed as a basis for planning appropriate learning activities, as a means of facilitating optimal development of each child in order to identify children who may be in need of more systematic diagnosis, and as records for use in communication and conferences with families.

## **Classroom Management**

Northwood Christian Church Preschool is blessed with a child-focused facility in which to conduct the program. We strive to maintain a classroom environment filled with learning activity and the sounds of happy, engaged children. A few guidelines for management of the classroom and learners are followed to insure that class time is used effectively. First, the environment itself is maintained during class and from day-to-day in an orderly way. This promotes smooth transitions from one activity to another, as well as a good start and finish to class sessions. Second, we examine movement patterns of children and teachers, and keep play and work spaces easily accessible. Finally, teachers provide a balance of active/quiet and self-directed/teacher-directed activities, to manage the pace and intensity of activities in which the youngsters engage.

When guiding children, we maintain daily routines so that the sequence of each class day is predictable. Staff also state suggestions and directions in a positive and neutral way, and speak directly and quietly to children whenever possible. If children are given choices, the decision is truly their's to make. Misbehaving youngsters are re-directed away from undesirable behavior, toward activities related to their motives and interests. Affirmation and specific praise are offered when children engage in pro-social and at-task behavior. Staff also encourages independence, offering but not forcing help on youngsters even if it takes a little longer for them to complete a task themselves. In summary, in working with young children, the Preschool staff recognizes that their own attention during school time must be devoted to the youngsters' needs: observing, guiding, promoting creative efforts, problem solving, supporting attempts at friendship, and encouraging them to meet and overcome new challenges.

## **Behavior Management**

Basic guidelines for the health and safety of the children are followed at Northwood Preschool. The classroom environment is arranged to avoid problem-causing situations. Expectations are tailored to fit the developmental levels of the children, thereby minimizing frustrations and inappropriate behavior. Children are also taught and encouraged to develop self-control, autonomy, manage feelings, solve problems, and experience satisfaction in cooperative social behavior.

However, problems invariably arise anywhere people gather in groups. When young children become harmful to themselves or others, destructive to property, or repeatedly disruptive to the learning process, educators are obliged to intervene. The matter of importance under these circumstances is the form that intervention takes.

Consistent with Jesus' role model, professional standards for the education of young children, and our own good sense, Northwood Preschool does not use punishment, humiliation or verbal abuse in addressing children's misconduct. Children are never denied food as punishment, or reprimanded for wetting, soiling, or not using the toilet. Instead, the Preschool staff analyzes possible reasons for behavior problems and makes adjustments in the environment as necessary and appropriate. We also offer alternatives, redirect activity, point out natural or logical consequences of different

behaviors, and assist children individually or in a group to problem solve. In these ways and more, the staff model self-control in our own touch and voice. We are firm and consistent about limitations when they are appropriate to the situation and the child's ability to understand and comply.

## **Problem-solving strategies**

Teachers use many strategies and techniques to assist children in resolving conflicts. Although methods vary depending on children's ages and the severity of the situation, all teach problem-solving skills and instill an intrinsically motivated sense of right and wrong. Northwood Preschool teachers use the following techniques when dealing with conflict situations:

- **Limit setting:** Children are given basic, clear, and concise rules to guide their behavior. Boundaries and expectations expand as children mature.
- **Consistency:** So children know what to expect, limits and expectations are consistent throughout the Preschool's classes, and all adults respond in a similar way to conflict situations.
- **Tone:** A kind yet serious tone delivered by intervening adults reinforces children's sense of security and lets them know the situation is under control. Teachers should kneel at the child's height to deliver intervention messages face-to-face.
- **Modeling:** Adults clearly demonstrate compassionate, caring behaviors that set examples for children to follow.
- **Passive intervention:** Teachers give children time to work through their own problems, but are there to help if things escalate to destructive or aggressive behavior. Passive intervention, such as re-direction, gentle touch or positioning between youngsters is often sufficient to quell a small storm.
- **Directive intervention:** Children are physically separated if they begin to hurt each other. Follow-up through clarifying questions and problem-solving help to diffuse tension and validate youngsters' feelings.
- **Generating options/solutions:** Children are given tools (e.g., negotiation, restitution, collaboration, cooperation) to settle conflicts. Used consistently, these alternatives help young children to empathize with others, take offense less often, and self-regulate their own behavior.
- **Natural consequences:** Teachers point out and reinforce natural consequences as they occur. Children see the results of their own behavior and begin to modify it accordingly. "You threw sand after we asked you not to. Now you need to leave the sandbox and find a different area to play in."
- **Single adult delivery:** Teachers do not interrupt or intervene in another adult's interaction with the child(ren) about a behavioral matter. Children are quick to discern when adults do not agree with one another, which can cause confusion. This contradicts the goals of consistency and modeling described above. Any disagreement that adults have about child guidance is discussed after class time and amicably resolved.

