

Love  Discovery  Learning

BEAR CREEK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SCHOOL



PARENT HANDBOOK

Of Operational Policies & Procedures

www.bcumcs.org

Revised August 2023

Bear Creek United Methodist Church and School

16000 Rippling Water Drive
Houston, Texas 77084

School Phone: 281-463-2969

Email: school@bcumcs.org

Website: www.bcumcs.org

Fax: 832-427-4393

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Texas Health and Human Services
Child Care Licensing Division

713-287-3238

1330 East 40th Street
Houston, Texas 77022

https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services www.dfps.state.tx.us

Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400

TEXAS STATE MINIMUM STANDARDS

A copy of the Texas State Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers is available in the BCUMCS office for your review at any time. We also post our center's most recent Licensing Inspection Report on the bulletin board inside the office. Information about this facility is also available on the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services website at: www.tdprs.state.tx.us.gov. The Child Care information line at 1-800-862-5252 also has information about local licensing offices. *To report child abuse use the toll-free Child Abuse Hotline number 1-800-252-5400 available 24 hours a day.*

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The Bear Creek United Methodist Church School will be hereinafter referred to as:

Bear Creek UMC School Parent Handbook of Policies and Procedures

1. PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy of Bear Creek UMC School incorporates Piagetian principles. The curriculum is thoughtfully selected, skillfully presented and carefully matched to the child's level. Content is presented in various ways according to each child's stage of development. A discovery approach to learning is offered and provides opportunities for observation and hands-on experiences. A child learns by doing, by exploring the environment and by using all the senses. Realizing that each child has a unique learning style, the educational goal is to help him/her develop at an optimal rate while nurturing a positive self-concept. Encouraging listening, following directions and sequencing develops reading readiness skills. Art activities are a natural form of expression. The children are provided with a variety of art mediums, allowing them to use their imagination and to create. The process of creating, not the "end product", provides the child with the learning experience. Often children must "warm-up" to getting their hands into paint, glue, etc. All children will be encouraged to participate in art activities; however, the child will be allowed to decide if s/he wants to participate. We encourage parents to share their professions, hobbies or culture with the children. If you have a special interest or skill set, please let the teacher know!

2. CURRICULUM & GOALS and SCREEN TIME POLICY

Teachers will provide activities to meet the following goals:

- ◆ To encourage each child's expression of his/her feelings and needs in constructive ways.
- ◆ To strengthen their awareness of their individuality, independence, and self-confidence.
- ◆ To encourage each child to learn appropriate times of cooperation with the other boys and girls and the teacher while maintaining his sense of independence.
- ◆ To engage in large muscle movement and to provide opportunities to explore small muscle movement skills.
- ◆ To explore various play and structured learning activities such as blocks, books, art, music, movement, and games to sharpen observation, following directions and communication skills while keeping the fun in learning.
- ◆ To participate in 'hands on' learning experiences, to encourage and foster discovery and the love of learning.
- ◆ To provide parental involvement as an integral part of the educational program for young children.
- ◆ To provide each child with the opportunity to grow in awareness of the love of God and our natural world.

SCREEN TIME POLICY (any electronic device with a screen)

Because we care about the health and wellbeing of the children in our care, we follow the American Academy of Pediatrics' Recommendations on Screen Time:

- Children under 2 should have no screen time
- Children age 2 and over should watch less than 30 minutes per week at child care, and less than 2 hours per day total.

Bear Creek UMC School understands that TV and other electronic media can get in the way of exploring, playing, and interacting with others, which encourages learning and healthy physical and social development. Therefore we will restrict screen time by:

- χ Allowing a maximum of 30 minutes total per week of educational and age appropriate screen time.
- χ Allowing no more than 15 minutes of educational computer time per day.
- χ Not allowing any screen time during meals and snacks.
- χ Having zero screen time (TV, video, and computer) for children under the age of two.

3. RELIGION

Bear Creek UMC School offers many opportunities for spiritual development. Children participate in Chapel once a week where stories about God's love, His creation and His Son are shared. Children experience the joy of prayers, songs, Christian holiday celebrations, and celebrations of birthdays and the birth of new siblings. Each day children participate in prayers and blessings in the classroom at snack and mealtime. Much of what is learned about faith and religion at this early age comes from the modeling of the adults in the child's life. God's love is continually shared with each child through all those with whom s/he comes in contact throughout the day at school.

4. STAFF

The staff of Bear Creek UMC School is experienced in working with young children. All participate in a continuous program of in-service education and studies for professional advancement in order to remain alert to the ever-changing needs of today's families and to the findings of current research.

Before hiring all applicants must submit and pass a FBI fingerprint and background check. Background checks will be resubmitted annually. Staff members are routinely trained in First Aid, CPR, Health and Safety training related to COVID-19 and the Spread of Communicable Diseases, Dispensing Medication, Policy for Recognizing, Preventing and Reporting Child Abuse and or Neglect, and others as required.

Bear Creek UMC School is licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. A copy of the minimum standards and the most recent licensing report is filed in the Director's office and is available for review upon request. They may also be viewed online at www.dfps.state.tx.us.

The Methodist Church has adopted a Safe Sanctuary Policy effective December 2005 for the protection of children, staff, volunteers and the church. All staff, substitutes and volunteers are required to attend this annual training and submit to a background check.

5. SCHOOL BOARD

The School Board is directly responsible for establishing and administering the policies and operating budget for Bear Creek UMC School Board. The Board meets monthly and consists of ten members who serve a two year term, and includes church staff, church members and non-church members. A list of nominees to fill expiring at-large School Board positions shall be presented annually (in the spring) to the Bear Creek United Methodist Church Lay Leadership Committee for selection and approval.

