

Certification Guidelines
For
Weekday Preschool & Kindergarten
Programs

Developed by the
Preschool Directors Association
of the
North Georgia
United Methodist Conference

2009 Revision

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Developed by the Preschool Directors Association
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Mission Statement

We believe that the church

- Is called to be in ministry to the congregation and to the community.
- Is committed to assist persons to live life in the fullness that Jesus proclaimed.

We believe that each child

- Is a child of God.
- Has a right to develop to his/her fullest potential.

We believe that weekday programs

- Should provide examples of the highest qualities of the Christian faith.
- Should assist parents in these crucial years of child rearing.
- Should provide children the best of early childhood education so that they may develop to their fullest potential physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

We believe that this certification effort will

- Define the elements of a high quality preschool program.
- Recognize schools that are *Programs of Excellence*.
- Assist programs who strive for excellence in the service they provide.
- Give recognition to teachers who give of themselves.
- Help parents choose a high quality school for their child.
- Further the goal of the church to show God's love in action.

Use of Guidelines

These guidelines may be used as:

A Planning Tool

The standards outlined in this document may be used by the director, staff, and board to plan and evaluate the program through a process of self-study.

An Evaluation Tool

For schools seeking certification, the guidelines will provide a format for evaluation of program standards. The recognition of a school as a *Program of Excellence* is made based on meeting the criteria outlined in these guidelines and specified in the checklist. The process of peer review evaluates how closely the program follows these guidelines.

As Supporting Information for the Checklist of Certification Standards

Please note that the accompanying Checklist will be completed and that 90 percent of the criteria must be met. Supporting documentation for each criterion must be provided and specific page numbers cited in the checklist. An opportunity to correct oversights in documentation will be possible before final submission.

Certain criteria as noted with a * are mandatory including:

1. Licensure or exemption from licensure. Programs should secure this documentation early in the process.
2. Staff credentials as defined and noted in Section I. on Personnel.
3. Compliance with *Safe Sanctuary* (child abuse prevention procedures) as defined and noted in Sections VI, VII, & IX,
4. Supervision of Children as defined and noted in Section VII, Programs for Children.

Note that a few statements made as 'recommendations' are optional in this revision but are considered good practices that schools are encouraged to follow.

Section I. Personnel

The Preschool program has developed a document which states personnel policies, including but not limited to hiring, job descriptions, compensation, supervision and evaluation, discipline and termination, grievance procedures, professionalism, confidentiality and ethical conduct. This document also includes requirements and procedures related to staff expectations and employment, benefits, workman's compensation. It is recommended that this information be compiled in a staff handbook and shared with staff. The Preschool Board has approved this document as the policies and procedures by which the program will conduct personnel issues.

A. Staff Requirements

1. Staff members

- a. Are at least 18 years of age.
- b. Staff members are in good physical and mental condition and free of any physical condition, communicable disease or mental health disorder which would interfere with the ability to provide care and supervision of young children. Documentation of an annual physical exam and biennial TB skin test are recommended.
- c. Must have an acceptable criminal background check.
- d. Agree to uphold the philosophy of the United Methodist Church regarding the spiritual development of young children.
- e. Have not made any false statements concerning qualifications.
- f. Have signed a letter of agreement outlining employment duties and projected compensation.

2. The Director

The director meets one of the following conditions

- a. Bachelor degree from an accredited college in a field other than early childhood education or child development and three years of qualifying work experience.
- b. Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in early childhood or child development and two years qualifying work experience.

3. Lead Teachers*

All lead teachers meet one of the following criteria. At least 50% meet or exceed standards b - e. Long term goals reflect efforts to have credentialed teachers.

- a. High School or GED, 2 years of child care experience, 20 hours BFTS Staff development or other approved instruction to include instruction in Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP).
- b. Vocational credential in early childhood which includes practicum experience in child care or CDA degree; two years of qualifying child care experience.
- c. Associate degree in early childhood education and one year of qualifying child care experience.

- d. Bachelor degree in a non-education area and two years experience in child care. 10 hours BFTS Staff development including DAP.
- e. Bachelor degree in elementary, secondary, or special education and instruction in DAP.
- f. Bachelor degree in early childhood education, early childhood special education, or child development.

4. Assistants

All assistants have a high school diploma or GED and one year of child care experience which can include volunteer work.