## **Snack Routines**

An important learning experience each day is "snack time." This is an opportunity to learn about health routines, nourishing food, and social norms for table conduct and conversation. At Northwood Preschool, children wash their hands before being seated for snack. The "snack helper" is invited to hand out napkins and lead the class in prayer.

Youngsters are encouraged to serve themselves family style in an orderly manner, and wait for all to be served before eating. Children are encouraged to try all foods, but are not forced to eat foods they do not like. Alternative snacks are not available, but water is always an option to the beverage that parents provide.

Children are also encouraged to sit at the tables during snack time, and to dispose of their napkin, cup, and leftover food in the classroom trash receptacle. Teachers encourage and demonstrate pleasant conversation at the tables, and sit with children during snack to promote interaction. Staff also washes and sanitizes table surfaces before and after snack, and wears plastic gloves when handling food.

### **Playground/Outdoor Play**

In addition to the playground safety guidelines presently earlier in this document, teachers and teaching assistants enforce the following playground rules:

- Children must be accompanied by staff at all times.
- Children may not throw sand or bark chips. Children work with sand and sand box toys from outside the box, rather than climbing directly into it.
- Children may not climb up the slide, and slide down properly seated and feet first.
- Toys from the classroom or toys from home are not allowed outside on the playground. Balls, shovels, or other equipment are not allowed on climbing structures.
- Tricycles stay on the sidewalk, and children must be seated while riding. If a child runs into the wall or another child while riding the tricycle they forfeit that turn.
- Pushing, shoving and wrestling are not allowed. Children may not climb on the fence.
- Staff is to be actively involved with the children on the playground. Staff must be positioned to view all parts of the playground. Staff should position themselves throughout the playground so that all youngsters are in plain view at all times.
- All children are accounted for before returning to classrooms.

### **Indoor Large Muscle Activities**

Indoor large muscle play during the Oregon rainy season should be planned in advance, and coordinate with the integrated thematic units presented in the classroom. Teachers should be prepared to use this time for related music, dance, gymnastic, games and sports skill development. In some cases, this may require separate times for the two classes to use the fellowship hall, whereas on other occasions both classes may be brought together for planned activities.

The fellowship hall may be the ideal setting for one or both classes to conduct art and craft activities over several days time. Teachers must check the church calendar for other events scheduled to use the fellowship hall, and clear away projects-in-process when necessary.

Whatever the use of the fellowship hall for large group activity, preschool staff are expected to plan in advance for the activity, and insure that it is linked intentionally to the curriculum being taught. It is also appropriate for teachers to continue regular classroom activity during inclement weather.

## **Conclusion**

In striving to provide a high quality, developmentally-appropriate preschool experience for young children, Northwood Preschool staff and ministry team work together to share expertise, develop and execute planned activities, and address challenges that arise. Our collaborative work is enriched by the Christian principles we value in interactions among ourselves and with the children and families we serve. "Service" is indeed our passion of this ministry, in a way that both teaches and exemplifies the marvelous love and sacrifice of Jesus, and the peace and joy to be found in living in God's will.

## **Appendix A**

### ***Northwood Christian Church Preschool***

#### ***Preschool Teacher Performance Evaluation Criteria***

##### **CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT: To establish and maintain a classroom climate conducive to teaching and learning.**

- The teacher is warm and welcoming to children and parents.
- The classroom is inviting, interesting, and allows for clear movement of learners and flow of activities.
- Parent involvement in the classroom program is encouraged.
- Classroom rules and procedures are age-appropriate, clearly and kindly stated, and reinforced when necessary. (See Health and Safety, below)
- Children clearly understand appropriate use of play areas and equipment.
- The Christian foundation of the preschool is clearly evident in age-appropriate ways.
- The teacher's faith is reflected openly to the children and their families.

##### **PLANNING & PREPARATION: To develop and communicate the learning program offered at Northwood Preschool.**

- The teacher collaborates with other staff in design/selection of thematic curriculum that includes age-appropriate facts, concepts, and skills.
- Lessons, activities and materials are engaging, developmentally appropriate, and allow for both structured and self-selected learning experiences.
- Parents receive an overview of the program on a weekly and monthly basis.
- Materials for daily activities are prepared in advance, and learning centers and activities are set up in advance of the children's arrival each day.

##### **CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION: To collaborate in developing and delivering a quality pre-academic program.**

- The curriculum is age-appropriate to learners in each group.
- The classroom displays a language and print-rich environment to promote literacy development.
- The thematic curriculum promotes literacy and numeracy skills, as well as new knowledge about the sciences, social studies, art, music, and technology.
- The teacher implements the planned curriculum, and encourages children to complete both structured and self-selected activities.
- Instruction is varied and engaging (large or small group, individualized, varied materials and media, etc.).
- Projects and activities may be completed over two or more class sessions.