6. ENROLLMENT POLICY/ADA/INCLUSION

Bear Creek UMC School accepts children with disabilities in accordance with (ADA) American with Disabilities Act and provides a developmentally appropriate program that is sensitive to the needs of all children. Bear Creek UMC School is open to asking for reasonable modifications in policies, practices and procedures in order to accommodate individuals with disabilities. Every reasonable effort will be made to meet the needs of all children. However, due to financial limitations (funding for additional staff), or staff training, there may be situations in which enrollment of a student with a disability would constitute an undue burden on the school program.

Children needing a year to grow will be offered a space in the 4/5 Pre K class. This class is designed to accommodate students needing a developmental year before entering kindergarten.

Placement in 4/5 Pre K will be made by consensus between the child's parents, classroom teachers, director.

Exceptions to policies of admission would fundamentally alter the nature of the program.

STATEMENT OF INCLUSION

Bear Creek UMC School is a ministry of Bear Creek United Methodist Church and an outreach to the community. All programs are open to all children, regardless of race, nationality, creed, or physical abilities (where possible).

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Bear Creek UMC School will accept children with disabilities if we can meet the needs of the child. We are limited in funding for additional staff that might be required or special training or equipment. There may be situations in which we cannot meet the needs of some children. In this case we will try to make suggestions for an alternate school environment. We will handle each child on a case by case basis and will consider tuition refunds when a placement does not work out. The School Board will make the final decision in all cases.

7. THE SCHOOL YEAR, HOLIDAYS AND INCLEMENT WEATHER

The Bear Creek UMC School regular classes will begin in September and end in May. Our hours of operation are 7:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Monday – Friday. Summer classes will commence in June, and will end in mid-August.

In establishing the school year for Bear Creek UMC School, schedules for Katy I.S.D. and Cypress-Fairbanks I.S.D. will be taken into consideration. Starting dates for the next school year will be announced in the May calendar. An official school calendar for the year will be given to the parents during classroom school visits in August.

Bear Creek UMC School is affected by both Katy I.S.D. and Cy-Fair I.S.D. We will close if EITHER of them close for inclement weather. Please consult radio and television stations, www.katyisd.org and www.cfid.net for official word concerning district closing. It is not our policy to make up or reimburse for a bad weather day.

For your convenience, a calendar of events will be sent home with your student each month and available on our website.

8. SCHOOL VISITATION/OPEN DOOR POLICY/BREASTFEEDING

ALL CLASSES

Enrolled children and their parents will be invited to visit the classroom prior to the opening day of school. Classroom teachers will contact parents to schedule a school visit. This school visit will acquaint the child with their new teachers, classroom and the facility. Parents will have an opportunity to visit with teachers, share important information about their child, meet other parents and children in the class. A school visit will provide the opportunity for children and parents to become comfortable in the classroom environment.

Open Door Policy:

Parents are welcome to visit the school at any time during school hours to observe their child, the school's operation and program activities without having to secure prior approval. Please do check in at the school office.

Breastfeeding Policy/Education and Support Resources

A designated comfortable, private place with adult seating is available in the Bear Creek UMC Nursery near the sanctuary for mothers to pump or breastfeed their child. Parents have the right to breastfeed or provide breastmilk for their child while in our care. Breastfeeding education and support resources in the community is provided to parents on the resource table.

9. CELL PHONES

For the safety of our children, please refrain from using cell phones while on our campus.

10. ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Parents are expected to bring their children to school on time. Classes begin at 9:00 a.m. or between 7:00-9:00 a.m. for optional early care. **Children should not arrive before 9:00 a.m.** as the teachers are preparing their classrooms for the day. Teachers are not free to supervise children in their classrooms until 9:00 a.m.

Please bring your child no later than 9:10 a.m. A child may feel uncomfortable about arriving after everyone else has become involved in activities, and it can be disruptive to the children who may have difficulty getting settled.

It is the policy of Bear Creek UMC School that each child is escorted to and from his classroom ***by an adult***. Parents should not enter the classroom (or school in the event of Epidemic/Pandemic), unless specifically necessary. Do not linger after telling your child goodbye. If s/he is upset, the quicker you are out of sight, the quicker s/he can be calmed. Siblings are not allowed to enter the classroom. *This rule is vital for the safety of our children.*

Child Care Licensing requires that your child is signed in and out each day on Brightwheel. Please see the front office if you need assistance.

11. PICKING UP YOUR CHILD

Parents are expected to pick up their children on time. All classes dismiss at 1:30 p.m. (5:30 p.m. for extended care).

Please make every effort to be here to pick up your child on time so they will not feel concerned or left behind. Teachers are required to bring children who have not been picked up on time to the school office and late charges will begin to accrue.

If you know you are going to be detained, please notify the school immediately (281-463-2969) and we will reassure your child of your arrival. If saving 10 minutes means risking an accident, please drive safely and plan differently next time.

A \$15 charge and \$2.00 per minute will be billed to your account for late pick up your child after 1:40 or 5:30 for extended care students.

No child will be released unless written authorization by a parent is given to the teacher or is on file in the office. Non-parents should expect to show identification to the child's teacher. Emergencies will be handled by the director on an individual basis.

12. TUITION AND FEES

Registration Fee:

There is a non-refundable registration fee for each child due with an application. Registration fees include non-refundable supply fees for the year.

Registration fees are only refunded if Bear Creek UMC School is unable to place the child in a class. We reserve the right to cancel a class when it is under enrolled and cannot be sustained.

Tuition:

A current (annual) tuition and fees schedule is available in the office and on our website.

