



Greetings!

On behalf of the staff and members of Grace Church, I want to thank you for giving us the opportunity to minister to your family through our GEM Express Preschool and Kindergarten. We began the GEM ministry in the fall of 2021 to serve our community, rather than just our church. It continues to have that focus today, as we strive to make a difference in our community and in the lives of those who attend our program.

We realize that life brings many challenges to families today, and we want to support you in your journey and partner with you as you seek to be parents who pass on a great legacy through their children for generations to come. Our Children's Ministry Director, Stephanie Connon, leads our exceptional Grace Kids team as they equip you and engage your children in the discovery of Jesus and his love for them. She would be happy to serve you and your family in whatever way she can.

We sincerely appreciate the trust and confidence you have placed in us by allowing us to partner with you in this endeavor. We take this very seriously and will do all that we can to support you as parents. Please do not hesitate to call on me or any one of our church staff if we might be able to serve you or your family. You can contact any of us through the church office number (972-727-4512) or by personal email. If you do not have a church home, we would love to include you as part of the Grace Church family. We are in this together!

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# INTRODUCTION TO GEM

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to GEM (Grace Educational Ministry) Express Preschool & Kindergarten! We consider it a privilege to have your child registered in our school, and we appreciate the opportunity to assist in their education and care. Your child's well-being is our first priority in the selection of staff, curriculum, programs, and activities. Our goal is to give your child the best early education possible, within the framework of a Christian atmosphere. Our distinctives include low student-teacher ratios, biblically based curriculum, high staff retention rate, and we are the only early education program in Lucas/Allen accredited by the Association of Christian Schools International.

GEM Express is a biblically based ministry of Grace Church. We believe you will find our congregation to be a caring place for fellowship, learning, worshipping and serving others. We welcome guests!

This Student Handbook is a resource for information regarding the policies and procedures of GEM Express Preschool and Kindergarten. We hope you will find it informative and useful. Please call the GEM office for any other information you might need.

I have an open-door policy and would be happy to discuss any concerns you may have.

Contact me in the GEM office to discuss any questions or concerns regarding the policies and procedures of GEM Express.

Diana Abbott  
Director  
972-727-0071

**Grace Church**  
**2005 Estates Parkway**  
**Lucas, Texas 75002**  
**Phone: 972-727-0071 Fax: 888-380-3199**  
**Web Address: [gemexpress.org](http://gemexpress.org) email: [Diana@grace-efc.org](mailto:Diana@grace-efc.org)**

## MISSION STATEMENT

GEM Express Preschool & Kindergarten exists primarily to be an evangelistic outreach ministry to those in our community without a church home, and secondarily to provide support to families of Grace in the training up of their preschool and kindergarten age children according to biblical principles.

## STATEMENT OF FAITH

GEM Express agrees with and follows the teachings of Grace Church.

### What Grace Church Believes:

Grace Church is part of an association of churches known as the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA). While we are autonomous in our structures and leadership, as part of the EFCA, Grace Church agrees with the 10 points of the statement of faith. These points are:

#### 1. God

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

#### 2. The Bible

We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

#### 3. The Human Condition

We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

#### 4. Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus-Israel's promised Messiah-was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocates.

#### 5. The Work of Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

#### 6. The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

#### 7. The Church

We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

## **8. Christian Living**

We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

## **9. Christ's Return**

We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

## **10. Response and Eternal Destiny**

We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

## **HISTORY**

In 2000, the leadership of Grace Church began discussions about establishing a weekday preschool ministry at Grace. Due to the interest from the community and a desire to create a ministry intentionally focused on outreach, the church leadership decided to establish a weekday preschool ministry at Grace to begin in the fall of 2001. Diana Abbott was hired to direct the ministry. Two teachers and one assistant were hired to staff the ministry and registration opened on June 1, 2001. In September 2001, twenty students were registered for the program. Classes were offered for 3 year olds and 4 year olds on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:00 am – 2:00 pm September through May. The ministry has grown from the original 20 students registered to 150 in 2020. The staff has grown from the original four to twenty-four currently serving on the GEM staff.

## **OBJECTIVES / GOALS**

### **The objectives of GEM Express are as follows:**

- Provide a Christian environment in which each child is stimulated to grow physically, socially, academically, and spiritually
- Extend an opportunity for church and home to work together in meeting the needs of each child
- Cultivate attitudes and habits that enable each child to live productively in his / her environment
- Offer opportunities for self-expression, investigation, experimentation and participation in individual and group activities
- Develop situations in which the child can achieve and build healthy self-esteem and an awareness of his / her abilities
- Maintain a balanced program of activity and quiet work

### **The goals of GEM Express include:**

- A strong academic approach
- A phonetic approach to reading
- Individual and group instruction and activities
- Small class sizes
- Music and large motor activities
- Bible teaching through stories, songs and crafts
- Technology

## **TEXAS MINIMUM STANDARD**

GEM Express Preschool & Kindergarten is licensed by The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. Copies of the following documents are available in the school office:

- Minimum Standards for Licensed Childcare Centers
- Recent licensing inspection
- Texas Department of Health Inspection
- Fire Inspection
- Propane Inspection
- Student Allergies
- Pest inspections / treatments

**Childcare Licensing website - [www.txchildcaresearch.org](http://www.txchildcaresearch.org)**

**Childcare Licensing Hotline – 1-800-582-6036**

**Abuse/Neglect Hotline – 1-800-252-5400**



Regional Accreditation Commission

July 2, 2019

Connie Thornton  
Chairman

Ms. Diana Abbott  
GEM Express Preschool & Kindergarten  
2005 Estates Parkway  
Lucas, TX 75002

Ed Thomas  
Vice-Chairman

Dear Diana:

Dr. Joy Bell

I am pleased to inform you that the South-Central Regional Accreditation Commission has voted to renew accreditation for **GEM Express Preschool & Kindergarten** (grades EE-K) for a full term of five years. This accreditation is effective July 1, 2019 and will continue through June 30, 2024.

Katerina Foley

Substantial changes initiated subsequent to the 2018-2019 accreditation visit which significantly alter the objective, scope, curriculum, and/or control of your program are not automatically included in this accreditation. A change in the school's leadership (chief school administrator) during the accreditation period must be reported right away to the South-Central Regional Office.

Tim Kuhns

Jan Pride

Dr. Tony Ryff

During the accreditation period, you will need to send to the regional office every year by October 1:

Dr. Craig Shaw

1. the annual report,
2. an annual Statement of Financial Practice,
3. the EE yearly staff profile, and
4. other forms as required by circumstances.

Jill White

Dr. Diane Bunker  
Accreditation Director

These forms are available on the ACSI website. Your next annual report is due October 1, 2019.

We placed an order for your accreditation certificate, and it will be mailed to the school.

On behalf of the visiting team members and the commission, we wish to congratulate you, the board of trustees, and your faculty and staff for this achievement. We are pleased to retain **GEM Express Preschool & Kindergarten** on our growing list of ACSI accredited schools.

Sincerely in Christ,

Connie Thornton  
Regional Accreditation Commission Chairman  
ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL

Copy to Jan Pride

ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL • SOUTH-CENTRAL REGION  
The Hope Center • 2001 W. Plano Parkway, Suite 3600, Plano, TX 75075-8632  
Phone: 972.941.4406 • Fax: 469.440.7634 • Web: www.acsi.org • Email: acsisc@acsi.org





# REGISTRATION AT GEM

## IS MY CHILD READY?

### Your child at 2 years\*

Child's Name

Child's Age

Today's Date

Milestones matter! How your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about his or her development. Check the milestones your child has reached by age 2. Take this with you and talk with your child's doctor at every well-child visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.



#### What most children do by this age:

##### Social/Emotional Milestones

- Notices when others are hurt or upset, like pausing or looking sad when someone is crying
- Looks at your face to see how to react in a new situation

##### Language/Communication Milestones

- Points to things in a book when you ask, like "Where is the bear?"
- Says at least two words together, like "More milk."
- Points to at least two body parts when you ask him to show you
- Uses more gestures than just waving and pointing, like blowing a kiss or nodding yes

##### Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Holds something in one hand while using the other hand; for example, holding a container and taking the lid off

- Tries to use switches, knobs, or buttons on a toy
- Plays with more than one toy at the same time, like putting toy food on a toy plate

##### Movement/Physical Development Milestones

- Kicks a ball
- Runs
- Walks (not climbs) up a few stairs with or without help
- Eats with a spoon

#### \* It's time for developmental screening!

At 2 years, your child is due for an autism screening, as recommended for all children by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Ask the doctor about your child's developmental screening.

#### Other important things to share with the doctor...

- What are some things you and your child do together?
- What are some things your child likes to do?
- Is there anything your child does or does not do that concerns you?
- Has your child lost any skills he/she once had?
- Does your child have any special healthcare needs or was he/she born prematurely?

**You know your child best.** Don't wait. If your child is not meeting one or more milestones, has lost skills he or she once had, or you have other concerns, act early. Talk with your child's doctor, share your concerns, and ask about developmental screening. If you or the doctor are still concerned:

1. Ask for a referral to a specialist who can evaluate your child more; and
2. Call your state or territory's early intervention program to find out if your child can get services to help. Learn more and find the number at [cdc.gov/FindEI](http://cdc.gov/FindEI).

For more on how to help your child, visit [cdc.gov/Concerned](http://cdc.gov/Concerned).

**Don't wait.  
Acting early can make  
a real difference!**



# Help your child learn and grow

As your child's first teacher, you can help his or her learning and brain development. Try these simple tips and activities in a safe way. Talk with your child's doctor and teachers if you have questions or for more ideas on how to help your child's development.



- Help your child learn how words sound, even if he can't say them clearly yet. For example, if your child says, "or nana," say "You want more banana."
- Watch your child closely during playdates. Children this age play next to each other, but do not know how to share and solve problems. Show your child how to deal with conflicts by helping her share, take turns, and use words when possible.
- Have your child help you get ready for mealtime, by letting him carry things to the table, such as plastic cups or napkins. Thank your child for helping.
- Give your child balls to kick, roll, and throw.
- Give toys that teach your child how to make things work and how to solve problems. For example, give her toys where she can push a button and something happens.
- Let your child play dress up with grown-up clothes, such as shoes, hats, and shirts. This helps him begin to pretend play.
- Allow your child to eat as much or as little as she wants at each meal. Toddlers don't always eat the same amount or type of food each day. Your job is to offer her healthy foods and it's your child's job to decide if and how much she needs to eat.
- Have steady routines for sleeping and feeding. Create a calm, quiet bedtime for your child. Put on his pajamas, brush his teeth, and read 1 or 2 books to him. Children this age need 11 to 14 hours of sleep a day (including naps). Consistent sleep times make it easier.
- Ask your child's doctor and/or teachers about toilet training to know if your child is ready to start. Most children are not able to toilet train until 2 to 3 years old. Starting too early can cause stress and setbacks, which can cause training to take longer.
- Use positive words when your child is being a good helper. Let him help with simple chores, such as putting toys or laundry in a basket.
- Play with your child outside, by playing "ready, set, go." For example, pull your child back in a swing. Say "Ready, set...", then wait and say "Go" when you push the swing.
- Let your child create simple art projects with you. Give your child crayons or put some finger paint on paper and let her explore by spreading it around and making dots. Hang it on the wall or refrigerator so your child can see it.

To see more tips and activities download CDC's Milestone Tracker app.

This milestone checklist is not a substitute for a standardized, validated developmental screening tool. These developmental milestones show what most children (75% or more) can do by each age. Subject matter experts selected these milestones based on available data and expert consensus.

[www.cdc.gov/ActEarly](http://www.cdc.gov/ActEarly) | 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)



Download CDC's  
free Milestone  
Tracker app



Learn the Signs. Act Early.



# Your child at 3 years



Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Age \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Milestones matter! How your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about his or her development. Check the milestones your child has reached by age 3. Take this with you and talk with your child's doctor at every well-child visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.