B. New Staff Training

1. Upon employment, new employees shall be oriented in the following areas:
 - a. The preschool's goals and philosophy
 - b. Employee's job description, assigned duties and responsibilities.
 - c. The preschool's personnel and program policies and procedures.
 - d. Health and safety requirements and procedures.
 - e. Reporting requirements for suspected child abuse. (Also see Section VI.)
 - f. Grievance policy.
 - g. Facility tour
 - h. Employee evaluation.
2. Within the first year of employment, 10 hours to include
 - a. CPR and First Aid
 - b. Overview of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)

C. Ongoing Staff Training

1. Each year all personnel shall attend a minimum of ten hours of staff development training. Instruction will be obtained from an accredited college, *Bright From The Start* approved class or SDU opportunity, or other director approved classes in early childhood and instructional issues. It is recommended that supervisory personnel include training opportunities in administration in the hours earned each year.
2. Evidence of successful completion of current training in CPR, First Aid is maintained. Training must be offered by certified or licensed health care professionals and deal with the provision of emergency care for infants and children. This is applicable to at least fifty percent or more of the current staff. At least one person with current training is assigned to each group of children.
3. Training Resources are available.
 - a. Professional development resource materials are available such as books, DVDs, CDs, and website information.
 - b. Information about training workshops or seminars is communicated to the staff.
 - c. Observation at other preschools can be arranged.

- d. A balance between hands-on workshop classes and child development topics is recommended for staff development.
4. Evidence of orientation and training is documented in the personnel file of each staff member and is available for review during the certification visit. All personnel records are stored in a locked file cabinet when not in use.

D. Staff Evaluation

1. Staff evaluation forms are made available. A self-evaluation is part of this form.
2. Staff has been given written procedures for the evaluation process.
3. The director evaluates staff performance on an ongoing basis. Classroom observation and visits are frequent. Written evaluations are completed annually.
4. Conferences are scheduled with the director for each staff member. The director offers positive, constructive suggestions.
5. Staff evaluation forms are kept on file.
6. Staff evaluations may be used for decisions regarding promotions, salary increases or warnings of disciplinary action.

E. Grievance Policy

A grievance policy is a written statement informing employees that they have the right to express complaints and a right to expect the employer to review and respond to the complaint. A policy must be in place to govern procedures for conflict between:

1. Staff members.
2. Parent(s) and staff members.
3. Director and staff member(s).
4. Director and parent(s).

F. Staff Meetings

1. Are scheduled in advance and occur at least once a month.
2. Have planned agendas to include a devotion, administrative business, staff responsibilities, and planning for children or curriculum.
3. Have staff input and the opportunity to share ideas and concerns.

G. Staff Benefits

Policies regarding benefits will be established by the school and describe what is offered employees. Policies will include these topics:

1. Sick leave
2. Personal leave
3. Professional Leave
4. Holidays
5. Jury duty leave
6. Tuition reduction scholarships for those with children in the preschool. If these are available, corresponding benefits are available to staff without children in the program.

7. Bonuses
8. Substitutes for teachers/assistant teachers
9. Paid training hours and tuition for training experiences
10. Other benefits as offered by the school to employees.

H. Substitutes

1. The preschool will provide for substitute (paid or volunteer) staff when regular staff is absent from work.
2. A list of substitutes and their phone numbers are on file.
3. Substitutes must be 18 or older and have an acceptable criminal record/background check.
4. Substitutes must be informed of the preschool's policies/procedures and staff responsibilities for the age group they are assigned.
5. The substitute should be in a class with a teacher or assistant at all times.

I. Staff and Administrative Relationships

1. The director is present and available to staff during all school hours. A designated replacement is made when the director is not on the premises.
2. The director meets with staff on a regular basis and shares information in a timely manner.
3. The director invites staff to share ideas and other input.
4. The director clearly communicates expectations and verbally encourages staff.
5. The director listens to staff and acknowledges their concerns.
6. The director discusses the special needs of specific children and families with the assigned teacher. She assists in solving problems, communicating with parents, identifying procedures for referrals and communicating with resource persons.
7. Policies regarding gossip and confidential information are in place and staff are familiar with the policies.

J. Staff Turn-over

Schools have records of the percentage of staff turn-over for the last 3 years. A plan is in place for assuring that staff turn-over is kept to a minimum. In schools where yearly staff turnover average is greater than 25% over the past 3 years, the board and director have a written plan for investigating causes and improving conditions. This plan is reflected in the long term goals of Section X.