Tuition is due **on the FIRST DAY OF EACH MONTH** and credit is not given for absences.

May Tuition Due on the first, as it is for all months.

May tuition is considered late on May 5.

May tuition must be paid by the 5th for your child to attend class and year-end special events.

Payments:

Statements will be issued by e-mail at the beginning of each month.

Payments may be made in the following ways:

- **Cash** – please give to the office administrator or director in the school office so a receipt may be issued.
- **Checks** – may be dropped off in the school office tuition drop box (make checks payable to BCUMCS and add your child's name of the memo line) or mailed to church office to the attention of the school.
- **Brightwheel** – payments may be made by checking account, debit card* or credit card*. Follow payment link on monthly statement (this is a fully secured, credit card compliant gateway).
- **EFT** – automatic monthly payments via e-check, credit card* or debit card*. A consent form is required and is available in the school office.
- **Online banking bill pay** may also be utilized. The payee should read “**BCUMC School**” and the address is **16000 Rippling Water Dr. Houston, TX 77084**. We do not have account numbers, so please list your child's name in that space.

***All payments made by credit or debit card will include a convenience fee to cover the charges incurred by the school. This includes payments made in the school office, online or EFT. Payments may also be made by e-check at no cost.**

Late Fee

A late fee (\$10) will be charged for fees not received by the 10th of the month. Three or more late payments will result in a \$25 per tuition administrative fee.

Returned Check Fee:

A \$25 fee will be imposed for all returned checks. In the event of three returned checks in one school year period, cash payment will be required for the remainder of the year.

Withdrawal Notification:

Enrollment at Bear UMC Creek School is intended to be a nine month commitment. One month prior notice, in writing, or one month tuition is payable upon the child's withdrawal from the program.

If tuition payment has not been received by the end of month, or payment arrangements have not been made in writing, your child is subject to immediate removal from Bear Creek UMC School. A letter will be sent from the School Board at the end of the month as a reminder.

Sick, Vacation and Holiday Credit:

There are no make-up days or credit on tuition for illness, scheduled school holidays and vacation periods. Our tuition is calculated based on needs for a school year divided by nine months.

Child Care for Parties and Special Events:

Parents must reserve and pay in advance for child care in the school office by the due date posted. This due date is one week prior to the date of the event. The cost is based on the number of requests for child care and the number of workers required for the Safe Sanctuary ratios.

A separate Registration form must be completed annually for each child that uses the child care provided by the church.

13. SCHOOL RECORDS & FORMS

Forms

Enrollment forms are available by email and online after July 1

- All forms in the packet must be completed in full and all signature lines must be signed before submitting to the office.
- Physician's form (new students) - Must be signed by your doctor and have the child's official immunization record from the doctor attached. This must be dated after June 1, and must be submitted by the due date stated in enrollment forms.
- All forms must be completed and returned by date set. *Late forms may delay your child's start date.*

Records Update or Policy Changes

If during the school year any of your information changes such as your address or phone numbers, please come by the office and fill out a record update change form. You may also update your information on Brightwheel. If any of our policies are changed during the school year, you will be notified in writing.

School records included in the enrollment packet, must be completed and returned to the school office. No child will be admitted until all required forms are on file in the office.

A current immunization record from the physician's office must accompany the Health Form each year of enrollment. Please keep the school office informed of new immunizations and current health information.

14. STUDENT RECORDS

Confidential anecdotal records are kept on each student to assist in preparing for parent/teacher conferences. Portfolios are passed on with your child to help introduce your child to his new teacher. Children's records are kept on file for a minimum of 90 days after your child's last day in care.

15. PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent Orientation – Open House:

A Parent Orientation and Open House will be held in August. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss school and classroom policies, curriculum plans and schedules. It will provide an opportunity to meet your child's teachers and to become acquainted with the parents of your child's school friends. **PARENTS ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND THIS FUNCTION** that is for adults only. We are unable to provide child care for this evening.

Parent Conferences:

Parent conferences are offered twice a year by your child's teacher. During the month of October, you will be contacted for a telephone conference for children Infant/Toddler – Four year old classes. In the spring, personal conferences for all ages are held. Both parents are encouraged to attend. Parents or teachers may request a conference, as the need arises. Parents may send a note or make a phone call to the teacher and/or the Director.

The progress, development or behavior of your child will NOT be discussed with the teacher during class hours. Please DO NOT confer with the teacher at the classroom door. Our school hours are spent with the children. Teachers will not discuss a child other than your own with you.

Parents will respect the teacher's personal time. Calls to your teacher during evening hours should be scheduled in advance unless there is an emergency.

Parent Surveys:

Each year in the spring, parent surveys are distributed for you to complete and return. This information is a vital tool for our staff and School Board to consider when making decisions regarding our school events and policies.

Tuition / Comments Box:

The box just inside the office is a place to leave your tuition. It is a convenient and private place to leave written compliments, concerns or suggestions. A comment card is supplied for your convenience on the narrow table outside the office. (Anonymous notes cannot receive a response.)

16. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES/PROBLEM RESOLUTION
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It is to be expected that anytime people interact closely together that there will be occasional conflict, misunderstandings, concerns or difficulties. Our staff knows that it is a parent's job to want what is best for and to advocate and protect their child. Each and every member of our staff strives to offer your family the very best early childhood experiences possible. If you have a concern about your child or teacher, the following is the procedure you should follow:

1. Schedule a conference with the teacher so that the concern can be discussed and resolved.
2. If, after the conference, the parent(s) feel the situation is still unresolved, they should file a written grievance with the Director.
3. The Director will accept the grievance notification, review it, and schedule a conference with both the teacher and the parent(s) in a timely fashion.
4. After the second conference, the parent may wish to submit their grievance to the School Board for resolution and request permission to address the issue at the next regularly scheduled board meeting. This request must be submitted to the School Board Chair one week prior to the meeting. Once a problem is taken to the Board for resolution, the decision of the Board is final and is expected to be observed by all parties involved.