## What most children do by this age:

### Social/Emotional Milestones

- Calms down within 10 minutes after you leave her, like at a childcare drop off
- Notices other children and joins them to play

### Language/Communication Milestones

- Talks with you in conversation using at least two back-and-forth exchanges
- Asks "who," "what," "where," or "why" questions, like "Where is mommy/daddy?"
- Says what action is happening in a picture or book when asked, like "running," "eating," or "playing"
- Says first name, when asked
- Talks well enough for others to understand, most of the time

### Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Draws a circle, when you show him how
- Avoids touching hot objects, like a stove, when you warn her

### Movement/Physical Development Milestones

- Strings items together, like large beads or macaroni
- Puts on some clothes by himself, like loose pants or a jacket
- Uses a fork

## Other important things to share with the doctor...

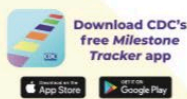
- What are some things you and your child do together?
- What are some things your child likes to do?
- Is there anything your child does or does not do that concerns you?
- Has your child lost any skills he/she once had?
- Does your child have any special healthcare needs or was he/she born prematurely?

**You know your child best.** Don't wait. If your child is not meeting one or more milestones, has lost skills he or she once had, or you have other concerns, act early. Talk with your child's doctor, share your concerns, and ask about developmental screening. If you or the doctor are still concerned:

1. Ask for a referral to a specialist who can evaluate your child more; and
2. Call any local public elementary school for a free evaluation to find out if your child can get services to help.

For more on how to help your child, visit [cdc.gov/Concerned](https://www.cdc.gov/Concerned).

**Don't wait.  
Acting early can make  
a real difference!**



American Academy  
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

# Help your child learn and grow

As your child's first teacher, you can help his or her learning and brain development. Try these simple tips and activities in a safe way. Talk with your child's doctor and teachers if you have questions or for more ideas on how to help your child's development.



- Encourage your child to solve her own problems with your support. Ask questions to help her understand the problem. Help her think of solutions, try one out, and try more if needed.
- Talk about your child's emotions and give him words to help him explain how he's feeling. Help your child manage stressful feelings by teaching him to take deep breaths, hug a favorite toy, or go to a quiet, safe place when he is upset.
- Set a few simple and clear rules that your child can follow, such as use gentle hands when playing. If he breaks a rule, show him what to do instead. Later, if your child follows the rule, recognize and congratulate him.
- Read with your child. Ask questions, such as "What is happening in the picture?" and/or "What do you think will happen next?" When she gives you an answer, ask for more details.
- Play counting games. Count body parts, stairs, and other things you use or see every day. Children this age are starting to learn about numbers and counting.
- Help your child develop his language skills by speaking to him in longer sentences than his, using real words. Repeat what he says, for example, "need nana," and then show how to use more "grown-up" words by saying, "I want a banana."
- Let your child help with making meals. Give him simple tasks, such as washing fruits and vegetables or stirring.
- Give your child instructions with 2 or 3 steps. For example, "Go to your room and get your shoes and coat."
- Limit screen time (TV, tablets, phones, etc.) to no more than 1 hour per day of a children's program with an adult present. Don't put any screens in your child's bedroom. Children learn by talking, playing, and interacting with others.
- Teach your child simple songs and rhymes, such as "Itsy Bitsy Spider" or "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."
- Give your child an "activity box" with paper, crayons, and coloring books. Color and draw lines and shapes with your child.
- Encourage your child to play with other children. This helps him learn the value of friendship and how to get along with others.

To see more tips and activities download CDC's Milestone Tracker app.

This milestone checklist is not a substitute for a standardized, validated developmental screening tool. These developmental milestones show what most children (75% or more) can do by each age. Subject matter experts selected these milestones based on available data and expert consensus.

[www.cdc.gov/ActEarly](http://www.cdc.gov/ActEarly) | 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)



**Learn the Signs. Act Early.**



# Your child at 4 years



Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Age \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Milestones matter! How your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about his or her development. Check the milestones your child has reached by age 4. Take this with you and talk with your child's doctor at every well-child visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.

## What most children do by this age:

### Social/Emotional Milestones

- Pretends to be something else during play (teacher, superhero, dog)
- Asks to go play with children if none are around, like "Can I play with Alex?"
- Comforts others who are hurt or sad, like hugging a crying friend
- Avoids danger, like not jumping from tall heights at the playground
- Likes to be a "helper"
- Changes behavior based on where she is (place of worship, library, playground)

### Language/Communication Milestones

- Says sentences with four or more words
- Says some words from a song, story, or nursery rhyme
- Talks about at least one thing that happened during his day, like "I played soccer."
- Answers simple questions like "What is a coat for?" or "What is a crayon for?"

### Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Names a few colors of items
- Tells what comes next in a well-known story
- Draws a person with three or more body parts

### Movement/Physical Development Milestones

- Catches a large ball most of the time
- Serves himself food or pours water, with adult supervision
- Unbuttons some buttons
- Holds crayon or pencil between fingers and thumb (not a fist)

## Other important things to share with the doctor...

- What are some things you and your child do together?
- What are some things your child likes to do?
- Is there anything your child does or does not do that concerns you?
- Has your child lost any skills he/she once had?
- Does your child have any special healthcare needs or was he/she born prematurely?

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1. Ask for a referral to a specialist who can evaluate your child more; and
2. Call any local public elementary school for a free evaluation to find out if your child can get services to help.

For more on how to help your child, visit [cdc.gov/Concerned](https://www.cdc.gov/Concerned).

**Don't wait.**  
Acting early can make  
a real difference!



# Help your child learn and grow

As your child's first teacher, you can help his or her learning and brain development. Try these simple tips and activities in a safe way. Talk with your child's doctor and teachers if you have questions or for more ideas on how to help your child's development.



- Help your child be ready for new places and meeting new people. For example, you can read stories or role play (pretend play) to help him be comfortable.
- Read with your child. Ask him what's happening in the story and what he thinks might happen next.
- Help your child learn about colors, shapes, and sizes. For example, ask the color, shapes, and size of things she sees during the day.
- Encourage your child to use "his words" to ask for things and solve problems but show him how. He may not know the words he needs. For example, help your child say, "Can I have a turn?" instead of taking something from someone.
- Help your child learn about others' feelings, and about positive ways to react. For example, when he sees a child who is sad, say "He looks sad. Let's bring him a teddy."
- Use positive words and give attention to behaviors you want to see ("wanted behaviors"). For example, say "You're sharing that toy so nicely!" Give less attention to those you don't want to see.
- Tell your child in a simple way why she can't do something you don't want her to do ("unwanted behavior"). Give her a choice of what she can do instead. For example, "You can't jump on the bed. Do you want to go outside and play or put on some music and dance?"
- Let your child play with other children, such as at a park or library. Ask about local play groups and pre-school programs. Playing with others helps you child learn the value of sharing and friendship.
- Eat meals with your child when possible. Let her see you enjoying healthy foods, such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and drinking milk or water.
- Create a calm, quiet bedtime routine. Avoid any screen time (TV, phone, tablet, etc.) for 1 to 2 hours before bed and don't put any screens in your child's bedroom. Children this age need 10 to 13 hours of sleep a day (including naps). Consistent sleep times make it easier!
- Give your child toys or things that encourage his imagination, such as dress-up clothes, pots and pans to pretend cook, or blocks to build with. Join him in pretend play, such as eating the pretend food he cooks.
- Take time to answer your child's "why" questions. If you don't know the answer, say "I don't know," or help your child find the answer in a book, on the Internet, or from another adult.

To see more tips and activities download CDC's Milestone Tracker app.

This milestone checklist is not a substitute for a standardized, validated developmental screening tool. These developmental milestones show what most children (75% or more) can do by each age. Subject matter experts selected these milestones based on available data and expert consensus.

[www.cdc.gov/ActEarly](http://www.cdc.gov/ActEarly) | 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)



**Learn the Signs. Act Early.**



# Your child at 5 years



Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Age \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Milestones matter! How your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about his or her development. Check the milestones your child has reached by age 5. Take this with you and talk with your child's doctor at every well-child visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.

## What most children do by this age:

### Social/Emotional Milestones

- Follows rules or takes turns when playing games with other children
- Sings, dances, or acts for you
- Does simple chores at home, like matching socks or clearing the table after eating

### Language/Communication Milestones

- Tells a story she heard or made up with at least two events. For example, a cat was stuck in a tree and a firefighter saved it
- Answers simple questions about a book or story after you read or tell it to him
- Keeps a conversation going with more than three back-and-forth exchanges
- Uses or recognizes simple rhymes (bat-cat, ball-tall)

### Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Counts to 10
- Names some numbers between 1 and 5 when you point to them
- Uses words about time, like "yesterday," "tomorrow," "morning," or "night"
- Pays attention for 5 to 10 minutes during activities. For example, during story time or making arts and crafts (screen time does not count)
- Writes some letters in her name
- Names some letters when you point to them

### Movement/Physical Development Milestones

- Buttons some buttons
- Hops on one foot

## Other important things to share with the doctor...

- What are some things you and your child do together?
- What are some things your child likes to do?
- Is there anything your child does or does not do that concerns you?
- Has your child lost any skills he/she once had?
- Does your child have any special healthcare needs or was he/she born prematurely?

**You know your child best.** Don't wait. If your child is not meeting one or more milestones, has lost skills he or she once had, or you have other concerns, act early. Talk with your child's doctor, share your concerns, and ask about developmental screening. If you or the doctor are still concerned:

1. Ask for a referral to a specialist who can evaluate your child more; and
2. Call any local public elementary school for a free evaluation to find out if your child can get services to help.

For more on how to help your child, visit [cdc.gov/Concerned](https://www.cdc.gov/Concerned).

**Don't wait.  
Acting early can make  
a real difference!**



# Help your child learn and grow

As your child's first teacher, you can help his or her learning and brain development. Try these simple tips and activities in a safe way. Talk with your child's doctor and teachers if you have questions or for more ideas on how to help your child's development.



- Your child might start to “talk back” in order to feel independent and test what happens. Limit the attention you give to the negative words. Find alternative activities for her to do that allow her to take the lead and be independent. Make a point of noticing good behavior. “You stayed calm when I told you it’s bedtime.”
- Ask your child what she is playing. Help her expand her answers by asking “Why?” and “How?” For example, say “That’s a nice bridge you’re building. Why did you put it there?”
- Play with toys that encourage your child to put things together, such as puzzles and building blocks.
- Use words to help your child begin to understand time. For example, sing songs about the days of the week and let him know what day it is. Use words about time, such as today, tomorrow, and yesterday.
- Let your child do things for himself, even if he doesn’t do it perfectly. For example, let him make his bed, button his shirt, or pour water into a cup. Celebrate when he does it and try not to “fix” anything you don’t have to.
- Talk about and label your child’s and your own feelings. Read books and talk about the feelings characters have and why they have them.
- Play rhyming games. For example, say “What rhymes with cat?”
- Teach your child to follow rules in games. For example, play simple board games, card games, or Simon Says.
- Create a spot in your home for your child to go to when he’s upset. Stay nearby so your child knows he is safe and can come to you for help calming as needed.
- Set limits for screen time (TV, tablets, phones, etc.) for your child, to no more than 1 hour per day. Make a media use plan for your family.
- Eat meals with your child and enjoy family time talking together. Give the same meal to everyone. Avoid screen time (TV, tablets, phones, etc.) during mealtime. Let your child help prepare the healthy foods and enjoy them together.
- Encourage your child to “read” by looking at the pictures and telling the story.
- Play games that help with memory and attention. For example, play card games, Tic Tac Toe, I Spy, or Hot and Cold.

**To see more tips and activities download CDC’s Milestone Tracker app.**

This milestone checklist is not a substitute for a standardized, validated developmental screening tool. These developmental milestones show what most children (75% or more) can do by each age. Subject matter experts selected these milestones based on available data and expert consensus.

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**Learn the Signs. Act Early.**



## REGISTRATION

Before a student can be considered for registration the following is needed:

- Registration Forms\*
- Health Statement (upon 1<sup>st</sup> time registration) (due August 1, 2023)
- Hearing and Vision Screening (4 & 5 year olds)
- Current Immunization Record
- Registration Fee\*\*
- One parent must attend Mandatory Parent Orientation – date TBD

**\* ALL REGISTRATION FORMS (not including health documents) AND FEES MUST BE TURNED IN NO LATER THAN 7 DAYS AFTER INITIAL REGISTRATION SUBMITTED OR YOUR SPOT WILL BE FORFEITED.**

**\*\* ALL REGISTRATION FEES ARE NONREFUNDABLE**

A Student Information Packet is given upon registration with all the necessary forms required for each student. Please keep us updated throughout the school year of any changes to your information.

Parents will be notified in writing in the monthly newsletter of any policy changes.

## NON-DISCRIMINATORY STATEMENT

Students are registered at GEM Express Preschool & Kindergarten without discrimination of race, color, creed, or national origin. Previously registered students and their siblings receive first notification of registration.