Section II. Preschool Board

A preschool board is established to act as the governing body of the preschool giving guidance and support to the Director. The board or governing body is established by each local church denomination in accordance to its prevailing doctrine.

A. Membership

Preschool board members may include preschool staff members, other church staff members, church committees with which the school interacts and preschool parents. Membership requirements and terms of office are left to the discretion of each church. For those preschools operating in the UMC, the board is formed in accordance with the Book of Discipline and is approved through the nominations process employed by the church. The director is considered a member but may have non-voting status if board policy so states.

B. Meetings

A regular meeting schedule is established. Quarterly meetings are recommended as a minimum.

C. Duties

The responsibilities of the board include working with the director to define policies and procedures for enrollment, financing, personnel, curriculum, calendar, student policies, operational needs, and provide continuing evaluation of the program approving changes as needed.

D. By-laws

Information including the purpose of the preschool board, membership, meetings and duties are established in writing as by-laws.

Section III Curriculum

- A. The program has adopted a written curriculum based on appropriate practice in early childhood. The curriculum may be commercially obtained, created internally, or borrowed from a variety of sources. The program's philosophy and goals are reflected in the curriculum.
- B. Staff members are familiar with the goals of the curriculum. Reports to parents include progress toward the goals of the curriculum.
- C. The curriculum supports a daily schedule which incorporates a variety of activities including:
 - 1. Child initiated activities
 - 2. Large and small group interaction
 - 3. Large and small motor experiences
 - 4. Alternating periods of quiet and active play
 - 5. Outdoor play each day, weather permitting
 - 6. Development of age appropriate spiritual concepts
- D. Developmentally appropriate activities and materials are used.
- E. Goals within the curriculum include a variety of topics including:
 - 1. Christian attitudes, values, and actions
 - 2. Cognitive development
 - 3. Thinking, reasoning, questioning and experimentation
 - 4. Positive self concept
 - 5. Social skills and appropriate school behavior
 - 6. Language development
 - 7. Physical development including fine and gross motor skills
 - 8. Health, safety and nutrition
 - 9. Creative expression
 - 10. Respect for individual and cultural differences
- F. The use of television, films and videotapes is limited to special events and is not used on a regular basis. Materials are previewed and determined to be age appropriate. The use of technology such as computer software and CD players is age appropriate, is presented as a choice, and does not supplant other types of learning activities.
- G. Curriculum activities support the needs and interests of students. Teachers are flexible in planning and implementing curriculum.
- H. Teachers are able to effect smooth transitions between activities.

- I. Individual needs can be accommodated within the curriculum.
- J. Growth and developmental stages are evident within the curriculum.
- K. Scope and sequence of units are evident within the curriculum.
- L. An appropriate classroom environment is created to support the curriculum. The classroom has space for clearly designated centers which include at a minimum centers for blocks, books, manipulatives, art, and housekeeping. The classroom has an area for group activities.
- M. Each classroom has enough materials for each child to be engaged. Additional materials are available to be rotated within the classroom. All materials are in good repair.
- N. At least 10 books per student in the school population are available on site for use in the classroom. Books are available for each unit/topic within the curriculum.
- O. Outdoor play space is incorporated in the curriculum. Themes and activities from the curriculum are brought into the outdoor environment occasionally.

Section IV. Physical Facility

Outdoor Play Space

- A. Outdoor play space is safe, easily supervised and accessible.
- B. A fence in good repair encloses the outdoor space. Gas meters, heating/cooling systems etc. are located outside the fence. Grounds are free from litter and maintained.
- C. The outdoor play space is divided by age group or age groups are assigned different times in the schedule for outdoor play. It is recommended that 60 square feet of space is available for each child using the playground at any one time.
- D. First Aid supplies are readily accessible. Children are supervised by at least 2 staff on the playground so that emergencies can be handled quickly.
- E. The program has consulted a certified playground inspector and has notes of his recommendations or a certificate of compliance. The board has adopted a plan to make the playground in compliance with all national safety recommendations. This plan is reflected in long term goals in Section X.
- F. The playground equipment is in good repair with no sharp edges. Ground cover depth meets standards. Shade is available on some parts of the playground.
- G. Outdoor play space includes areas for riding toys, sand/water play and a variety of equipment for climbing and balancing. Adequate space exists for running.