Any parent who openly demonstrates to children or other parents a lack of support for the staff or policies of Bear Creek UMC School is undermining the school's positive goals and thereby hindering its effectiveness. Such a lack of good faith will call into question a family's continued enrollment in the program. The School Board reserves the right to resolve any situations of this nature.

Please remember:

- Teachers truly want to partner with families.
- Teachers will not "take it out on your child" after you have brought a concern. Each staff member has only the best intentions at heart for your child, regardless of any interaction a parent has had with the teacher.
- Please do not allow concerns to "build up". It is very disheartening to the staff to find out later that parents have had a concern and never expressed it to anyone who could help. Speaking with other parents and rallying them up to understand your concerns is the same as gossip.
- Please remember that our staff is not allowed to discuss issues concerning you or your child with other parents.
- All concerns and suggestions are appreciated and seriously considered by the staff.

Every effort will be made to resolve problems and issues related to the children, the school, and the staff, while giving the best interest of our children the utmost importance.

Parent Notifications

Parent notifications will be sent through the Brightwheel app. We utilize the communication system to give daily, weekly, and other school information.

Special Events:

Parents and children enjoy special events that take place year round and create special memories with activities such as “Storybook Land”, “Circus Days”, “Thanksgiving Experience”, “Christmas Pageant”, “Dad’s Night”, “Western Days”, “Mother’s Day Tea”, “Easter Play” and “Super Summer Send Off”. Parent participation is vital to the success of these events and creates a special bond for their child as they experience these events with their parents.

Family Fun Events:

At Bear Creek UMC School, we are intentional about creating avenues for families to interact and become a part of a supportive community. “Family Fun” events will be planned each year. Details will be announced in the school newsletter and class notes.

Parent Education:

Parent education is available through parent meetings, Church events, and Parent Groups. Our school office has handouts, books and other resources available to provide parents with help on the joyous but often challenging task of raising children.

School Pets

Classroom pets are limited to fish aquariums.

Birthdays:

You may make arrangements with your child’s teacher to bring a special snack on the day you will celebrate your child’s birthday with the class. Simple cupcakes or cookies are easier for the children than a large cake. **We do not celebrate birthday parties at school, so we do not allow any favors or decorations for birthdays at school.** All food must be store bought, and sealed.

Birthdays are also acknowledged at Chapel and are scheduled by your classroom teacher. Parents are always welcome to attend chapel, and especially for birthday chapels.

Please do not bring party invitations unless the entire class is receiving an invitation.

Class Parties

Parents will be given the opportunity during the “Before School Visit” to sign up to help organize class parties for the class. This is another way to create special memories and enjoy time with your child.

Parents are welcome and encouraged to attend parties, but due to space limitations and to make the moment more special for the “party child”, we do not allow siblings to attend.

Sibling Policy Exception: An infant who is less than six months old may attend if the infant is in a sling. We do not have room in the class for strollers and infant seats. If the infant begins to cry, the mother and the infant will need to leave the classroom to keep from disrupting the classroom activities.

Please make sure these celebrations are “age appropriate”. Special paper goods, snacks and a simple craft and/or game are enjoyed by the children. Elaborate decorations and goody bags are not necessary and put more pressure on the adults to prepare for the party than is necessary.

Please remember that this is a preschool, and any emulation of other behavior is inappropriate. Please do not bring anything to the party that has not been approved by the teacher. **ALL PARTY PLANS MUST BE APPROVED BY THE TEACHER.**

For safety reasons, and to comply with licensing standards, latex balloons are not allowed.

17. HEALTH CHECKS & ILLNESS EXCLUSION

Your child's health is a matter of major importance to us. Precautions are taken at all times to safeguard the health of the group. This includes refusing to admit sick children into the class and isolating children as much as possible who become ill during school hours. If your child becomes ill during school hours, you will be called to come get your child. We expect them to be picked up within 30 minutes to the greatest extent possible. If you can not be reached, we will call the person/persons indicated on your ID/Pick Up Form. Teachers and staff of Bear Creek UMC School reserve the right to perform a general health check upon arrival.

Healthy Participation

All children will be involved in physical fitness activities, both indoors and outdoors, as an important part of the curriculum. If you believe that your child is too ill to participate in any of these activities, please keep your child home. We do not have the staff or facility to separate one child from an activity while the remainder of the class participates.

Please keep your child home for any of the following reasons:

- If your child currently has or has had a fever of 100.0 degrees during the previous 24 hour period
- If your child has not been fever free without the aid of fever reducing medication in the last 24 hour period. (E.g. If your child is warm in the morning, and you give them Tylenol so they can make it until lunch)
- If your child has been on an antibiotic for less than 24 hours
- If your child has had diarrhea or vomiting within the last 24 hours
- If your child has a heavy nasal discharge
- If your child has a constant cough
- If your child is fussy, cranky, and generally not himself
- If your child has symptoms of a possible communicable disease
- If your child has an unidentified rash

Parents should notify the school when children have a communicable disease so that other parents may be notified.

If a child is diagnosed with a communicable disease by a health professional, the State of Texas requires written documentation from the health professional that the child is free of contagious disease BEFORE entering the classroom for the first time following his/her absence. This standard is in place to protect all children. There are no make-up days due to illness or any other reason.