##### ***Circle Time: To develop interpersonal communication and social skills***

- Time is regularly scheduled for group conversations.
- Children are encouraged to share concerns and events that are important to them.
- Children are taught listening skills, which are consistently reinforced.
- Children are taught to ask and answer questions related to group conversations during circle time.
- Circle time may be used for class meetings, in which children and teachers solve social problems that arise during class time.

***Story Time: To enhance children’s understanding of language and promote literacy***

- The teacher plans a daily story time related to the thematic curriculum being taught.
- The teacher selects reading material, both fiction and non-fiction, that extends children’s experiences.
- The teacher uses literacy teaching strategies and techniques to promote early language and literacy development.
- The children eagerly anticipate story time and share in the discussion of the material.

***Art and Music: To insure that multiple modalities are employed in learning and promote children’s appreciation of the visual and performing arts.***

- Art and music are incorporated meaningfully into the daily program to promote children’s exploration and self-expression.
- A variety of artistic media and music genre are explored in these activities.
- Craft activities are used to reinforce the facts and concepts taught in the theme-based curriculum, and develop age-appropriate skills (e.g., cutting, sculpting, drawing or painting, writing).

**MOTIVATION AND MANAGEMENT: To promote children’s self-regulation, competence, and resilience.**

- The teacher communicates clear and consistent expectations of children’s conduct with respect to learning and interaction with others.
- The teacher provides appropriate praise and feedback specific to the social or learning behavior of children.
- Teacher directions are clear and guide children through smooth transitions in classroom routines.
- The teacher deals appropriately with children’s interruptions, questions, and contributions.
- The teacher intervenes, clearly and kindly, when children’s behaviors interfere with others’ opportunity to learn.
- The teacher guides children in transforming strong feelings or aggression into language and cooperative play.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY: To insure a safe school environment for all.**

- The teacher models and teaches good health habits (e.g., bathroom use, containment of colds, snack routines, etc.).
- The teacher establishes and reinforces rules and procedures for outside play and indoor games and sports.
- The teacher attends immediately to injuries or accidents that occur in school, according to guidelines outlined in the Parent Handbook
- The teacher provides instruction on disaster awareness and conducts fire drills at least once monthly.

**PARENT INTERACTION: To promote parent engagement in their children’s school experience.**

- The teacher reviews registration materials that parents submit to learn more about the children enrolled in their classes.
- The teacher observes and records pertinent information, and shares it with parents when appropriate.

- The teacher provides progress notes to parents about their children's engagement in activities and interaction with others at preschool.
- The teacher holds, at least once each year, a conference with each child's parent(s) to establish home-school communication and promote shared goals for the preschool experience.
- The teacher welcomes parent participation in the classroom, to the extent possible, and involvement in special events and fundraising.
- The teacher attends and participates in scheduled preschool events, including programs and parent meetings.

### **PROFESSIONALISM**

- The teacher is present and prepared when children report to preschool.
- The teacher contacts the Preschool Coordinator when absent.
- The teacher is genuine, good-humored and understanding in interactions with children and/or parents.
- The teacher maintains confidentiality about children and families previously or presently involved with the preschool.
- The teacher is interested and involved in his/her own professional development.
- The teacher attends and contributes to regular staff and advisory board meetings.

## **Preschool Teacher Performance Evaluation Procedures**

At Northwood Christian Church Preschool, we celebrate the gifts and talents each teacher brings to our team, and work in a collegial fashion to insure that all children benefit from each teacher's knowledge and skills. Therefore, performance evaluation is a collaborative effort intended to identify teachers' strengths and needs and promote professional growth. To this end, the following process will be undertaken each school year.

At the end of Fall quarter, the Preschool Coordinator will initiate the annual teacher evaluation process by requesting that teachers undertake a self-evaluation closely linked in content to the defined evaluation criteria. In each major category, teachers will write a brief self-assessment of perceived strengths and areas needing improvement. When the self-assessment is complete, the teacher and coordinator meet to review and discuss it and establish 2-3 professional development goals for the remainder of the year. A plan for activities to achieve those goals is also developed collaboratively.

To the extent possible and desirable, the Preschool Coordinator will provide assistance in teachers' achieving their professional development goals. This may involve book study, supplying professional materials, classroom coaching, and/or obtaining funds to attend classes or conferences. In addition, the coordinator provides staff development to all teachers and teacher assistants in areas that the team has agreed to collectively address.

At the end of the year, each teacher and the coordinator review achievement of the professional development goals, and present a joint report to the Preschool Ministry Team and church Personnel Committee, if requested. All Preschool staff will hold a year-end meeting in which the growth plans are shared and achievement of professional goals is celebrated.