Indoor Play Space, multi-purpose space and hallways

- H. Indoor space is available for large motor activities and rainy day activities.
- I. Halls are arranged to reduce risk of accident, to promote easy visual supervision, and to allow emergency evacuation.
- J. Space is available for music activities, chapel, and other special curriculum activities as needed.
- K. Stairways have handrails, non-skid surfaces, and are lighted.

Classrooms

- L. At least 25 square feet per child is allotted per child in classrooms. It is recommended that 35 square feet per child be allotted. (See the chart for an Overview of classes to report space in each classroom.)
- M. The facility is in compliance with the local fire marshal requirements.
- N. Outside windows and doors have screens unless the building is climate controlled.
- O. Floors have non-abrasive coverings. Floors surfaces may be easily cleaned.
- P. Walls, bulletin boards, chalk boards, and other surfaces are in good condition. Paint is lead free. Equipment or shelves hung from walls are securely mounted.
- Q. All equipment is easily stabilized and has no protruding edges or hinges. Heavy duty plastic or wooden construction and non-toxic, lead free surface coverings are used. Doors on play equipment do not present a pinching hazard. Equipment on carts does not present a tipping hazard.

- R. Furniture is sturdy and designed for heavy use. Non-toxic, lead free surface coverings are used. Tables and chairs have rounded corners, are non-collapsible or equipped with a locking mechanism.
- S. Bookcases, cabinets and shelves are stabilized and have rounded corners. Children have access to toys organized at a level for child use.
- T. Hanging hooks do not present a hazard. They are non-protruding, rounded at the tips, protected by a shelf, placed above the eye level of children but within reach.
- U. Classrooms are cleaned daily and trash is removed.

Bathrooms

- V. Bathroom facilities are available in close proximity to the classroom. Each bathroom has flushing toilets, sinks with warm and cold water, and antibacterial soap dispensers. Bathrooms are cleaned and disinfected and trash is removed daily.

Preschool office and storage space

- W. An office is set aside for the preschool administrator that includes a desk, chairs, computer and phone.
- X. The preschool office provides secure storage for confidential files and records as well as a private location for conversations with staff and parents. If the office is used for conversations with children, the door has a window or remains open.
- Y. Storage for extra classroom materials, equipment and furniture is available and easily accessible.

Section V. Finance

A. Projection for Adequate Income

The preschool director, board and/or appropriate church committee plan that necessary funds are available to cover planned expenditures. The source of these funds may be the following:

1. Tuition
2. Registration Monies
3. Special Fees (activity, book, etc.)
4. Donations
5. Fundraisers
6. Church Supplement
7. Other

B. Annual Budget

The preschool budget is a joint effort between the director and appropriate school board, and/or church personnel. Once financial resources have been determined, a written plan including both income and expenditures is developed.

Items to be considered are:

1. Personnel
 - a. Salaries
 - b. Benefits (sick leave, paid holidays, etc.)
 - c. Staff Development
 - d. Substitute Pay
 - e. Required Federal and State Withholding Tax
 - f. Employer's FICA
 - g. Workman's Compensation Insurance
 - h. Payroll preparation services
2. Program
 - a. Equipment (copier, playground, etc.)
 - b. Equipment repair/replacement
 - c. Classroom Furniture
 - d. Classroom toys, games, manipulatives
 - e. Curriculum
 - f. Consumable classroom supplies (paper, paint, etc.)
 - g. Office Supplies
 - h. Programs and Special Events
 - i. Use of building, occupancy fees, other contributions
 - j. Utilities
 - k. Professional Organizations, Journals, etc.

3. Facilities Maintenance (Indoor/Outdoor)
4. Cleaning Services
5. Insurance (Liability)
6. Food Service (if applicable)
7. Transportation (if applicable)
8. Reserve funds. It is recommended that programs have some savings set aside, at least two months operating expenses, for unforeseen emergencies that negatively impact the school. In schools where financial conditions have not allowed this provision, the board has created a plan to accomplish this goal and it is reflected in the long-term goals listed in Section X. The preschool board and church finance committee support this practice.

C. Recording of Monies Received/Disbursed

Procedures are established for the accurate recording of monies received and disbursed. Computer software programs are available for this purpose. A system of internal controls is established to maintain the integrity of the school records and accurately reflect monies received and disbursed. A person is designated for this responsibility with checks and balances noted in the program policies.