Allergy Information

Bear Creek UMC School keeps a list of the children who have allergies to specific foods (peanuts, etc.), who are allergic to bee/wasp stings or have other medical concerns such as asthma, ear tubes, etc. This list will be posted in every classroom and administrative offices. An Allergy Emergency Plan will be kept for each child with allergies. It is vital that parents keep us updated regarding their child's allergies, reactions to exposure to those allergies and appropriate remedies. BCUMCS staff will work hard to minimize the risk of exposure to something which may cause an allergic reaction in a child. However, we cannot guarantee that a child will not come into contact with an allergen.

Head Lice Policy

Any child that has been identified as having head lice **must be treated and nit free** before returning to school. Child will be checked by office staff before returning to school. If the parent becomes aware that their child has head lice, the parent is required to report this to the director.

Vision and Hearing Screening

All four and five year old students, will participate in a vision and hearing screening at the school in the fall. This report is filed with the state of Texas. **A private screening report will need to be given to the school should your child miss school the day of the screening.**

18. PROCEDURES FOR DISPENSING MEDICATION

Bear Creek UMC School will only dispense over-the-counter and/or prescription medication that is in original, labeled containers and is accompanied by a doctor's note with explicit dosage and administration instructions. Bear Creek UMC School will only give medication to the child for whom the doctor's note is written and for whom the medication container is labeled. One doctor's note per course of treatment is required. If a child, for example, is to be given a course of antibiotics for 10 days, the doctor's note must identify the dates that the medication is to be given. **We will only dispense prescription medication that is prescribed three or more times in a day. Medication prescribed once or twice a day must be given by the parent at home unless it is to be given in an emergency situation.**

Parents are required to complete a Medication Form at the front office. Medication Forms, doctor's notes and medication are to be turned into the School Office.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that all prescription medication is properly labeled by a pharmacist and replaced prior to the expiration date.

Insect Repellent, Sunscreen and Diaper Creams may be administered by staff as needed if provided in original container labeled with child's name and instructions to be followed per product description. A form must be filled out, signed and on file in the school office.

19. HEALTH RECORDS INCLUDING IMMUNIZATIONS

A medical form signed and dated by the child's physician is required to admit a child into the program. A current immunization record from each child's doctor must be on file in our office. Children who are not current on their immunizations may be excluded from attending school by the State of Texas.

It is a requirement of our school and the Department of Health that your child's medical records be kept up to date. When your child receives booster shots or has a change in medical status, it must be communicated to the school in writing. Information may be mailed, emailed, faxed or hand delivered to our office.

20. CUSTODY SITUATIONS

Bear Creek UMC School does not get involved with custody disputes. We will follow the court order exactly as it is written. If your family has a court order on file, you must provide us with the most recent copy. It is the parent's responsibility to provide the court order updates as changes occur. **PLEASE NOTE: PER STATE LAW, IN THE ABSENCE OF A COURT ORDER, BOTH PARENTS HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS.** With this being said, it is still imperative that all enrollment forms are completed with BOTH parents' information.

21. DRESS CODE

Children should dress in:

- Comfortable clothes that can get dirty. Our students paint and play outside most every day.
- A warm jacket for cold weather

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- Non-slip, closed toed, athletic type shoes are required for safe playground play and motor class. Other types of shoes are not appropriate for preschool. Cowboy boots are limited to Rodeo Days.

• “Emergency clothing” should be provided for all classes. All articles of clothing should be clearly marked with the child’s name in a disposable zipper bag. Children that are potty training should have multiple changes of clothes, socks, and shoes available. If the clothing is not provided, parents are required to bring clothing to their child immediately, or the child will need to go home for the day.

22. HALLOWEEN

Bear Creek UMC School does not celebrate Halloween. Storybook Land, Circus Days, Fall and Harvest events are planned around developmentally appropriate activities that replace Halloween activities.

We do not allow Halloween items such as ghosts, witches, skeletons or scary, violent images for the following:

- Costumes, masks, clothing
- Show and Tell or other toys
- Snacks

23. TOILET TRAINING REQUIREMENTS (for classes PK3 & Up)

Children attending Pre-K 3 and above are expected to be potty trained and know how to use restroom facilities. Teachers work closely with the parents to ensure that through patience and loving guidance, their toileting goals are met. If you choose to send your child who is training in underwear, be aware that we will throw away excessively soiled underwear.

- Potty training is the responsibility of parents. Teachers will help support their efforts.
- Potty trained children are expected to wear underwear, but will be changed into a diaper or pull up after their second accident of the day.
- An additional \$100.00 fee per month will be charged for children in diapers/pull-ups that require changes.

24. FOOD ALLERGIES & NUTRITION

Food Allergies

According to the FDA “Each year, millions of Americans have allergic reactions to food. Although most food allergies cause relatively mild and minor symptoms, some food allergies can cause severe reactions, and may even be life-threatening. There is no cure for food allergies. Strict avoidance of food allergens — and early recognition and management of allergic reactions to food — are important measures to prevent serious health consequences.” For more information please visit please visit

<https://www.fda.gov/media/79019/download> Handouts are available on our parent resource table.

Nutritional Information

Parents will provide a healthy/well balanced mid-morning snack and lunch for their children. The parent should understand that Bear Creek UMC School is not responsible for the nutritional value of snack or lunch or for meeting the child’s daily food needs. According to U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE “**Help your preschooler eat well, be active, and grow up healthy!** Young children need your help to develop healthy eating and physical activity habits for life. During their early years, you and your preschooler's doctor are partners in maintaining your child's health.” For more information please visit please visit

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/> Handouts are available on our parent resource table.