## ANNUAL REGISTRATION FOR RETURNING STUDENTS

Current GEM families have first priority when registering for the new school year and will have their own registration day before it is open to the community. You must bring in your completed registration packet and registration fee on the designated day as **classes are still filled on a first-come first-served basis.**

## WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURES

If it is necessary to withdraw a child from the school, the parent should notify the front office in writing at least two weeks before the date of withdrawal.

*If two weeks' notice is not given, one half of the month's tuition remains due and payable.*

## 2023-2024 CLASSES OFFERED

Students are placed in classes based on age as of September 1, 2023.

|                  |             |             |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Two Year Olds:   | Tue/Th      | Mon/Wed/Fri |
| Three Year Olds: | Tue/Th      | Mon/Wed/Fri |
| Four Year Olds:  | Mon/Wed/Fri | Mon-Th*     |
| Kindergarten:    | Mon-Th*     |             |

\*Friday Enrichment day offered for M-Th 4s or Kindergarten.

\*Classes offered based on current registration.

## EXTENDED CARE

Extended Care hours are available for the following hours:

8:00 am – 9:00 am Before Care

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm After Care

# FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR GEM

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## FEES & TUITION

### 2023-2024 SCHOOL FEES

#### REGISTRATION FEES

2 days - \$270.00

3 days - \$300.00

4 days - \$375.00

5 days - \$410.00

Kindergarten - \$395.00

Friday Enrichment Only - \$145.00

\* Sibling Discount - \$10.00 discount on registration fee

Registration fee includes annual supply fee, school T-shirt, and nap mat.

### 2023-2024 SCHOOL TUITION

#### MONTHLY TUITION

#### **EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT Monthly Tuition**

\*Early Bird Discounted Rates only available if registered by **February 28, 2023** \*

##### 2 & 3 Year Old Classes

2 days - \$305.00

3 days - \$355.00

5 days - \$480.00

##### 4 Year Old Classes

3 days - \$355.00

4 days - \$415.00

4 days + Friday Enrichment - \$500.00

##### Kindergarten

4 days - \$435.00

Kindergarten + Friday Enrichment - \$510.00

**Friday Enrichment Only (4s and Kinder only)** - \$155.00

\*Sibling Discount - \$10.00 discount per month on tuition

#### **REGULAR Monthly Tuition**

\*Regular Rates begin **March 1, 2023**\*

##### 2 & 3 Year Old Classes

2 days - \$315.00

3 days - \$365.00

5 days - \$490.00

##### 4 Year Old Classes

3 days - \$365.00

4 days - \$425.00

4 days + Friday Enrichment - \$510.00

##### Kindergarten

4 days - \$445.00

Kindergarten + Friday Enrichment - \$520.00

**Friday Enrichment Only (4s and Kinder only)** - \$165.00

\*Sibling Discount - \$10.00 discount per month on tuition

## EXTENDED CARE

### REGISTRATION FEES – EXTENDED CARE

Before Care - \$25  
After Care - \$30.00  
Before & After Care - \$35.00

### MONTHLY TUITION – EXTENDED CARE

| <u>BEFORE CARE ONLY</u> | <u>AFTER CARE ONLY</u> | <u>BEFORE &amp; AFTER CARE</u> |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Day - \$25/month      | 1 Day - \$50/month     | 1 Day - \$75/month             |
| 2 Days - \$40/month     | 2 Days - \$80/month    | 2 Days - \$120/month           |
| 3 Days - \$55/month     | 3 Days - \$110/month   | 3 Days - \$165/month           |
| 4 Days - \$70/month     | 4 Days - \$140/month   | 4 Days - \$210/month           |
| 5 Days - \$85/month     | 5 Days - \$170/month   | 5 Days - \$255/month           |

## TUITION DUE DATE

Tuition is due on the first day of each month. Tuition payments can be electronically drafted from your banking account, by check or cash, or may be made online by credit card. If you choose the auto draft method of payment, an authorization form for the monthly tuition draft is due with registration forms.

**Tuition is an annual amount received in nine equal monthly payments.**  
**No reduction of fees or tuition will be made for full payments of year's tuition, absences, holidays, inclement weather or vacations.**

For tax purposes, please note the Tax ID number for our church is: #75-1762716.

**\*\* THE PREFERRED METHOD FOR TUITION PAYMENTS IS THE AUTODRAFT METHOD \*\***

## LATE TUITION DATE

A \$10.00 late fee will be assessed if tuition is not received by the 5th day of the month unless prior arrangements have been made with the director.

## LATE PICK-UP FEES

A late fee of \$5.00 is charged when a parent arrives after 2:10 pm to pick up their child. For every minute after 2:10 pm, a \$1.00 charge will be added to your total fees for that month. (Example: If you arrive at 2:15 pm to pick up your child you will be charged a \$10.00 late fee.)

## RETURNED PAYMENT CHARGE

A fee of \$20.00 will be charged for returned payments.

# ATTENDANCE AT GEM

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## SCHOOL HOURS

Classes are held from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm.

## ATTENDANCE

GEM's operating hours are from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, September through May. Classes are held from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. *Children should arrive between 8:50 am and 9:10 am. Teachers are busy preparing for the day and are unable to supervise early arrivals.* Afternoon carpool begins at 1:50 pm and ends at 2:10 pm. Please notify the school office if your child will not be in attendance on any given day, as accurate attendance records are kept in each classroom. If you have opted for Extended Care, Before Care children may be dropped off at 8:00 am and After Care children must be picked up by 4:00 pm.

## LATE ARRIVAL / EARLY RELEASE

If your child arrives after 9:10 am, he/she must be checked in through the school office and a GEM staff member will escort the child to his/her classroom.

If a child will be picked up early (before 1:50 pm), parents must sign them out in the GEM office. Teachers cannot release a student from school early without authorization from the school office.

## INCLEMENT WEATHER

### INCLEMENT WEATHER

GEM Express may close for inclement weather. Due to our registration of students and staff that live in both the Allen and Lovejoy school districts, we will adhere to the following:

- If Allen or Lovejoy schools close, GEM Express will follow the same recommendation.
- If either AISD / LISD has a 2 hour delay, GEM will start at 10:30 am.
- If either Lovejoy or Allen closes due to inclement weather, GEM will be closed.
- If Lovejoy closes and Allen has a delayed start, GEM will be closed.
- If Allen closes and Lovejoy has a delayed start, GEM will be closed.
- If Allen has a delayed start and Lovejoy does not, GEM starts at 10:30 am.
- If Lovejoy has a delayed start and Allen does not, GEM starts at 10:30 am.

You can check [www.allenisd.org](http://www.allenisd.org) or [www.lovejoyisd.net](http://www.lovejoyisd.net) for their most current information regarding school closings. Please listen to radio and television broadcasts and follow procedures for Allen Independent School District (AISD) / Lovejoy Independent School District (LISD).

If GEM is closed due to inclement weather, we do not make up the bad weather day.

### OUTDOOR PLAYGROUND WEATHER

GEM will follow the National Weather Service guidelines to maintain outdoor playground time safe for all students. Students will have outdoor playground time daily weather permitting. We will not go outside if it is raining, lightning/thundering within 10 miles, temperature/heat index is 100° or above, or cold/windchill factor 32° or below. Children will have access to water during the hot temperatures. We do not apply sunscreen to students.

### HEAT GUIDELINES

Heat Index Chart (in Fahrenheit %)

|                     |         | Relative Humidity (Percent) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |
|---------------------|---------|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
|                     |         | 40-44                       | 45-49 | 50-54 | 55-59 | 60-64 | 65-69 | 70-74 | 75-79 | 80-84 | 85-89 | 90-94 | 95-99 | 100 |
| Air Temperature (F) | 80-83   | 80                          | 80    | 81    | 81    | 82    | 82    | 83    | 84    | 84    | 85    | 86    | 86    | 87  |
|                     | 84-89   | 83                          | 84    | 85    | 86    | 88    | 89    | 90    | 92    | 94    | 96    | 98    | 100   | 103 |
|                     | 90-93   | 91                          | 93    | 95    | 97    | 100   | 103   | 105   | 109   | 113   | 117   | 122   | 127   | 132 |
|                     | 94-99   | 97                          | 100   | 103   | 106   | 110   | 114   | 119   | 124   | 129   | 135   |       |       |     |
|                     | 100-103 | 109                         | 114   | 118   | 124   | 129   | 130   |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |
|                     | 104     | 119                         | 124   | 131   | 137   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |

|  |  |  |  |  |                                     |
|--|--|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|
|  | <b>COMFORTABLE</b><br>Outdoor Play<br>> 30 min |  | <b>CAUTION</b><br>Outdoor Play<br>20 min or less |  | <b>DANGER</b><br>No Outdoor<br>Play |
|--|--|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|

- Keep in mind that temperature and humidity combined determines the possible risk of heat related injury for students.
- When in the yellow zone, start with low level activity and increase as tolerated for 20 minutes or less.
- Students should drink plenty of water before, during and after exercise.
- Students should be allowed to take frequent water breaks and rest as needed.

Wind-Chill Factor Chart (in Fahrenheit)

|                     |       | Wind Speed in mph |     |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |
|---------------------|-------|-------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
|                     |       | 0-4               | 5-9 | 10-14 | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | 35-39 | >40 |
| Air Temperature (F) | >40   | 40                | 36  | 34    | 32    | 30    | 29    | 28    | 28    | 27  |
|                     | 35-39 | 35                | 31  | 27    | 25    | 24    | 23    | 22    | 21    | 20  |
|                     | 30-34 | 30                | 25  | 21    | 19    | 17    | 16    | 15    | 14    | 13  |
|                     | 25-29 | 25                | 19  | 15    | 13    | 11    | 9     | 8     | 7     | 6   |
|                     | 20-24 | 20                | 13  | 9     | 6     | 4     | 3     | 1     | 0     | -1  |
|                     | 10-19 | 10                | 1   | -4    | -7    | -9    | -11   | -12   | -14   | -15 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                                     |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|
|  | <b>COMFORTABLE</b><br>Outdoor Play<br>> 30 min |  | <b>CAUTION</b><br>Outdoor Play<br>20 min or less |  | <b>CAUTION</b><br>Outdoor Play<br>15 min or less |  | <b>DANGER</b><br>No Outdoor<br>Play |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|

- Keep in mind that air temperature and wind speed combined will determine the length of outdoor play during cold conditions.
- Students should be dressed properly.

## PICK-UP

Children must be picked up promptly before carpool ends at 2:10 pm.

Children will only be released to those who are authorized\*\* by parents or guardians to do so. Identification in the form of a driver's license will be required.

**\*\* MAKE CERTAIN THAT NAMES OF AUTHORIZED PERSONS ARE ON FILE IN THE SCHOOL OFFICE. CONTACT THE SCHOOL OFFICE REGARDING CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO THE PICK-UP LIST.**

# A DAY AT GEM

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## CARPOOL PROCEDURES

GEM Express uses a carpool system for both morning arrivals and afternoon dismissals. For morning drop-off, parents form two (2) lines according to carpool tag color. Staff members will help children from their cars and escort them to classrooms. Morning carpool begins at 8:50 am and ends at 9:10 am.

For afternoon carpool, parents form two (2) lines, according to carpool tag color, displaying assigned color carpool numbers. Carpool tags will be handed out at Meet the Teacher, or your child's first day of school. Staff members will bring children directly to their cars. Parents should remain in their vehicles and allow the staff member to safely buckle your child in the seat.

For the safety and timely release of all students, the carpool system is mandatory for all GEM Express students. Thank you for your cooperation!

**Please refrain from using cell phones during loading and unloading.**

**Teachers often use this time to communicate important information about your child's day or upcoming school events.**

Your child will be given a tag to be placed on his/her backpack. Please place the backpack tag towards the TOP of your child's backpack. Do NOT attach it to a zipper as the zipper changes location.

This serves two purposes:

1. During morning carpool, it allows us to quickly identify your child's classroom.
2. During afternoon carpool, it allows us to identify your vehicle.