D. Financial Status Report

A financial status report should be communicated on a regular basis to the preschool board and/or church committee. Program policy designates the schedule for these reports. The following reports are recommended:

1. Cash Flow Statement
2. Year-to-Date Summary

E. Budget Projection

An evaluation of current expenses and fees is used to project the operating budget for the following year. This is documented as a proposed budget for approval by the board and/or church committee.

Section VI. Safety and Health

The preschool and its staff are responsible for each child from the time the child arrives at school until the time the child is picked up at school. Each school has written policies that cover each safety issue readily available to parents and staff in the form of parent and staff handbooks.

As situations arise there are clear guidelines to follow. Safety policies and procedures are approved by the board of the school and reviewed each year by the staff. The preschool has a policy statement regarding the following safety issues. These policies are well known to staff and implemented throughout the school.

A. Discipline Policies

1. Biting
2. Bullying
3. Notification of problems to parents
4. Suspension and expulsion
5. *Corporal punishment is not allowed.

B. Accidents

An accident report form is used with a copy to the parent and the school

C. Health

1. Allergies
2. Medication permission (to give medication if necessary, i.e. benedryl if allergic reaction is a concern, epi pen if prescribed by doctor)
3. Medical release
4. Immunization form on file for each child
5. Notification of parents for health issues: lice, flu, etc
6. Poisoning and emergency CPR/First aid procedures posted
7. Information is given to parents regarding health situations that prevent school attendance.

D. Food preparation and serving

1. Cooking activities
2. Table sanitation
3. Hand-washing procedures
4. Serving procedures for snack/ lunch

E. Child Abuse

1. No physical, sexual, or verbal abuse is tolerated*

2. Reporting procedures regarding child abuse.

(Whenever there is a reasonable cause to believe that a child has been physically injured or has suffered death by other than accidental means, has been neglected, exploited or deprived, or sexually assaulted or exploited, such incident must be reported. Any suspected incident of child abuse, neglect, or deprivation shall be reported to the local County Department of Family and Children Services in accordance with O.C.G.A. Sec. 19-7-5.)

F. Toileting and Diapering Procedures are posted.

No child is left unattended while being diapered or having their clothes changed on a diapering surface. Procedures from *GA Standards of Care* have been adopted.

G. Transportation of children.

1. Field trip permission and procedure.

Children are not allowed to participate in an activity away from the preschool without the parent's written permission.

2. Late pick up

3. Off-site transportation

The preschool has a transportation plan in place for off-site activities. Any vehicle used by the school must follow current child safety laws for the state of Georgia. Vehicles used for the transportation of children must have an annual maintenance check.

H. Custody Issues

1. Record of adults approved for pick-up from school

2. Custody document when specific adults are prevented from pick-up

I. Supervision of children (also see Section VII)

1. Children are not permitted access to any area not approved for childcare.

2. Children are not permitted to be in the kitchen except as part of a planned, supervised learning experience.

3. Construction and maintenance take place only in areas that are not accessible to the children.

J. Animal policy

K. Plant policy

The preschool premises are free of plants which are hazardous.

L. Sleeping and resting equipment is arranged to:

1. avoid obstructing access to exit doors.

2. provide the teacher access to each child.

3. prevent children's access to cords hanging from window treatments or other hazardous objects.

M. Water Play

1. All swimming and wading pools inaccessible to children except during supervised activities.
2. Tubs for water play are sanitized between their use by different groups.
3. Children with cuts or sores are prevented from water play.

N. Telephone

1. A telephone shall be readily available in the preschool.
2. Emergency numbers are posted.

The following numbers should be posted in a conspicuous place next to each telephone. In those areas of the state serviced by 911, this emergency number may be posted in lieu of the phone numbers required for:

- a. physician or hospital
- b. ambulance or rescue squad service
- c. fire department
- d. police department
- e. county health department
- f. regional poison control department
- g. school address and phone number

O. Alarms

1. A fire alarm is operational.
2. Monthly fire drills are reported as required by the Fire Marshall.
3. A weather radio with an alarm is operational.