Snacks

Parents will provide a mid-morning snack for their child. This snack must be in a separate container and labeled with your child's name. This snack must not require refrigeration and be ready to eat. All children

will be served water with snack. Children may bring juice or milk with their lunch. Children in afternoon extended care will receive an afternoon snack provided by the school.

Healthy Snack Ideas: Crackers, pretzels, popcorn (for preschool only), goldfish crackers, muffins (especially mini muffins) carrots, fruits that do not need refrigeration, peanut butter and crackers, Chex mix, Grain bars, animal crackers, graham crackers. (Please remember, this is a light snack)

Lunch

Each child needs to bring a lunch with a drink every day. Lunches should be nutritious and ready to eat. Please try to avoid things that need to be cut up by staff or heated.

- Liquids and food hotter than 110 degrees F are kept out of reach.
- All staff are educated on food allergies and they take precautions to ensure children are protected.

Bear Creek UMC School offers a catered lunch option. Information about this program can be found in the front lobby.

25. WHAT NOT TO BRING TO SCHOOL

Adults:

Bear Creek UMC School is licensed by the Department of Family and Protective Services and is required to uphold the standard 746.3707 set by this governmental agency. As such, the firearms, hunting knives, bows and arrows, and other weapons are prohibited on the premises of the child care center. The ONLY exception is law enforcement officials who are trained and certified to carry a firearm on duty.

Students:

Except for toys that are needed in the opening days of school to help ease your child's transition from home to school, we ask that you encourage him **to leave his toys at home or in the car**. Because toys can easily be misplaced during the day, the teacher will store the item/s in the child's cubby.

NO guns, war toys or other toys of destruction.

Please do not bring presents for the children to the school.

Please do not bring money, coins or good jewelry.

26. WHAT TO BRING FOR YOUR CHILD IN AN INFANT/TODDLER CLASS

Each child should bring a snack, lunch and a water.

Please send finger foods prepared so the children can feed themselves as much as possible.

Glass containers are NOT allowed. Toddlers should have spill-proof plastic drinking cups (with mouth piece covered lid).

Only disposable diapers are used and please include plenty for changes. Also, include wipes or disposable baby wash cloths in your child's diaper bag.

All infants and toddlers will need multiple changes of clothing (each in separate zip plastic bag) in case of accidents.

Toys should be left at home except for a special "security" blanket or toy.

Bear Creek UMC School Parent Handbook of Policies and Procedures

Special instructions should be written and provided to the teacher upon arrival at school.

27. INFANT SLEEP SAFETY Minimum Standards 746.501(9)

Bear Creek UMC School follows the Infant Sleep Safety Guidelines as listed in the Child Care Minimum Standards and as outlined by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. All infants will be placed on their backs to sleep. To avoid suffocation, nothing is allowed in the crib but the infant, including blankets and stuffed animals. Sleep positioning devices are prohibited unless instructed by the child's health care professional. An "Infant Sleep Exception" form must be completed by the health care professional. All cribs at Early Care and Education meet the CPSC safety guidelines. Crib compliance documents are on file in the front office. Pacifiers are allowed, however straps that attached to the child's clothing and pacifiers with stuffed animals attached are prohibited.

Please write your child's name on ALL items that are sent to school with your child, including lids & bottoms of containers.

28. BEHAVIOR & GUIDANCE

At Bear Creek UMC School our teachers plan to provide an engaging, positive, supportive environment for our young learners to develop their social and emotional skills. Social development is an integral part of each child's school experience and through modeling and communicating our expectations, we ***first promote good behavior choices and prevent poor choices.***

Positive relationships between adults and children help the children develop a positive self-concept, confidence and a sense of security that helps prevent challenging behavior. A supportive environment helps the child know his expectations and limitations and provides positive feedback when they are met. Children are encouraged to persist at difficult tasks, communicate their emotions effectively, control and solve social problems. When children have these skills, they are less likely to engage in problem behavior.

As children are developing their social and emotional skills, there will be times they may present challenging behavior at school. Our staff would approach each situation from a developmentally appropriate set of expectations depending on the child and his stage of development. It is always our goal to move the child toward independence and personal responsibility. With toddlers, redirection is appropriate, and as children become more verbal and mature, conversations between the teacher and the children encourage thoughtfulness about choices and how to make amends. If a child is very upset, s/he may be offered the opportunity to sit away from the group and think about his/her choices for a few minutes until s/he is calm enough to "continue negotiations" and/or re-enter the class activities. It is sometimes helpful for the child who may be disrupting the class to spend some peaceful time in the Director's office.

If challenging behavior persists, parents will be notified in order to work together with the teachers to develop a plan to help the child grow into using more responsible behavior choices. This plan will vary based on the age and individual needs of the child.

29. OPERATIONAL DISCIPLINE & GUIDANCE POLICY Minimum standard §744.501(7), §746.501(a)(7), and §747.501(5)

Parents will review and sign this policy upon enrolling their child. Employees, members, and volunteers will review and sign this policy at orientation. A copy of the policy is provided in the operational policies. This policy is effective the first day of child's enrollment.

Discipline must be:

- Individualized and consistent for each child;

- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and
- 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 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; and
- 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 or open; and
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

MINIMUM STANDARDS RELATED TO DISCIPLINE Title 40, Chapter 746 Subchapter L:

[http://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.ViewTAC?tac_view=5&ti=40&pt=19&ch=746&sch=L&rl=Y](http://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.ViewTAC?tac_view=5&ti=40&pt=19&ch=746&sch=L&rl=Y)

30. POLICY FOR RECOGNIZING, PREVENTING AND REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND OR NEGLECT

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any **suspicion** of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of Bear Creek UMC School are considered mandated reporters, under this law. They are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior or condition prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. We take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children.