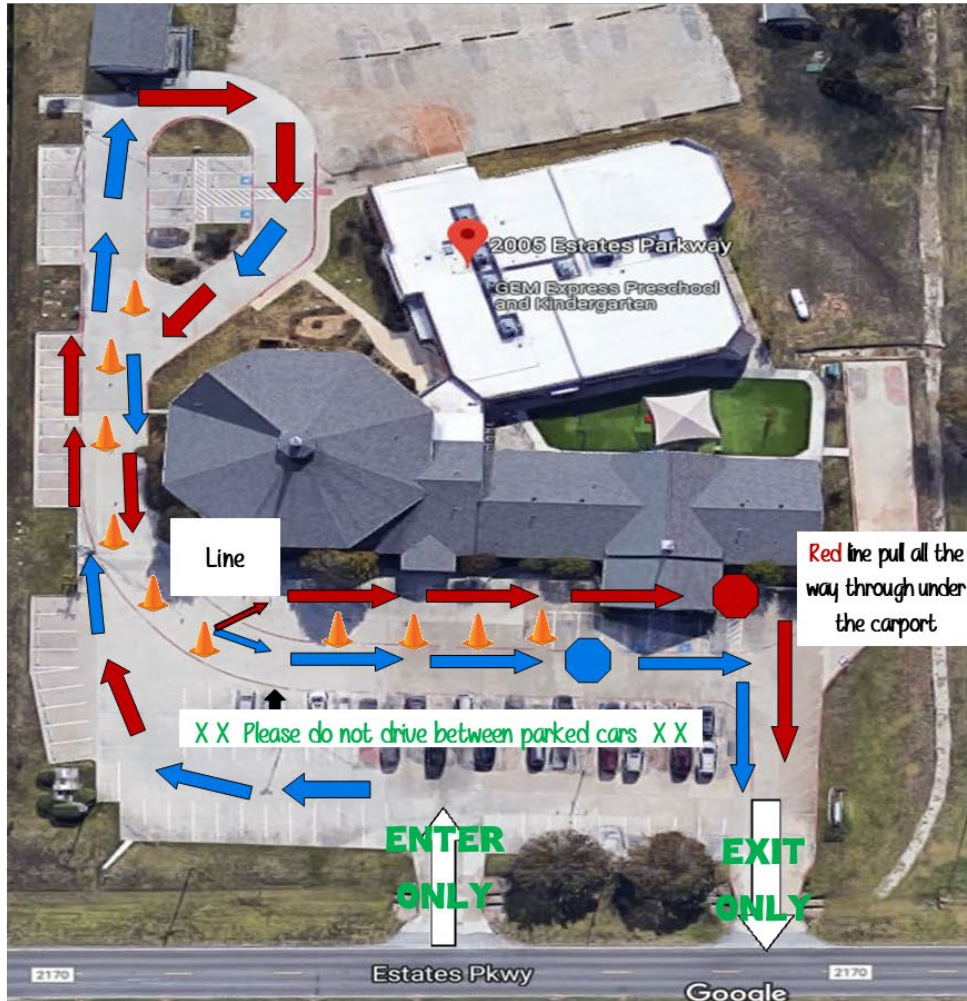
As stated above, you will also receive a carpool tag. During afternoon carpool, please hang your carpool number from your rearview mirror *so that the number faces out*.

\*IMPORTANT - Please leave the number visible until your child is in the car. Your child's teacher may recognize you or your vehicle, but other teachers or subs may not.



# Carpool Procedure MORNING and AFTERNOON

For normal carpool days, you will form two lines when you get to the front of the building.



- DO NOT go between the parked cars.
- **DO NOT CUT THROUGH THE CONES.** Please circle around the back.
- As traffic flow slows, a staff member may move the cones and direct you to the front. *IF the cones have not been moved, please continue to the back.*
- Please go to your assigned lane indicated by carpool tag color. Please do not choose your own lane.
- **PLEASE DO NOT BE ON YOUR CELL PHONE!** We need everyone paying attention to the staff members and the children walking to vehicles.

Key

Red =  carpool tags & arrows

Blue =  carpool tags & arrows

○ = line stops for loading/unloading

We need everyone's cooperation to make carpool safe for the students and staff.

## RAINY DAY CARPOOL PROCEDURE

We will use the same procedure as regular days EXCEPT when you get to the front of the building, please stay in a single line and pull under the car port. Please pull forward as far as possible so that we may load more than one vehicle at a time.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE ON RAINY DAY!



## Carpool Procedure RAINY DAYS



On rainy days, you will stay in **ONE LINE** no matter car tag color. Pull all the way up to the carport.  
**PULL UP** as far as possible so that we may load more than one car at a time.



| Key    |                                  |
|--------|----------------------------------|
| Red =  | carpool tags & arrows            |
| Blue = | carpool tags & arrows            |
| ○ =    | line stops for loading/unloading |

- **DO NOT** go between the parked cars.
- **DO NOT CUT THROUGH THE CONES.** Please circle around the back.
- As traffic flow slows, a staff member may move the cones and direct you to the front. *If the cones have not been moved, please continue to the back.*
- **PLEASE DO NOT BE ON YOUR CELL PHONE!** We need everyone paying attention to the staff members and the children walking to vehicles.

We need everyone's cooperation to make carpool safe for the students and staff.



## DRESS

Please dress your child in comfortable clothes, keeping in mind children will participate in art activities, sandbox play, water table activities, etc. Tennis shoes or soft-soled shoes must be worn. Sandals and cowboy boots are dangerous on the playground equipment and do not allow the child the mobility needed for free play and large motor activities.

Be sure to send your child with a coat or jacket on cool to cold days. Classes will be going outside for play each day, weather permitting. Each child should have a complete change of clothing in a labeled plastic bag in his/her backpack. Label with both first and last names.

## TOYS

Children should leave all personal toys at home, or in your vehicle, unless your child's teacher specifically asks your child to bring a "show and tell" item to school. Never allow your child to bring violent toys or weapons (guns, knives, swords, etc.) to school. *GEM cannot be responsible for items sent from home.*

## HOLIDAYS

At GEM Express, our holiday celebrations are biblically based and God-focused. We do not celebrate Halloween (no witches, ghosts, skeletons, etc.); instead, we celebrate Fall Festival. At Christmas, our focus is the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We do not include Santa in our classroom discussions or activities. The focus at Easter is the resurrection of Christ, therefore, we do not use the Easter bunny in our discussions or activities. We want to support our GEM families who strive to keep their own family celebrations God-honoring. Please be mindful of these policies when sending treats that will be distributed to the entire class.

## REST PERIODS

A rest period will be required daily for each child registered in the two's through four's preschool program. GEM will provide each child with a vinyl mat for rest time. The mat will be labeled with each child's name using a permanent marker. You may send a small blanket or stuffed animal for your child's exclusive use at rest time. These items will be sent home daily in your child's backpack. Please label these items with your child's first and last name.

**\* Rest mats must be vinyl in order to meet basic licensing standards. Fabric bedrolls are not allowed.**

## VIGOROUS PLAY

All classes are scheduled for at least 25 minutes of outdoor play. Childcare licensing recognizes the importance of regularly planned large motor activities throughout the school day and as a licensed childcare center we adhere to their standards. In addition to playground time, all students participate in PE or Music & Movement for at least 20 minutes per school day as well a music and movement activities utilized during circle time and class transitions. In all, students have opportunities to engage in large motor activities approximately 50 minutes each school day. Students attending After Care have an additional 30-45 minute playground time added to their schedule. Outdoor play extends opportunities for large motor development, social-emotional development, and small muscle development by offering variety, challenge and complexity in ways that are not attainable in confined indoor space.

## TOILET TRAINING

Although we anticipate toileting accidents, children registered in the three-year-old classes through kindergarten are expected to be toilet trained. Students may not register for Pre-k or Kindergarten unless fully toilet trained. Children should be able to tell their teacher they need to use the restroom and care for their restroom needs independently. Please dress your child in clothing they can manage independently at bathroom time. Elastic

waistbands are appropriate and do not frustrate the child. Belts, snaps and buttons are difficult for children to manage by themselves.

Children in the two-year-old class should be in diapers, pull-ups, or underwear if completely toilet trained. If your child wears diapers or pull-ups, please send a daily supply in your child's backpack. Diaper rash ointment and lotion must be provided by the parent, if necessary.

## LUNCHES & SNACKS

Each child will need to bring his/her lunch daily. Please do not send chewing gum or candy in your child's lunch. Milk or fruit juices are recommended. No carbonated beverages will be allowed. A child's diet is a very important factor affecting his/her alertness and attention to instruction, as well as his/her behavior and physical development. We want the best for and from each child. The state requires that we monitor what children eat while in our care. If any food provided by the parents presents a choking hazard (ex. whole grapes), GEM staff will cut into smaller pieces. Children should receive 1/3 of their nutritional needs while at school. Your child's lunch should contain a minimum of one item from each of the following food groups:

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| MILK              | Milk, cheese, yogurt                      |
| VEGETABLE & FRUIT | ¼ cup (fruit juice included)              |
| PROTEIN           | Meat, eggs, beans, poultry, nuts or seeds |
| GRAIN             | All breads and crackers                   |

Teachers will be responsible for scheduling snacks for their classes. Teachers will notify parents of any class food allergies. Students will be assigned specific days to bring the snack. Please send snacks low in sugar content. Please check with your child's teacher if you would like to send a special snack for your child's birthday.

Parents are responsible to provide nutritious lunches and snacks for their child. GEM does not provide lunches.

## SNACK RECOMMENDATIONS

### Beverages:

100% fruit juice  
Danimals drinkable yogurt  
Capri Sun Fruit Waves juice pouch  
Bottled Water  
Milk (Non-fat or low-fat, plain or flavored)

### Low Fat Grain Foods:

Pretzels, any variety  
Animal crackers  
Graham crackers  
Wheat crackers (Wheat Thins, Triscuits)

### Additional snacks that meet fat requirements:

Goldfish Baked Snack Crackers  
Chex Mix  
Snack mix, any brand  
Vanilla wafers, any brand  
Baked chips  
Fresh fruit  
Marzetti's Cream Cheese Fruit Dip

Fruit Grain bars  
Oatmeal bars  
Nutrigrain bars  
Fresh veggies  
Reduced fat ranch dip

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

GEM Express depends on parent involvement to ensure the best preschool experience for our students. Parents and teachers working together can provide many special events and programs for the students during the school year. Parents are encouraged to get involved and participate in school activities and parties. Any photographs parents may take while in attendance at a school function are for personal use only. Please do not post photos of other GEM students on social networking sites or any other public or internet forum without parental permission.

We have an open door policy at GEM so feel free to visit at any time. Please check in at the school office and obtain a visitor's badge.

\*The above statement is subject to change per COVID-19 policies and procedures updates.

### **BIRTHDAY PARTY INVITE POLICY**

It is GEM's policy *not* to send home birthday invitations unless everyone in the class is invited.

### **SUNSCREEN AND INSECT REPELLANT POLICY**

It is our policy that we do not apply sunscreen or insect repellent to our students. Please apply to your child at home before school if necessary.

# HEALTH AND SAFETY AT GEM

## STAFF IMMUNIZATIONS

Upon hiring, staff are required to have a TB test. No other staff immunizations are required but an annual flu vaccination is recommended.

## STUDENT IMMUNIZATIONS

The state requires that on your child’s 4th birthday he / she must have OPV and DPT immunizations. Please notify the school office when your child has received these immunizations in order to keep medical records current and in compliance with the state. Your doctor should sign and date the shot record form.

(See following charts for required immunizations):

## IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD-CARE FACILITIES

### 2022 - 2023 Texas Minimum State Vaccine Requirements for Child-Care and Pre-K Facilities

This chart summarizes the vaccine requirements incorporated in the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 25 Health Services, §§97.61-97.72. This chart is not intended as a substitute for consulting the TAC, which has other provisions and details. The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is granted authority to set immunization requirements for child-care facilities by the Human Resources Code, Chapter 42.