P. Facility Safety Features

1. Interior doors have locking mechanisms that are not easily accessible to children; keys are available when needed. Door locks permit personnel to open a locked door from outside the room. Outside doors lock to provide security and controlled access to the building but are easily opened from the inside.
2. All windows or glass doors are constructed of safety glass or have protective devices covering the glass.
3. Gates and installation are approved for child care settings.
4. Electrical outlets within the reach of children have protective caps or other safety features specifically designed to prohibit children from placing anything in the receptacle. Cords are secured. Outlets, cords and plugs are in good condition.
5. Heating and cooling equipment is protected from children's reach. Cleaning materials and flammable or toxic materials are stored in a locked location. When cleaning materials are needed in the classroom, they are placed out of children's reach.

6. It is recommended that all surfaces and toys in toddler rooms be tested for lead.
7. First Aid supplies are stored so that easily accessible to staff in emergency situations. First Aid supplies that are potentially toxic (such as epi-pens or topical creams) are stored out of children's reach.

- Q. Written Emergency Plans include:
1. Loss of water, electricity or gas
 2. Water or gas leaks
 3. Intruder
 4. Fire
 5. Medical Emergencies
 6. Community Crisis situations
 7. Severe Weather
 8. Site evacuation procedures
 9. Parent access to the plan
 10. Parent notification procedures in an emergency

Section VII. Programs for Children

A. Supervision of Children

1. Children have consistent caregivers. Children are assigned to the same teachers for the entire school year so that relationships can be formed. Changes during the school day or school year are rare.
2. *Children are supervised by two adults in accordance with *Safe Sanctuary* guidelines.
3. *Children are supervised by sight and sound by teachers. Infants and toddlers are supervised by sight and sound at all times; children three and older may be supervised by sight or sound only for brief periods. Care is taken to arrange environments so that a clear line of sight is possible. When children visit the potty, teachers can hear the child and provide assistance if necessary. When a child leaves the classroom, he continues to be supervised. No child is left alone. Teachers have consistent procedures that involve 'counting heads' during transitions to and from the classroom.
4. No teacher is left in a concealed area when providing diapering or providing potty assistance. An open door and/or the presence of another staff are school policy in all instances.
5. Programs that serve infants place children on their backs for sleeping.

B. Information Collection

1. Information collected during registration includes name, address, DOB, phone number; emergency contacts; special health care needs; and adults authorized for pick-up. See the sample registration form for other items that may be included on the registration form.
2. All personal information is treated as confidential. School policy defines limits on who shares information about students or families. Information is stored in a locked cabinet.

C. Ratios in classrooms (C.1 - C.10)

Approved ratios are maintained. See the chart in the checklist to report school groupings. Note that each classroom ratio is considered one item (up to 10 items) when determining percentage of items met. Approved ratios are listed below. Ratios are determined based on primary caregivers. Special teachers such as music teachers are not included in the ratio.

0 - 6 mo.	1 adult	3 children
7 - 12 mo.	1	4
13-18 mo.	1	4
19-23 mo.	1	5
2 years	1	6
3 years	1	7
4 years	1	8
5 years	1	9

D. Policies for Special Needs Children

A special needs child is defined as one who is physically, socially, emotionally or behaviorally challenged and one that may require modification in a regular education classroom. A policy is in place regarding children with special needs that includes these topics:

1. After ample time for observation and adjustment has been allowed, the teacher and director may observe that a child
 - a. is having difficulty performing at an appropriate developmental age level
 - b. is having difficulty adjusting to school, or
 - c. is disrupting the learning environment for children, then
 - d. efforts are made to make reasonable modifications in the classroom, to address this issue with the parents, and to provide resource information regarding referrals in the county in which the child lives.

2. Programs that elect to serve special needs children in the preschool program have considered the following:
 - a. Specialized staff training.
 - b. Lower staff/child ratios.
 - c. Special environmental arrangements and equipment.
 - d. Placement of the child by developmental level rather than by chronological age.
 - e. Support for the families of the special needs child.
 - f. Coordination of the preschool efforts with the services of *Babies Can't Wait* for children under 3 or public school early intervention services for children ages 3 - 5.
 - g. The need for additional parent/teacher/director conferences to discuss identified concerns and devise a plan of action for success in the preschool program.