As mandated reporters, the staff of Bear Creek UMC School cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in "good faith."

Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the child's body
- Severe verbal reprimands
- Improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, season
- Transporting a child without appropriate child restraints (e.g. car seats, seat belts, etc.)
- Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- Not providing appropriate meals including a drink for your child
- Leaving a child unattended for any amount of time

- Failure to attend to the special needs of a disabled child
- Sending a sick child to school over medicated to hide symptoms, which would typically require the child to be kept at home until symptoms subside.
- Children who exhibit behavior consistent with an abusive situation
If parents feel they need assistance with possible child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse, we encourage you to get help. Please call the National Parent Hotline at 1-855-427-2736 or visit www.helpandhope.org/find-help.html

The statewide Abuse & Neglect phone number is 1-800-252-5400, if you would like to report any suspected abuse or neglect.

31. DISMISSAL POLICY (SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION)

Verbal and physical aggression or misconduct will not be tolerated. When necessary, the parents of the child will be contacted, and if the behavior continues, removal from Bear Creek UMC School may be necessary.

Children may be removed from the program for the following reasons:

1. If the child is abusive to our teachers or the other children in our program.
2. If the child's parent or guardian is rude or disrespectful to our staff or uses profanity in our school building or on our school grounds.
3. For non-payment of tuition.
4. If the parent has excessive late pick-ups.
5. Dismissal of a student may be an option when it is determined that the best interest of the child may be a different educational setting or more intensive intervention than Bear Creek UMC School can provide to help the child achieve success.

If the director decides that a child should be removed, the pertinent information will be taken to the School Board for a final binding decision. If a child is removed for any reason other than #5, advance tuition will be forfeited. If the child is removed before the end of a month, any remaining tuition already paid will also be forfeited. Registration and supply fees are not refundable.

We are a developmental preschool and we can provide a learning environment for many children with developmental delays. If a delay is suspected, Bear Creek UMC School reserves the right to request a formal professional diagnosis in order to better serve our students. The parent will be notified and referred to ECI if the child is an infant or two-year-old or to the child's school district if the child is three years of age or older for an evaluation. In certain instances, the director may decide that a child requires an extra aide to "shadow" them throughout the school day in order for us to provide services. This aide must be provided at the parent's expense. If the child is removed because we cannot meet the developmental or medical needs of the child, partial month tuition will be refunded. Registration and supply fees are not refundable.

Adults:

Any abuse toward school or church staff is grounds for immediate dismissal of the family.

32. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Fire, Severe Weather and Safe Drills

Fire drills are practiced monthly at Bear Creek UMC School. Severe weather drills and Safe drills (what to do in case of an intruder) are held every three months. Records of these drills are kept in the office. The

Fire Marshal and Child Care Licensing examines these records on their annual visit. A fire evacuation plan and a severe weather plan are posted in each classroom.

Evacuation from Education Building

If evacuation from our building is necessary, we will escort children to the Adult Sunday School Ministry Village opposite the main parking lot of the church/school.

Emergency Relocation Site

In case of an emergency property evacuation, all children will be relocated to The Harmony School 16205 Keith Harrow Houston TX 77084. We have an emergency preparedness plan that is available for review in each classroom and in the office.

Notification of Parents

The teachers at Bear Creek UMC School keep a clipboard with them at all times which contains copies of your child's contact information. In case of an emergency evacuation, we will be able to contact you using this information. Remember, we **MUST** have a number to reach you **AT ALL TIMES**. Please make sure your "voice mail box" is **not** full.

33. MEDICAL EMERGENCY

In the case of a medical emergency the director or acting director will secure any and all necessary emergency medical arrangements. These steps may include, but are not limited to, the following not necessarily in any particular order:

1. Attempt to contact parent or guardian through numbers listed on the emergency information.
2. Attempt to contact child's physician.
3. If unable to contact parent or physician or if in the opinion of the director or acting director it is warranted by the situation, we will do one or all of the following:
 - a. Call paramedics (911)
 - b. Have the child taken to an emergency facility in the company of a staff member.
4. Any expenses incurred under #3 above will be borne by the child's family.

TEACHERS WILL COMPLETE AN INCIDENT REPORT AND TURN IN TO THE SCHOOL OFFICE.

34. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

FIRE DRILLS

SIGNAL to exit: Whistle, bell, announcement or shrill, pulsing siren

RESPONSE: LEAVE THE BUILDING

1. Evacuation routes are posted in each room. Each room has a plan A and Plan B. Make sure children know both routes. Both routes will be practiced during the year.
2. When alarm sounds, children are to walk to the door immediately.
3. Teacher counts the children and matches it to sign-in sheet in red box.
4. Teacher takes red box, flashlight AND sign-in sheet to track attendance.
5. Children and teachers leave the building according to evacuation plan and proceed to assigned point 200 feet from building. Teacher leads and assistant follows class.
6. Classroom assistants will turn off the light and close each door as the class exits.
7. Teachers count children at assigned outside location and match to sign-in sheet.

8. Office staff will check the restrooms, notify the playground and help Infant/Toddler classes.

Infant/Toddler classes (12 - 24 months)

Children will be placed in cribs to evacuate and move to assigned location outside. The office staff will move immediately to assist these classes. Teachers should follow the same procedure of counting children, assembling supplies and taking emergency box.

Music class will exit using posted Plan A or Plan B.

Motor class will exit using posted Plan A or Plan B.

Signal to return:

When notified by director or office staff, return to the classrooms the same way exited. Count children again upon return.

**NOTE: There will be a fire drill each month at different times of the day.
Fire drills will be timed and reported to the Harris County Fire Marshal's Office.**

WEATHER DRILLS

Locations are posted in each classroom.