A child shall show acceptable evidence of vaccination prior to entry, attendance, or transfer to a child-care facility in Texas.

| Age at which child must have vaccines to be in compliance: | Minimum Number of Doses Required of Each Vaccine |         |                                 |   |   |  |                            |                                   |
|--|--|---------|---------------------------------|---|---|--|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|  | Diphtheria / Tetanus / Pertussis (DTaP)          | Polio   | Hepatitis B (HepB) <sup>1</sup> | <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib) <sup>2</sup> | Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) <sup>3</sup> | Measles, Mumps, & Rubella (MMR) <sup>1,4</sup> | Varicella <sup>1,4,5</sup> | Hepatitis A (HepA) <sup>1,4</sup> |
| 0 through 2 months   |  |         |                                 |   |   |  |                            |                                   |
| By 3 months  | 1 Dose   | 1 Dose  | 1 Dose                          | 1 Dose  | 1 Dose  |  |                            |                                   |
| By 5 months  | 2 Doses  | 2 Doses | 2 Doses                         | 2 Doses   | 2 Doses   |  |                            |                                   |
| By 7 months  | 3 Doses  | 2 Doses | 2 Doses                         | 2 Doses   | 3 Doses   |  |                            |                                   |
| By 16 months   | 3 Doses  | 2 Doses | 2 Doses                         | 3 Doses   | 4 Doses   | 1 Dose   | 1 Dose                     |                                   |
| By 19 months   | 4 Doses  | 3 Doses | 3 Doses                         | 3 Doses   | 4 Doses   | 1 Dose   | 1 Dose                     |                                   |
| By 25 months   | 4 Doses  | 3 Doses | 3 Doses                         | 3 Doses   | 4 Doses   | 1 Dose   | 1 Dose                     | 1 Dose                            |
| By 43 months   | 4 Doses  | 3 Doses | 3 Doses                         | 3 Doses   | 4 Doses   | 1 Dose   | 1 Dose                     | 2 Doses                           |

↓ Notes on the back page, please turn over. ↓

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- <sup>1</sup> Serologic evidence of infection or serologic confirmation of immunity to measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, hepatitis A, or varicella is acceptable in place of vaccine.
- <sup>2</sup> A complete Hib series is two doses plus a booster dose on or after 12 months of age (three doses total). If a child receives the first dose of Hib vaccine at 12 - 14 months of age, only one additional dose is required (two doses total). Any child who has received a single dose of Hib vaccine on or after 15 - 59 months of age is in compliance with these specified vaccine requirements. Children 60 months of age and older are not required to receive Hib vaccine.
- <sup>3</sup> If the PCV series is started when a child is seven months of age or older or the child is delinquent in the series, then all four doses may not be required. Please reference the information below to assist with compliance:
- For children seven through 11 months of age, two doses are required.
  - For children 12 - 23 months of age: if three doses have been received prior to 12 months of age, then an additional dose is required (total of four doses) on or after 12 months of age. If one or two doses were received prior to 12 months of age, then a total of three doses are required with at least one dose on or after 12 months of age. If zero doses have been received, then two doses are required with both doses on or after 12 months of age.
  - Children 24 months through 59 months meet the requirement if they have at least three doses with one dose on or after 12 months of age, or two doses with both doses on or after 12 months of age, or one dose on or after 24 months of age. Otherwise, an additional dose is required. Children 60 months of age and older are not required to receive PCV vaccine.
- <sup>4</sup> For MMR, Varicella, and Hepatitis A vaccines, the first dose must be given on or after the first birthday. Vaccine doses administered within 4 days before the first birthday will satisfy this requirement.
- <sup>5</sup> Previous illness may be documented with a written statement from a physician, school nurse, or the child's parent or guardian containing wording such as: "This is to verify that (name of child) had varicella disease (chickenpox) on or about (date) and does not need varicella vaccine." The written statement will be acceptable in place of any, and all varicella vaccine doses required.
- Information on exclusions from immunization requirements, provisional enrollment, and acceptable documentation of immunizations may be found in §97.62, §97.66, and §97.68 of the Texas Administrative Code, respectively and online at <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/immunize/school/default.shtm>.

#### Exemptions

Texas law allows (a) physicians to write medical exemption statements which clearly state a medical reason exists that the person cannot receive specific vaccines, and (b) parents/guardians to choose an exemption from immunization requirements for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief. The law does not allow parents/guardians to elect an exemption simply because of inconvenience (for example, a record is lost or incomplete and it is too much trouble to go to a physician or clinic to correct the problem). Schools should maintain an up-to-date list of students with exemptions, so they may be excluded in times of emergency or epidemic declared by the commissioner of public health.

Instructions for requesting the official exemption affidavit that must be signed by parents/guardians choosing the exemption for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief, can be found at [www.dshs.texas.gov/immunize/school/exemptions.aspx](http://www.dshs.texas.gov/immunize/school/exemptions.aspx). The original Exemption Affidavit must be completed and submitted to the school.

For children claiming medical exemptions, a written statement by the physician must be submitted to the school. Unless it is written in the statement that a lifelong condition exists, the exemption statement is valid for only one year from the date signed by the physician.

#### Documentation

Since many types of personal immunization records are in use, any document will be acceptable provided a physician or public health personnel has validated it. Validation includes a signature, initials, or stamp. An immunization record generated from an electronic health record must include clinic contact information and the provider's signature/stamp, along with the vaccine name and vaccination date (month, day, and year). An official record generated from a health authority is acceptable. An official record received from school officials, including a record from another state is acceptable.



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## IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS FOR KINDERGARTEN

### 2022 - 2023 Texas Minimum State Vaccine Requirements for Students Grades K - 12

This chart summarizes the vaccine requirements incorporated in the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 25 Health Services, §97.61-97.72. This document is not intended as a substitute for the TAC, which has other provisions and details. The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is granted authority to set immunization requirements by the Texas Education Code, Chapter 38.

#### IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

A student shall show acceptable evidence of vaccination prior to entry, attendance, or transfer to a public or private elementary or secondary school in Texas.

| Vaccine Required<br>(Attention to notes<br>and footnotes) | Minimum Number of Doses Required by Grade Level |   |   |   |   |   |   |                   |  |   |    |    | Notes |    |  |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|--|---|----|----|-------|----|--|---|
|   | Grades K - 6th                                  |   |   |   |   |   | Grade 7th   | Grades 8th - 12th |  |   |    |    |       |    |  |   |
|   | K   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6   | 7                 | 8  | 9 | 10 | 11 |       | 12 |  |   |
| Diphtheria/Tetanus/Pertussis<br>(DTaP/DTP/DT/Td/Tdap)     |   |   |   |   |   |   | 3 dose primary series and 1 booster dose of Tdap / Td within the last 5 years |                   | 3 dose primary series and 1 booster dose of Tdap / Td within the last 10 years |   |    |    |       |    |  | <p><b>For K – 6<sup>th</sup> grade:</b> 5 doses of diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine; 1 dose must have been received on or after the 4<sup>th</sup> birthday. However, 4 doses meet the requirement if the 4<sup>th</sup> dose was received on or after the 4<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>1</sup> For students aged 7 years and older, 3 doses meet the requirement if 1 dose was received on or after the 4<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>1</sup></p> <p><b>For 7<sup>th</sup> grade:</b> 1 dose of Tdap is required if at least 5 years have passed since the last dose of tetanus-containing vaccine.<sup>4</sup></p> <p><b>For 8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade:</b> 1 dose of Tdap is required when 10 years have passed since the last dose of tetanus-containing vaccine.<sup>4</sup></p> <p><sup>4</sup>Td is acceptable in place of Tdap if a medical contraindication to pertussis exists.</p> |
| Polio   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 4 doses or 3 doses  |                   |  |   |    |    |       |    | <p><b>For K – 12<sup>th</sup> grade:</b> 4 doses of polio; 1 dose must be received on or after the 4<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>1</sup> However, 3 doses meet the requirement if the 3<sup>rd</sup> dose was received on or after the 4<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>1</sup></p>   |   |
| Measles, Mumps, and Rubella<br>(MMR)                      |   |   |   |   |   |   | 2 doses   |                   |  |   |    |    |       |    | <p><b>For K – 12<sup>th</sup> grade:</b> 2 doses are required, with the 1st dose received on or after the 1<sup>st</sup> birthday.<sup>1</sup> Students vaccinated prior to 2009 with 2 doses of measles and one dose each of rubella and mumps satisfy this requirement.</p>  |   |
| Hepatitis B <sup>2</sup>                                  |   |   |   |   |   |   | 3 doses   |                   |  |   |    |    |       |    | <p>For students aged 11 – 15 years, 2 doses meet the requirement if adult hepatitis B vaccine (Recombivax<sup>®</sup>) was received. Dosage (10 mcg /1.0 mL) and type of vaccine (Recombivax<sup>®</sup>) must be clearly documented. If Recombivax<sup>®</sup> was not the vaccine received, a 3-dose series is required.</p> |   |
| Varicella <sup>2,3</sup>                                  |   |   |   |   |   |   | 2 doses   |                   |  |   |    |    |       |    | <p><b>For K – 12<sup>th</sup> grade:</b> 2 doses are required, with the 1st dose received on or after the 1<sup>st</sup> birthday.<sup>1</sup></p>   |   |
| Meningococcal (MCV4)                                      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                   | 1 dose   |   |    |    |       |    | <p><b>For 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade:</b> 1 dose of quadrivalent meningococcal conjugate vaccine is required on or after the student's 11<sup>th</sup> birthday.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> If a student received the vaccine at 10 years of age, this will satisfy the requirement.</p>                                  |   |
| Hepatitis A <sup>2</sup>                                  |   |   |   |   |   |   | 2 doses   |                   |  |   |    |    |       |    | <p><b>For K – 12<sup>th</sup> grade:</b> 2 doses are required, with the 1st dose received on or after the 1<sup>st</sup> birthday.<sup>1</sup></p>   |   |

NOTE: Shaded area indicates that the vaccine is not required for the respective grade.

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<sup>1</sup> Receipt of the dose up to (and including) 4 days before the birthday will satisfy the school entry immunization requirement.

<sup>2</sup> Serologic evidence of infection or serologic confirmation of immunity to measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, hepatitis A, or varicella is acceptable in place of vaccine.

<sup>3</sup> Previous illness may be documented with a written statement from a physician, school nurse, or the child's parent or guardian containing wording such as: "This is to verify that (name of student) had varicella disease (chickenpox) on or about (date) and does not need varicella vaccine." This written statement will be acceptable in place of any and all varicella vaccine doses required.

Information on exclusions from immunization requirements, provisional enrollment, and acceptable documentation of immunizations may be found in §97.62, §97.66, and §97.68 of the Texas Administrative Code, respectively and online at <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/immunize/school/default.shtm>.

#### Exemptions

Texas law allows (a) physicians to write medical exemption statements which clearly state a medical reason exists that the person cannot receive specific vaccines, and (b) parents/guardians to choose an exemption from immunization requirements for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief. The law does not allow parents/guardians to elect an exemption simply because of inconvenience (for example, a record is lost or incomplete and it is too much trouble to go to a physician or clinic to correct the problem). Schools should maintain an up-to-date list of students with exemptions, so they may be excluded in times of emergency or epidemic declared by the commissioner of public health.

Instructions for requesting the official exemption affidavit that must be signed by parents/guardians choosing the exemption for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief, can be found at [www.dshs.texas.gov/immunize/school/exemptions.aspx](http://www.dshs.texas.gov/immunize/school/exemptions.aspx). The original Exemption Affidavit must be completed and submitted to the school.

For children claiming medical exemptions, a written statement by the physician must be submitted to the school. Unless it is written in the statement that a lifelong condition exists, the exemption statement is valid for only one year from the date signed by the physician.

#### Provisional Enrollment

All immunizations must be completed by the first date of attendance. The law requires that students be fully vaccinated against the specified diseases. A student may be enrolled provisionally if the student has an immunization record that indicates the student has received at least one dose of each specified age-appropriate vaccine required by this rule. Student must not be overdue for the next dose in a series to be considered provisional. To remain enrolled, the student must complete the required subsequent doses in each vaccine series on schedule and as rapidly as is medically feasible and provide acceptable evidence of vaccination to the school.

A school nurse or school administrator shall review the immunization status of a provisionally enrolled student every 30 days to ensure continued compliance in completing the required doses of vaccination. If, at the end of the 30-day period, a student has not received a subsequent dose of vaccine, the student is not in compliance and the school shall exclude the student from school attendance until the required dose is administered.

Additional guidelines for provisional enrollment of students transferring from one Texas public or private school to another, students who are dependents of active duty military, students in foster care, and students who are homeless can be found in the TAC, Title 25 Health Services, Sections 97.66 and 97.69.

#### Documentation

Since many types of personal immunization records are in use, any document will be acceptable provided a physician or public health personnel has validated it. Validation includes a signature, initials, or stamp. An immunization record generated from an electronic health record must include clinic contact information and the provider's signature/stamp, along with the vaccine name and vaccination date (month, day, and year). An official record generated from a health authority is acceptable. An official record received from school officials, including a record from another state is acceptable.