VIII. Relationships with Parents

To foster relationships between school and home, parents are welcomed as an integral part of the school experience. This includes the following components:

- A. Parent Orientation to Program
 1. A parent orientation meeting occurs at the beginning of the year
 2. A parent handbook is provided before school year begins
 3. Parent/child visits to the classrooms occur before the school year begins

- B. Parent Involvement in the Program
 1. Policy outlines and is practiced that parents are welcome and encouraged to visit classes
 2. Parents are utilized as resources for the enhancing the total program
 3. Parents are involved in the classroom through many avenues, i.e., special projects, reading volunteer, class parties, mystery reader, etc.
 4. A parent organization exists which allows parents to take on leadership within the program and to assist in making decisions within the program

- C. Parent/Teacher Communication
 1. Confidentiality is maintained concerning all personal and private information regarding each family.
 2. Teachers encourage open communication with parents regarding various aspects of their child's growth and development.
 3. Newsletters and/or calendars from the teacher are sent home on a regular basis
 4. Parents are informed in writing of any injuries or contagious diseases.
 5. Teachers work with families on shared care-giving issues such as separation, potty training, special needs, food, allergies, etc.
 6. At least two conferences are offered each year. Information for these conferences can be gathered in the following ways:
 - a. Anecdotal records
 - b. Classroom/playground observations
 - c. Locally or nationally developed progress checklists.
 - d. Dated compilation of children's work (portfolio)

- D. Parent/Director Communication
 1. Newsletters and/or calendars from the director are available on a regular basis.
 2. Educational programming for parents dealing with family and child issues is offered.
 3. The director provides written forms for the following:

- a. Injury
- b. Allergies
- c. Permission forms for:
 - i. Car pool pick-up
 - ii. Field trips
 - iii. Release of confidential information
 - iv. Emergency medical care

E. Yearly Parent Evaluation of the School Program

- 1. Parents have an opportunity to make an annual evaluation of the program
- 2. Parents are provided with the results of the evaluation of the program

Section IX: Communication with Church and Community

A. Church

1. Recognizing the preschool is an outreach ministry of the church, a procedure should be established to communicate with churched families, un-churched families, and families with special circumstances.
2. The school and the local/sponsoring church have jointly developed a set of guidelines including policies and procedures for:
 - a. Use of space
 - b. Use of supplies and equipment
 - c. On-going maintenance
 - d. Repairs and upkeep
 - e. Major alterations/renovations
 - f. Scheduling of events
 - g. Joint public relations
3. *The policy of the school for the prevention of child abuse in the church shall be in keeping with the local church's policy statement as it relates to "Safe Sanctuary" guidelines.

B. Community

1. Within the community, the school communicates a policy of non-discrimination.
2. The school coordinates with other local schools, both private and public, regarding programs and special services available, particularly:
 - a. Placement procedures for entering kindergarten and 1st grade
 - b. Referrals to early intervention services for speech, hearing, vision, or other special education services.
3. The school communicates via various media, i.e., newspapers, internet, radio.
4. The school utilizes community resources for enhancing the total program, i.e., field trips, speakers, special programs.
5. Provides information to school parents regarding opportunities within the community and/or church such as educational opportunities, family outings, and church events.

Section X. Program Improvement Goals

- A. The Program sets goals for improvement each year. Goals are stated as:
 - 1. A minimum of three short term goals.
 - 2. A minimum of three long term goals.
- B. The Program includes the input of board members, parents and staff members in the formulation of goals. Documentation includes board minutes, parent evaluation results and a staff meeting agenda.
- C. When appropriate, the pastor and/or the church governing body are informed of goals and given an opportunity to provide input.
- D. Records of progress toward goals are kept.

Section XI. Required Forms

The following forms are used to conduct preschool business. Their use is evident in staff and student records.

- A. **Exemption from Licensing Letter or License* See the website for dec.al.ga.gov for an exemption request form to acquire an exemption.
- B. *Form 3231 - Immunization Form* Available to parents from their pediatrician or health department and submitted to the preschool within 30 days of enrollment.
Form 3300 - Ear, Eye, & Dental Form Needed for students 5 and older and available from their pediatrician or health department.
- C. *Proof of Insurance Carrier* Usually available to preschools through the church policy. It includes workers' compensation and facility insurance.
- D. Needed for all staff upon employment:
 - 1. *W-4* Federal IRS Form
 - 2. *G-4* GA tax Form
 - 3. *I-9* US Department of Justice Available online from the Immunization and Naturalization Service
- E. *IRS Form 5578* Racial Non discrimination