Signal to relocate: Whistle, bell, announcement, or manual horn blasts

Response: (ROOMS 6 – 15)

1. Children walk to door immediately.
2. Teachers count children, take flashlight, emergency box, sign-in sheet and move to assigned locations.
3. Children sit in assigned areas and make “turtles” by placing hand over the back of their heads with heads facing the wall.

Response: (ROOMS 2 – 5) Move to the kitchen area between rooms.

Motor class: Move to the boy's bathroom in the **gym** or FLC Kitchen.

Signal to return: verbal “all clear”. Office staff will be monitoring official reports to determine when threatening conditions require relocating students and when the imminent threat has passed.

Count children again after return to classroom.

TOXIC FUMES

INSIDE FUMES: Follow procedure for fire.

OUTSIDE FUMES: Turn off air (Maintenance), close doors (teachers-classroom), outside doors (office staff).

35. SCHOOL CLOSURE

Should any event occur that requires closing school prior to the arrival of the children, the Director and Admin will contact staff We will monitor Cy Fair ISD and Katy ISD closings to help determine the need for closures. We may choose to close independently as well. Staff will communicate with each child's family regarding the closure. Epidemic/Pandemic policies on school closures will be provided in writing as necessary in a separate document.

If the event occurs during school hours, the emergency procedure will be followed.

36. SECURITY

Bear Creek United Methodist Church and School Policy Regarding Open Carry & Weapons: Texas State Licensing and our Methodist Conference strictly forbid anyone other than uniformed law enforcement individuals from carrying weapons of any kind in school or church property at any time. For the safety of the children, the outside doors will be locked approximately 15 minutes after the beginning of the regular school day. After this time, everyone entering and exiting the school will use the doorbell located on the front entrance of the school. The school doors will be unlocked approximately 15 minutes before the end of the regular day.

Do not leave any child unattended in a vehicle or on the property. This is against the law and will be reported to proper authorities.

If you need assistance getting into the building, please call the school office. Do not leave personal articles (purses etc.) in your car when entering the building. The church and school are not responsible for items stolen or damage to your vehicle.

37. GANG FREE ZONE

By order of the State of Texas Legislature, the area around Bear Creek UMC School is designated as a "Gang Free Zone". More information about this state law is posted on the bulletin board outside the office.

38. SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY (i.e. Facebook)

It is the policy of Bear Creek UMC School that our staff do not "friend" the parents in their classroom on Social Media. If, after the school year is over, you would like to become "friends" on social media that is up to your teacher. We also request that you refrain from posting pictures of your child's classmates on your page without specific permission from the child's parent. We want to protect the privacy of all involved.

39. PROMOTION OF INDOOR AND OUTDOOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

We strongly believes and supports the need for physical activity each day.

When children participate in physical activity every day, multiple health benefits accrue. Regular physical activity builds healthy bones and muscles, improves muscular strength and endurance, reduces the risk for developing chronic disease risk factors, improves self-esteem, and reduces stress and anxiety. Beyond these known health effects, physical activity may also have beneficial influences on academic performance. In addition, cognitive skills and motor skills appear to develop through a dynamic interaction. Research has shown that physical movement can affect the brain's physiology.

Infants will be given opportunities for physical activity, including supervised tummy time.

Toddler age children will participate a minimum of 45 minutes for regular day or 60 minutes for extended care of moderate to vigorous active play each day.

Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten children will participate a minimum of 45 minutes for regular day or 90 minutes for extended care of moderate to vigorous active play each day.

Opportunities for active play may overlap with outdoor play when weather permits.

Bear Creek UMC School will promote all children's active play every day. Children will have ample opportunity to do moderate to vigorous activities, such as running, climbing, dancing, skipping, and jumping, to the extent of their abilities.

All children will participate each day in:

- Two occasions of active play outdoors when weather permits. (One occasion for regular day)
- Two or more structured or teacher-led activities or games that promote movement over the course of the day.
- Continuous opportunities to develop and practice age-appropriate gross motor and movement skills.

Physical activity may take place in the classroom or on the playground, when weather permits.

When participating in physical activity, children's clothing should protect them from sun exposure and permit easy movement (not too loose and not too tight) that enables full participation in active play. Footwear should provide support for running and climbing. Hats may be worn to protect children from sun exposure.

Examples of appropriate clothing/footwear include:

- Gym shoes or sturdy shoe equivalent
- Clothing for the weather, such as a lightweight, breathable jacket without any hood and neck strings.

Examples of inappropriate clothing/footwear include:

- Footwear that can come off while running or that provide insufficient support for climbing.
- Clothing that can catch on playground equipment, such as those with drawstrings or loops.

When weather conditions prohibit outdoor play, physical activities will occur in the classroom during the scheduled outside time. Classroom teachers have activities planned in advance for "rainy days".

40. PLAYGROUND IMPACT MATERIAL

The playground at Bear Creek UMC School is surrounded with an area of playground impact material as required by the Texas State Minimum Standards.

41. PARENT COMMENTS/CONCERNS

At any time, parents may contact the director in person, by phone or email to discuss any questions or concerns about the policies and procedures of Bear Creek UMC School.



Policies are reviewed annually and updated if necessary – Parents will receive an updated copy at time of update or annually

AFTER READING AND UNDERSTANDING, KEEP THE PARENT HANDBOOK FOR YOUR RECORDS AND TO REFER TO AS NEEDED.

***Your signed acknowledgement that you have received, read and agreed to Bear Creel UMC School Parent Handbook which contains the operational policies, *including those for discipline and guidance*, are included in your enrollment forms.**