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## VACCINES AND DISEASES

### Vaccine-Preventable Diseases and the Vaccines that Prevent Them

| Disease                | Vaccine  | Disease spread by                          | Disease symptoms  | Disease complications   |
|------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Chickenpox</b>      | Varicella vaccine protects against chickenpox.                     | Air, direct contact                        | Rash, tiredness, headache, fever  | Infected blisters, bleeding disorders, encephalitis (brain swelling), pneumonia (infection in the lungs), death   |
| <b>Diphtheria</b>      | DTaP* vaccine protects against diphtheria.                         | Air, direct contact                        | Sore throat, mild fever, weakness, swollen glands in neck   | Swelling of the heart muscle, heart failure, coma, paralysis, death   |
| <b>Hib</b>             | Hib vaccine protects against <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b. | Air, direct contact                        | May be no symptoms unless bacteria enter the blood  | Meningitis (infection of the covering around the brain and spinal cord), intellectual disability, epiglottitis (life-threatening infection that can block the windpipe and lead to serious breathing problems), pneumonia (infection in the lungs), death |
| <b>Hepatitis A</b>     | HepA vaccine protects against hepatitis A.                         | Direct contact, contaminated food or water | May be no symptoms, fever, stomach pain, loss of appetite, fatigue, vomiting, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), dark urine | Liver failure, arthralgia (joint pain), kidney, pancreatic and blood disorders, death   |
| <b>Hepatitis B</b>     | HepB vaccine protects against hepatitis B.                         | Contact with blood or body fluids          | May be no symptoms, fever, headache, weakness, vomiting, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), joint pain                      | Chronic liver infection, liver failure, liver cancer, death   |
| <b>Influenza (Flu)</b> | Flu vaccine protects against influenza.                            | Air, direct contact                        | Fever, muscle pain, sore throat, cough, extreme fatigue   | Pneumonia (infection in the lungs), bronchitis, sinus infections, ear infections, death   |
| <b>Measles</b>         | MMR** vaccine protects against measles.                            | Air, direct contact                        | Rash, fever, cough, runny nose, pink eye  | Encephalitis (brain swelling), pneumonia (infection in the lungs), death  |
| <b>Mumps</b>           | MMR** vaccine protects against mumps.                              | Air, direct contact                        | Swollen salivary glands (under the jaw), fever, headache, tiredness, muscle pain  | Meningitis (infection of the covering around the brain and spinal cord), encephalitis (brain swelling), inflammation of testicles or ovaries, deafness, death   |
| <b>Pertussis</b>       | DTaP* vaccine protects against pertussis (whooping cough).         | Air, direct contact                        | Severe cough, runny nose, apnea (a pause in breathing in infants)   | Pneumonia (infection in the lungs), death   |
| <b>Polio</b>           | IPV vaccine protects against polio.                                | Air, direct contact, through the mouth     | May be no symptoms, sore throat, fever, nausea, headache  | Paralysis, death  |
| <b>Pneumococcal</b>    | PCV13 vaccine protects against pneumococcus.                       | Air, direct contact                        | May be no symptoms, pneumonia (infection in the lungs)  | Bacteremia (blood infection), meningitis (infection of the covering around the brain and spinal cord), death  |
| <b>Rotavirus</b>       | RV vaccine protects against rotavirus.                             | Through the mouth                          | Diarrhea, fever, vomiting   | Severe diarrhea, dehydration, death   |
| <b>Rubella</b>         | MMR** vaccine protects against rubella.                            | Air, direct contact                        | Sometimes rash, fever, swollen lymph nodes  | Very serious in pregnant women—can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, birth defects   |
| <b>Tetanus</b>         | DTaP* vaccine protects against tetanus.                            | Exposure through cuts in skin              | Stiffness in neck and abdominal muscles, difficulty swallowing, muscle spasms, fever  | Broken bones, breathing difficulty, death   |

\* DTaP combines protection against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis.

\*\* MMR combines protection against measles, mumps, and rubella.

Last updated February 2022 - CS322257-A

## CONTAGIOUS DISEASES (Including COVID)

Parents must notify GEM Express if a child has a contagious or infectious disease, such as chicken pox, pink eye, head lice, etc. The child may return to school with a physician's release stating the child is no longer contagious. An email will be sent home notifying other parents of the contagious disease. If your child is too sick to play outside, please keep him/her home. We are not able to keep a child in another class while his/her class is on the playground. If a child becomes ill while at school, he/she will be cared for in an isolated area and will need to be picked up **within 30 minutes** from the time the parents are notified. Parents will be notified and requested to take the child home if he/she exhibits any of the following:

- Excessive cough or excessive nasal discharge
- Sore throat
- Croup
- Unexplained rash
- Skin infection (i.e. boils, ringworm, impetigo)
- Pink eye and other eye infections
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Any symptom of the usual childhood diseases

### **24 HOUR RULE**

**A child may return to school when they have been symptom free for 24 hours WITHOUT MEDICATION:**

**24 hours with no fever,**

**24 hours with no vomiting,**

**24 hours with no diarrhea.**

**Children who leave school early for any of these illnesses will not be admitted the following school day unless they have a doctor's note stating the child is not contagious.**

**If your child is diagnosed with strep or flu, they must complete 48 hours of medication before they may return to school.**

## MEDICATIONS

No medication can be administered to a child unless the proper forms have been completed. Written parental authorization is mandatory before medication will be dispensed.

Any medications brought by parents for their child must be in the original container, labeled with the child's name, date (if prescription medicine), expiration date, directions to administer the medication given and, if prescribed, include the name of the physician prescribing the medication. Forms for administering both prescription and non-prescription medication are available in the school office and online and must be filled out before the medication can be administered. **Please do not send medication in your child's backpack**; instead, bring medication and authorization form to the GEM office. Two GEM staff members will witness all medicine dispensed.

## STUDENT ALLERGIES AND TREATMENT PLAN

Licensing requires all centers to obtain an allergy emergency plan for all children with a known food or other type of allergy that has been diagnosed by a healthcare professional and requires medication to be on site. An allergy emergency plan is an individualized plan prepared by the child's healthcare professional that includes:

1. A list of each food or other item the child is allergic to
2. Possible symptoms if exposed to the food or item on the list; and
3. The specific steps to take if the child has an allergic reaction.

The child's healthcare professional AND the parent(s) must sign and date the plan and then submit the plan to the GEM office. A copy of the plan will be placed in the child's file and will be posted in a visible location in the classroom. **Students with allergies must submit this information and documentation, along with any unexpired allergy medication in order to attend classes at GEM. Parents are responsible for supplying GEM with a current plan and medication.**

## HEARING AND VISION SCREENING

Every child four or five years old must have vision and hearing screening results on file at GEM. Documentation should be provided on the child's health record. GEM must have this testing on file within 120 days of admission. GEM will arrange for vision and hearing screening, for four and five year olds, to be available in the first semester of each school year, for a minimal charge, as a convenience to our families.

## ANIMALS

Licensing does not permit animals on the premises unless parents are notified in writing when animals will be present. Good hygiene and hand washing after handling or coming in contact with animals will be practiced. Documentation must be presented showing current vaccines for dogs, cats, and ferrets. There also must be a statement of health from a local veterinarian. Chickens, ducks, and reptiles such as snakes, turtles, lizards, and iguanas are not allowed, and amphibians such as frogs and toads are not allowed.

## FACILITY MAINTENANCE

GEM Express is a ministry of Grace Church and uses their facilities. Therefore, Grace Church schedules inspections and is responsible for the maintenance of the facility. The church is treated quarterly for insects / pests by Americana Pest Control and notice is given before any applications. Fire extinguishers are serviced yearly by ABC Fire Extinguisher Co. Our sprinklers are maintained yearly by GS Fire Protection and First Command Protection Services is contracted for our fire system monitoring. The final fire safety inspection, which includes storage of chemicals, is performed by the Lucas Fire Department once a year in July / August before our school year begins.

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In an emergency, GEM's first responsibility is the safety of the children. If necessary, children will be moved to a designated safe area (see map on next page) where staff members will supervise them until parents can be notified to pick them up.

GEM has adopted the following procedures and policies for emergencies:



- GEM staff will supervise children at all times.
- All classrooms are equipped with a battery-operated flashlight.
- An emergency evacuation plan for fire and severe weather is posted in each classroom.
- GEM has a fire drill once a month. In addition, a severe weather drill and a lockdown drill will be performed 4 times each calendar year.
- All drills are documented in the GEM office.
- In the case of emergency evacuations due to a chemical spill, fumes, gas leak, fire, etc. GEM will follow the recommendation of the Lucas fire department. Parents will be notified after children are relocated to a safe area. There is one designated meeting area in the northeast corner of the parking lot and one in the rear of the facility on the southeast corner of the parking lot. If it is deemed necessary to relocate the students and staff to a different location, all students and staff will be moved to the portable building in the rear of the facility on the southeast corner of the property (see map on next page.) The director will supervise the staff and children throughout the evacuation process as well as contact the appropriate emergency personnel, licensing, and, if necessary, the health department. The director will do a final check of the facility to be sure everyone is out of the building. Parents may contact GEM at 972-727-0071. If the GEM phone is not functioning, an alternate phone will be activated only in the event of an emergency: 972-571-8050.
- The director will have in her possession a notebook with all student contact information including emergency contact information and emergency medical care authorization. Teaching staff will have the daily attendance records with them in the event of an evacuation or facility relocation.
- In the event GEM is not able to contact a parent, we will attempt to contact your emergency contact(s) listed on your child's registration form.
- Should medical care become necessary, GEM will seek medical attention for students in accordance with the emergency medical authorization information on the child's registration form. Parents will be notified by the director and staff will supervise child until emergency medical personnel arrive at GEM. If GEM is unable to contact a parent, GEM will contact the emergency contact on your registration form.
- In the event of an emergency, administrative staff and specials teachers will assist any children with limited mobility or children who have impairments such as hearing, visual or mental.
- If it should come necessary to evacuate the facility, GEM students and staff will relocate to the portables on the southeast side of the building.
- In the event that a child is unable to walk out of the building on his/her own, GEM staff will either carry the child to the designated safe place or use a wheelchair.

# COMMUNICATION AT GEM

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## PARENT CONFERENCES

Teachers will schedule two conferences for every student each school year. Parents, teachers, or the director may request additional conferences during the school year as needed. Open communication is encouraged and is essential to a successful partnership between home and school.

If a conference is needed, it is best to make an appointment. Our teachers have responsibilities prior to the beginning of school each day and at dismissal time, so please schedule conferences in advance.

## VISITORS

All visitors must check in with the GEM office and receive a visitor tag before proceeding to the classrooms.

## NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters are sent home monthly both electronically and in paper form. Newsletters are the main form of communication regarding monthly school-wide activities as well as pertinent information from the office.

## WEBSITE

The following information can be found on our website [gemexpress.org](http://gemexpress.org) :

- About Us
- Staff
- Curriculum & Programming
- Fees, Registration & Handbooks
- Important School Policies
- Newsletters
- Calendar & Special Events
- Support Us

## TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Teachers will communicate via email. It is the parent's responsibility to provide GEM with a current email address. Teachers may also opt to use a publishing tool such as Shutterfly or other classroom specific account. Teachers may upload class calendars, newsletters, and/or post pictures to the classroom account in order to inform parents of daily activities. In order to respect the privacy of all GEM families, we ask that you do not download pictures of other children from these web pages.

## PERSONAL CONFLICT

Personal conflict occurs when there is a disagreement or misunderstanding between two or more people regarding a specific idea, thought, verbal communication, or action. Personal conflict is most often a result of misunderstanding or not valuing another person's perspective or wishes. Personal conflict should be resolved directly between the two parties involved using the biblical principles laid out in Matthew 18. "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." Matthew 18:15-17

# ACADEMICS AT GEM

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## CURRICULUM

GEM uses a variety of phonics-based resources for its curriculum including Frog Street Press and Starfall.com. A typical day for our students includes academics, art, Bible, developmental activities, manipulatives, music, free play, and playground time. Teachers utilize enhancement resources such as water activities, technology, and a variety of learning games and activities. All water activities are supervised by at least one or two staff and children are required to wear protective smocks.

Curriculum for each age and all specials can be found on our website [gemexpress.org](http://gemexpress.org) under Curriculum & Programming.

## PROGRESS REPORTS

Students receive progress reports two times during the school year. The purpose of these reports is to keep you informed of your child's development in school.

Sample progress reports for each age can be found on our website [gemexpress.org](http://gemexpress.org) under Curriculum & Programming.

## PROCESS FOR ASSESSING DEVELOPMENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL STAGES OF STUDENTS

In addition to progress reports, teachers assess students at the beginning of the school year through observations and interactions. GEM implements a four-step process for this evaluation, which includes teacher observations, a collaborative effort by the parents and teachers to complete a developmental stage checklist from the Department of Health & Human Services, parent/teacher discussions to establish and set goals, and finally referrals to an outside resource if needed.

**It is essential that parents provide GEM with any assessment results to ensure we are aware of any special needs a student may have.**

## TECHNOLOGY GUIDELINES

Passive media (television, DVDs, audiotapes) when used, must meet the following requirements: enhance the effectiveness and the values of the program; are previously viewed by the staff for overall content and age appropriateness; serve as an occasional supplement to daily activities rather than a significant part; are appropriate to the age and the attention span; include appropriate staff involvement in introducing and following up the viewing with questions and activities that elicit children's active involvement.

# DISCIPLINE AT GEM

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## DISCIPLINE

GEM Express believes in Christian principles of child rearing. Discipline will be consistent and based upon an understanding of your child's needs and development. Our goal is to promote self-discipline and acceptable behavior. Our staff will keep you informed of any concerns and will not hesitate to ask for your assistance in dealing with a problem.

Our approach to discipline is a positive one using the following steps:

- Praise and encourage good behavior
- Remind child of behavior expectations
- Redirect unacceptable behavior
- Brief supervised time outs

Our discipline policy promotes a firm and respectful response to misbehavior. Corporal punishment is not used at GEM Express.

Please make your child's teacher aware of anything that might affect his/her behavior, such as a death in the family, absence of a family member, divorce, a new baby, new medication, etc. This will allow the teacher to be more sensitive toward your child and his/her behavior.

### Discipline and Guidance Policy for GEM Express:

Discipline must be:

- Individualized and consistent for each child
- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding
- Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

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

- Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior
- Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements
- Redirecting behavior using positive statements
- Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

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

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
- Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training
- Pinching, shaking, or biting a child
- Hitting a child with a hand or instrument
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth
- Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language

- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child’s age

## **DISMISSAL**

In the rare instance where it has been found that a child is uncontrollable and after all attempts to rectify the situation have been exhausted, it may be necessary to dismiss a child from our school. It is important to remember that our first priority is to each and every child. The consistent disruption of classroom activity by one child will not be tolerated. Guidelines for discipline and dismissal are as follows:

### Level I

- 1<sup>st</sup> Offense: Tell the child the rule.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Offense: Ask the child the rule.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense: Consequences (i.e. timeout, missed playground time or remove from the group)

### Level II - A consistent pattern of behavior has been documented.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Offense: Teacher-Parent conference
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Offense: Teacher-Parent-Director conference
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense: Parent will be contacted to administer discipline

### Level III

- 1<sup>st</sup> Offense: Probation
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Offense: Suspension
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense: Dismissal

## **STUDENT ANTI-HARRASSMENT POLICY**

At GEM Express Preschool & Kindergarten, we believe that all people have intrinsic value and worth because scripture clearly states we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27.) Bullying of any kind is wrong because it devalues another person’s God-given worth. Bullying is never acceptable because it directly contradicts God’s command - to us to love one another (John 13:34) and also to be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32.) It is our goal to partner with parents to work honestly in identifying any concerns regarding their child’s treatment of others and to take preventative measures to minimize any form of bullying both at home and school.

GEM identifies bullying as aggressive, unwelcome behavior that is both intentional and repeated over time. Single, isolated incidents are generally not considered bullying but will be addressed by staff when any such action is observed. Anyone who witnesses bullying should report the behavior to GEM staff. The director will be responsible for investigating any allegations and determining the need for disciplinary action. If the incident is substantiated, the director will notify parents of all parties involved that an investigation is underway. Parents are expected to assist in the resolution of issues that occur between their children and other children at GEM. Consequences may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion from the program.

The policy of GEM is to provide an academic environment that is free from harassment-whether based on sex (gender), race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, or disability-an environment that is free from all forms of intimidation, exploitation, and harassment (including sexual harassment), where all individuals treat each other with dignity and respect. The school includes bullying in its definition of harassment. The school is prepared to take action to prevent and correct any violations of this policy. This policy applies to the actions of administration, teachers, staff, parents, volunteers, and students. Anyone who violates this policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination or expulsion.

The school does not tolerate harassment of students, nor does it tolerate reprisals against any students who make a harassment complaint. Administration, teachers, staff, volunteers, and students who violate this policy are subject to disciplinary action, including expulsion from school or discharge from employment. Any administrative personnel who receive a complaint of harassment and fail to appropriately report it or take corrective action pursuant to this policy are also subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

## **I. Definitions and Prohibited Acts**

- A. Sexual harassment.** Sexual harassment means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, made by someone from or in the work or educational setting, under any of the following conditions:
- Submission to the conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of an individual's academic status or progress. This may occur by clearly stated acts or words or by implied acts or words.
  - Submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as the basis of academic decisions affecting the individual.
  - The conduct has the purpose or effect of having a negative impact on the individual's academic performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment.
  - Submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as the basis for any decision affecting the individual regarding benefits and services, honors, programs, or activities available at or through this school.
- B. Unwelcome and Offensive.** The fact that a student may not openly object to others actions or words does not prove that they were unwelcome. Under the law of harassment, or bullying and intimidation, a student does not have to openly object to others' actions or words to prove that the actions or words are unwelcome. Harassment, bullying, or intimidation may occur even if the student originally remains silent or fails to show disapproval. Acts and statements that may not offend some people may be highly offensive to others. Therefore, all employees, volunteers, and students should be sensitive to the feelings of others whether they object or not.
- C. Verbal Harassment.** Prohibited statements include, but are not necessarily limited to, the use of derogatory descriptions of a student or group of students based on race, color, disability, ethnic or national origin, or age. It is also a violation of this policy to state stereotypical classifications concerning race, national or ethnic origin, color, age, or disability of a student or group of students, especially if they are repeatedly made. Although some students or individuals may enjoy discriminatory identifications and jokes, the school does not tolerate such on its premises or during working hours. Examples of prohibited statements include, but are not necessarily limited to, derogatory or vulgar comments regarding a person's gender, sexually vulgar language, remarks about a person's physical anatomy or characteristics, dirty jokes, sexual innuendo, or display of written or graphic materials. Also prohibited are suggestive pictures, magazines, posters, offensive cartoons, and other words or pictures of a suggestive nature. Also prohibited are statements that demean women.
- D. Physical Sexual Harassment.** Prohibited actions include, but are not necessarily limited to, touching a student in a sexually suggestive way, or touching another so as to invade his or her personal privacy. This includes intentional touching or intentional movements made in order to observe another in a sexual manner. Also prohibited are physical acts such as hitting and pushing and making physical gestures of a sexual nature. As a general rule, any act or touching of a person that most individuals refrain from doing with a stranger should not be done with another student.
- E. Sexual Harasser.** A harasser may be a male harassing a female, a female harassing a male, a male harassing a male, or a female harassing a female, just as long as the harassment is sexually based or based on the gender of the student.

- F. Race, Color, National or Ethnic Origin, Age, and Disability Harassment.** Unwelcome statements, name calling, or other verbal or physical conduct based on a student’s race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, or disability is prohibited if and when any of the following occurs:
- Submission to the conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of an individual’s academic status or progress. This may occur by clearly stated acts or words or by implied acts or words.
  - Submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as the basis of academic decisions affecting the individual.
  - The conduct has the purpose or effect of having a negative impact on the individual’s academic performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment.
  - Submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as the basis for any decision affecting the individual regarding benefits and services, honors, programs, or activities available at or through the school.
- G. Electronic Harassment.** Harassment may occur through a number of mediums or means, including electronic communications. The student anti-harassment policy applies to all harassment, including any that occurs by or through any type of electronic communication. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, Internet, email, cell phones (including picture phone or text messaging as well as voice), PDAs or other communication devices, and facsimile (fax) communications of any type. This list of electronic devices is not inclusive, and the policy is intended to cover other types of electronic communication.
- H. Physical Harassment.** Prohibited actions include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following: Display of signs, pictures, cartoons, written statements, or other material that denigrates, intimidates, bullies, or otherwise discriminates against any student based on race, color, national or ethnic origin, age or disability.
- General harassment, pushing, shoving, or other intentional acts perpetrated in whole or in part because of the student’s race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, or disability.
- I. Definition of Bullying or Intimidation.** “Bullying or intimidation” means any written, oral, or physical act or gesture that a reasonable person under the circumstances should know will have the effect of harming a student or damaging her property or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property, or that has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school’s educational mission or the education of any student. Harassment, intimidation, or bullying includes a gesture or an act, whether written, oral, or physical, that is reasonably perceived as being motivated by a characteristic such as sex (gender), race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, or disability.
- J. Examples of Harassment, Bullying, or Intimidation.** Unwelcome conduct of this type can include a wide range of verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual or other nature. Among the types of conduct that would violate this policy are the following:
- Unwanted sexual advances or propositions.
  - Offering academic benefits in exchange for sexual favors.
  - Making or threatening reprisals after a negative response to sexual advances.
  - Visual conduct such as leering, making sexual gestures, or displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, or posters.
  - Verbal conduct such as making or using derogatory comments, epithets, slurs, and jokes about a student’s race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, or disability.
  - Physical conduct such as touching, assaulting, impeding, or blocking movements.
- Any conduct that has the effect of insulting or demeaning a student or group of students in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school’s educational mission or that is severe, persistent, or pervasive so that it creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment.

## II. Application of Anti-harassment Policy

The student anti-harassment policy applies to school hours; to any school-sponsored event or activity, including during school-arranged transportation of any type to or from an event or activity, and whether the activity or event occurs on or off the school campus; while on school property or at school-leased facilities; or at any other time when the event or activity has any school recognition. Additionally, as a Christian school, the school has the right to expect and does expect that students and any employee of the school will conduct themselves in a Christ like manner and/or as a Christian role model. Conduct violating these biblical standards- whether occurring at a school or during school-sponsored events, activities, or functions or not, or on campus or not- is subject to appropriate action by the school.

## III. Prohibited Actions

- A. Employee-Student Harassment, Bullying, or Intimidation. Employee-student harassment, bullying, or intimidation of any type is prohibited.
- B. Student-Student Harassment, Bullying, or Intimidation. Student-student harassment, bullying, or intimidation of any type is prohibited.

## IV. What to Do If You Experience or Observe Harassment, Bullying, or Intimidation

Students who feel that they have been subjected to conduct of a harassing, bullying, or intimidating nature are encouraged to promptly report the matter to one of the school officials designated below.

Students who observe conduct of a harassing, bullying, or intimidating nature is also encouraged to report the matter to one of the school officials designated below. All complaints will be promptly investigated.

## V. Where to Report Harassment, Bullying, or Intimidation

The following individuals are specifically authorized to receive complaints and to respond to questions regarding harassment:

- |                        |                             |                                |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <u>1. Diana Abbott</u> | <u>Title: Director</u>      | <u>Telephone: 972-727-0071</u> |
| <u>2. Joel Walters</u> | <u>Title: Senior Pastor</u> | <u>Telephone: 972-727-4512</u> |

## VI. Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to reasonably protect the privacy of the parties involved in any complaint. However, the school reserves the right to fully investigate every complaint and to notify a student's parent/guardian and appropriate government officials as the circumstances warrant

## VII. Protection Against Retaliation

It is against the school's policy to discriminate or retaliate against any person, including any student, who has filed a complaint involving harassment, bullying, or intimidation or who has testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in any investigation, formal proceeding, or hearing concerning harassment, bullying, or intimidation. However, if in the course of an investigation or subsequently the school learns that a student or others have made a complaint that was not in good faith or it was known to be false at the time of the complaint, the school reserves the right to take appropriate action. Making false complaints or complaints not made in good faith can jeopardize someone's reputation.

## VII. Procedure for Investigation of a Complaint and Taking Corrective Action

When one of the school officials designated in this policy receives a complaint, he or she shall immediately inform the principal/administrator. The principal/administrator will direct an investigation. If the investigation confirms the allegations, prompt corrective actions shall be taken. The individual who suffered the harassing, bullying, or intimidating conduct shall be informed of the corrective action taken. In addition, any employee or student found



to be responsible for harassment, bullying, or intimidation in violation of this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including expulsion or termination. The severity of the disciplinary action will be based on the circumstances of the infraction.

## **CHILD ABUSE POLICY AND REPORTING PROCEDURES**

All GEM Express Preschool & Kindergarten Staff are required to take **1 hour** of training **annually** in prevention techniques and the recognition of symptoms of abuse and neglect as well as the responsibility and procedure for reporting suspected abuse and neglect.

All GEM Staff are responsible to know and follow GEM's Policy regarding services for the prevention of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and recognizing the signs and the steps for reporting cases of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children.

Information appearing in boxes is taken from the Texas Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) website [[www.dfps.state.tx.us/itsuptoyou](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/itsuptoyou)]:

### **What is Child Abuse?**

To help prevent child abuse, you need to understand what it is. It's any mistreatment of a child that results in harm or injury. There are four basic types of child abuse, though children often experience more than one kind of abuse.

#### **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse includes actions such as beating, burning, or punching a child.

#### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse may involve criticizing, insulting, rejecting, or withholding love from a child.

#### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse includes rape, touching or fondling, or involving a child in pornography.

#### **Neglect**

Neglect includes failure to provide for a child's basic physical, medical, emotional, or educational needs. Leaving a young child home alone or failing to provide needed medical care may also be considered neglect.

### **Know the signs of abuse**

Children who are abused may show physical and behavioral signs, or they may show sudden changes in their behavior or school performance. These signs don't prove that children are being abused, but they could be a signal that the children or their families need help.

When children talk about being abused, take them seriously. Take steps to get help!

#### **General Signs of Abuse**

Abused children may seem:

- Nervous around adults or afraid of certain adults
- Reluctant to go home (coming to school early or staying late, for example)
- Very passive and withdrawn-or aggressive and disruptive
- Tired a lot, or they may complain of nightmares or not sleeping well
- Fearful and anxious

### Signs of Neglect

- Missing school a lot
- Begging for or stealing money or food
- Lacking needed medical or dental care
- Being frequently dirty
- Using alcohol or other drugs
- Saying there is no one at home to take care of him or her

### Signs of Physical Abuse

- unexplained burns, bruises, black eyes or other injuries
- apparent fear of a parent or caretaker
- faded bruises or healing injuries after missing school

### Signs of Sexual Abuse

- difficulty walking or sitting, or other indications of injury in the genital area
- sexual knowledge or behavior beyond what is normal for the child's age
- running away from home

### Signs of Emotional Abuse

- Acting overly mature or immature for the child's age
- Extreme changes in behavior
- Delays in physical or emotional development
- Attempted suicide
- Lack of emotional attachment to the parent

## Reporting Abuse, Neglect or Exploitation

*Any GEM personnel suspecting neglect or abuse of any child registered in our program are required to report concerns to designated Team Leaders and the Director. If children talk about being abused, take them seriously and take steps to help.*

The law requires any person who believes that a child is being abused, neglected or exploited to report the circumstances to Texas DFPS one of two ways:

### How to Report Abuse

In Texas, you have two ways to report to report child abuse or neglect:

**1-800-252-5400**

**[www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org)**

**For life threatening or emergency situations, call your local law enforcement agency or 911 immediately, and then make a report to DFPS.**

**By phone- Abuse Hotline-Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll-free at 1-800-252-5400**

**By Secure Internet Website: <https://www.txabusehotline.org>**

**When you get to the website there will be directions to the links to report abuse or neglect against children. Recent improvements to the site include a registration page, ability for the user to print the report, left side navigation and spell check.**

**If you have trouble or questions about making a report on the website, call (512) 929-6784 or 1-800-252-5400 for help.**

The law requires any person who believes that a child or person 65 years or older or an adult with disabilities is being abused, neglected, or exploited to report the circumstances to Texas DFPS Abuse Hotline. A person making a report is immune from civil or criminal liability, and the name of the person making the report is kept confidential. Any person who suspects abuse and does not report it can be held liable for a Class-A misdemeanor.

**Additional reporting requirements apply to teachers** and other professionals. A professional must report suspected abuse or neglect of a child within 48 hours of suspecting the child has been or may be abused or neglected (Texas Family Code Chapter 261.101 (b)). A professional cannot delegate this duty to another person to make the report. Reporting suspected child abuse makes it possible to protect the child and for a family to get help.

**Information that is helpful to have on hand when filing an abuse report includes (if known):**

- The name, age, and address of the child
- Your name and contact information
- A brief description of the situation and the child
- Current injuries, medical problems, or behavioral problems
- Parents' names and names of siblings in the home
- Names of relatives in or outside the home
- Explain how you know about the situation
  - *Texas Dept of Family and Protective Services newsletter, Oct 2010*

## Resources and Methods for Prevention of Abuse and Neglect

**All GEM personnel should know stages of child development and appropriate age and developmental expectations for children in their care.**

**GEM personnel should establish and maintain open communication with parents regarding the care of the children at our center. It is important to have an understanding of the home environment and any specific health or developmental challenges that may affect a child in our care.**

**All GEM personnel will receive training in classroom management techniques which focus on reinforcing appropriate behavior and encouraging children to make good choices.**

The staff is responsible to establish clear and consistent classroom expectations and natural consequences for inappropriate behaviors. Staff will implement the following techniques in accordance with GEM's Discipline Policy:

- Establish clear and concise classroom expectations in accordance with the developmental age level in each classroom.
- Establish a caring and consistent relationship with each student and create a safe and fun age appropriate learning environment in the classroom.
- Redirect children.
- Assure each classroom has enough resources and equipment to actively engage all students.
- Maintain required teacher-student ratios at all times.
- When necessary implement 2-5 minute time-out and discuss positive alternative with the student who is acting out.
- Request additional staff support if a student acts out physically and puts children or staff at risk.
- Work with parents to form a plan to encourage and develop a pattern of appropriate classroom behavior and implement an adequate form of communication to ensure staff and parents work together to ensure the child learns the social skills to participate in the classroom setting.
- Provide support and resources to educate parents regarding prevention of child abuse and neglect.

### **Community Action Plans: It's Up To Us!**

Children are a vital part of our communities. Their development will determine the future of our communities. Their growth, or lack thereof, changes the dynamics and circumstances in which we live. It's up to us as a community to make a difference in our children's lives. It's up to all of us to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We can do this as individuals and together as a community. It's as simple as everyday conversation.

It can be very uncomfortable to watch an out-of-control adult mistreat a child. Fortunately, there are things you can do to help.

- Start a conversation with the adult to direct attention away from the child. Say things like:
  - She seems to be trying your patience.
  - My child has gotten upset like that, too.
  - He has beautiful (eyes).
  - Children can wear you out, can't they? Is there anything I can do to help?
- Divert the child's attention, if misbehaving, by talking to the child.
- Look for an opportunity to praise the parent or child.
- If the child is in danger, offer assistance. For example, if the child is left unattended in a grocery cart, stand by the child until the parent returns.
- Avoid negative remarks or looks. These reactions are likely to increase the parent's anger and could make matters worse.

In addition to simple personal interaction, you can become a leader in your community by promoting child abuse prevention - particularly during April, the annual Child Abuse Prevention Month. Use the materials on this website to make child abuse prevention efforts thrive in all aspects of community: Teachers and Child-Care Providers; Neighbors; Faith-based Organizations; Businesses; Media; Sports.

### **Teachers and Child-Care Providers**

Teachers and child-care providers are often the first line of defense for our children. You play a primary role in their lives. Please consider one or more of the following activities in April and other times of the year to emphasize the importance of child abuse prevention.

- Copy and print kids activities to send home with the children.
- Have children create child abuse prevention bulletin boards.
- Designate Blue Ribbon Day on campus.
- Have your classes design and create blue ribbons, or use the one provided in this kit, to wear in April.
- Help "Stomp Out" child abuse by having children collect new pairs of socks and donate them to the local Rainbow Room or Child Protective Services office.
- Hold a Teddy Bear drive for your local police department or Children's Advocacy Center for children in crisis.
- Send child abuse prevention information home in homework folders or report cards.
- Have your classes "adopt" a CPS caseworker by providing new clothing and other items for the children they serve.

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Children:

In our school everyone is to be treated with respect. Teachers are to respect children, and children are to respect teachers. Children are also to respect each other.

God made each of us different. Some of us He made girls. Some of us He made boys. Some of us have blond hair. Some of us have brown hair. Some of us have blue eyes. Some of us have brown eyes. Some of us have dark skin. Some of us have light skin. The things that make us different are very special gifts from God.

Sometimes people make fun of people who are different from them. Sometimes, for example, boys make fun of girls because they are different. Sometimes girls make fun of boys because they are different.

When we make fun of people because they are different, we are not respecting them. We call this being disrespectful.

When we are disrespectful to each other, we hurt each other's feelings. After a while, if we continue to be disrespectful to each other, our school becomes an unhappy place. The children whose feelings have been hurt do not do as well in school as other children and sometimes do not want to come to school any longer.

In our school we want to be sure that everyone who is part of our school is happy to be here and has a chance to do his or her very best here. So if someone, whether it is a teacher or another child, says something or does something that is mean or disrespectful to you just because you are different, we want you to tell Mrs. Abbott right away. She will find out what happened and try to make sure that it does not happen again.

You should never be afraid to tell Mrs. Abbott when something disrespectful happens. It is not tattling, and it will not get you into trouble. If you always tell when something disrespectful happens, we can make sure that our school remains a happy place where everyone respects each other's differences.

Diana Abbott  
Director



# Things the State Wants You to Know

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## **BREASTFEEDING**

Licensing recognizes breastfeeding as the best source of milk for infants. Due to this belief we are required to inform nursing mothers that we do have an area where you may choose to breastfeed your child. You may use the chairs and couches in the Commons area located adjacent to the coffee bar in order to breastfeed your child.

## **GANG-FREE ZONE INFORMATION**

As a result of House Bill 2086 that passed during the 81<sup>st</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, Chapter 42 of the Human Resource Code will be amended to include Section 42.064 requiring that information about gang-free zones be distributed to parents and guardians of children in care at licensed child care centers. The following is a tip sheet to assist in complying with the new law. This information may be posted at your child care operation or copies may be provided to parents.

What is a gang-free zone?

A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where certain gang-related activity is prohibited and is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. Specific locations where certain gang related criminal activity is now prohibited include, but are not limited to, public schools, playgrounds, video arcade facilities, and day care centers.

The area that falls within a gang-free zone can vary depending on the type of location. For example, certain gang-related criminal activity that occurs within 1,000 feet of a school or day care center is a violation of the law.

How do parents know where the gang-free zone ends?

The gang-free zone is within 1,000 feet of your child care program. Maps may be produced for the purposes of prosecution and may be updated by the local municipal or county engineer. Parents may contact their local municipality to attempt to obtain a copy of the map if they choose to do so.

Why are gang-free zones needed?

Similar to the motivation behind establishing drug-free zones, the goal of gang-free zones is to deter certain types of criminal activity in areas where children gather by enforcing tougher penalties.

What does this mean for my day care center?

Child care providers are required to inform parents or guardians of children attending their center about the new gang-free zone designation. This means parents or guardians need to be informed that certain gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1,000 feet of your program is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty.

When do I have to comply with the new requirements?

The law is already in effect and providers should begin sharing information regarding gang-free zones immediately. Licensing staff will be offering technical assistance to facilitate compliance until rules are proposed and adopted, which is estimated to occur in March 2010. In the meantime, providers may want to update their operational policies and procedures to include information mandated by this law.

# RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

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## **Early Childhood Education Intervention**

<https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services>

ECI is a statewide program for families with children, birth to three, with disabilities and developmental delays. ECI supports families to help their children reach their potential through development services.

## **Hearing**

<http://www.advancedhearingcenter.com>

## **Speech and Occupational Therapy of North Texas**

[www.speechandot.com](http://www.speechandot.com)

## **Children's Advocacy Center of Collin County**

[www.caccollincounty.org](http://www.caccollincounty.org)

We provide safety to children victimized by abuse or neglect through an assessment of needs and risks the child may face.

## **Learner Services / Allen Independent School District**

<https://www.allenisd.org/Domain/6050>

## **Texas Department of Family Protective Services**

[www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)

## **Center for Disease Control**

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

## **Texas Health and Human Services**

<https://hhs.texas.gov>

## **Child Find**

<https://www.region10.org/programs/child-find/parents/>