

St. John's School

Early Learning Center & K-8

2024-2025

ELC Parent Handbook

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St. John's School Ministry Team reserves the right to revise or amend this handbook in any manner and any time it deems the revision or amendments necessary for the best interests of the staff and children.

The Mission Statement of St. John's Lutheran Church and School is:

"In the midst of distraction and misplaced hope, we walk together toward renewed hope and life in Jesus Christ."

Vision Statement: St. John's Lutheran School and Early Learning Center is a caring Christian learning community that inspires families to walk with Jesus and challenges each student to personal excellence.

Philosophy Statements:

- We believe that the Bible is God's Word. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- We believe that people come into a right relationship with God by grace through faith in Jesus. (John 3:16; Romans 3:28, 5:1)
- We believe that Christian schools exist to fulfill the great commission that Jesus gave His church to go into all the world and make disciples in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and to teach them to obey everything He commanded. (Matthew 28:18-20)
- We believe that a child's education, whether in the church, day or home school, is predominantly influenced by the family and that the Christian church and school exist to support, complement, and enhance the parental obligation to "Train up a child in the way he should go..." (Proverbs 22:6)
- We believe that the Holy Spirit, working through the word, brings people into a love relationship with Jesus. (1 Corinthians 6:11)
- We believe that the Scripture should be taught and applies to every situation in a person's life. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- We believe that all people are fearfully and wonderfully made and by the love of God are precious in His sight. (Psalms 139:14)
- We believe that Christian education equips people to live out the great commandment to love God and our neighbor. (Matthew 22:37; Deuteronomy 6:6-7)
- We believe that Christian education contributes to personal spiritual growth and responsible citizenship. (Romans 12: 1-2; 1 Corinthians 8:1-7)
- We believe that it is important to teach people to be responsible stewards of time, abilities, income, influence, and possessions. (Matthew 25:14-30)
- We believe that parents and teachers working together are necessary for children to mature in Christian character and purpose.

Objective Statement: St. John's purpose is accomplished when in keeping with our stated mission and philosophy, the following objectives are established:

- To enlist, support, and retain a professional staff that models a faithful Christian witness.
- To assist students in acquiring sound knowledge and understanding of the Holy Bible and

Luther's Small Catechism.

- To encourage attendance and participation in worship and the study of Scripture.
- To equip students to live a Christian lifestyle.
- To equip students with positive attitudes, appropriate speech, self control, and respect for authority and for others.
- To develop an appreciation for God's creation and an attitude of responsibility for the care and protection of the earth and its resources.
- To challenge each student to personal excellence through quality curricula, extra curricular activities and a capable Christian staff.
- To install in students a desire to be lifelong learners.
- To install a respect for all people and provide opportunities for service and interaction.
- To support the family by promoting mutual love, respect, and honor.

Educational Philosophy: We believe that young children learn best from active, hands-on facilitated experiences in a nurturing Christian learning environment that includes small groups, individual attention, as well as large group instruction for children 18 months through 5 years of age. Quality early childhood teachers develop and coordinate the flexible and creative curriculum to respond to the multifaceted challenges faced by today's children and families. The lifelong educational journey is coordinated by our early childhood teachers to emphasize the joy of learning in these developmental domains:

- **Intellectual:** By exploring and using hands-on activities that build confidence and curiosity.
- **Physical:** By offering exercises that develop large and small muscle coordination, and develop gross and fine motor skills.
- **Social/Emotional:** By facilitating a sense of security and belonging by encouraging participation in group activities and cooperation with others.
- **Spiritual:** By weaving God's Word into the daily program through Bible stories, Scripture, praise songs, and prayer.
- **Creative:** By exploring arts and crafts materials; and using them in new and individual ways.

Our Governance: St. John's ELC is an educational ministry of St. John's Lutheran Church, which is governed by a Board of Elders. The ELC Director manages day-to-day operations under the auspices of the School Principal. The School Ministry Team establishes policies and procedures for the school, and assists the Director and School Principal in management decisions and fiscal affairs.

Accreditation, Licensing, and Quality Improvement: St. John's is committed to continuous, quality improvement. St. John's partners with several entities to help inform this process:

- *National Lutheran Schools Accreditation:* St. John's School and ELC are accredited through the National Lutheran School Accreditation. A district visiting team re-accredited our school and ELC in 2022. Re-accreditation is required every five (5) years and each year a cumulative report is submitted for review.
- *Colorado State Licensing:* The ELC is licensed by the State of Colorado, Department of Human Services, so that it can provide childcare. State Licensing comes in and does an inspection of our program and staff files every 11 months. The permanent Child Care License is available for viewing in the ELC office. We accept children ages 18 months to 5 years old.
- *Colorado Shines:* Colorado Shines is a quality rating and improvement system that monitors and supports early learning programs. This rating for the ELC takes place every three (3) years. Its primary functions are to help participating programs and professionals improve their quality through assessment, training and tools, and to connect Colorado families with quality child care. Colorado Shines rates the quality of child care programs based on how well each program supports children's health and safety, ensures the staff are well-trained and effective, provides a learning environment that teaches children new skills, helps parents become partners in their child's learning, and has good leadership and business practices.

Every other year, the Pre-K classes go through a *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)* rating. Families are given a parent survey annually that asks: How are we doing? What are we doing well? What is challenging at St. John's? These surveys in addition to the results from the ratings, accreditation, and licensing processes inform our **Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)**. We appreciate your input. The surveys are reviewed by administration and at least two suggestions are used to inform our QIP. This improvement plan is updated annually, and is shared with staff, families, and stakeholders including the School Ministry Team with documented goals, timelines, and outcomes. A hard copy of the QIP is available in the ELC office, on the bookshelf in front of the Administrative Assistant's desk for parents to view at any time. A parent night is provided each year to discuss the improvement plan with interested parents.

Policies and Procedures

Absences: If your child's absence is known in advance, please inform the ELC office. If your child is ill or absent due to other unforeseen situations, email your child's classroom teacher or the ELC office each day he/she will be absent. There is no tuition credit for absences.

Arrival/Departure: Due to childcare regulations, all children in the center must be signed in and out by a parent or guardian. The sign in and out process is completed on a classroom iPad by a parent or guardian typing in his or her unique 4-digit pin code in the Tadpoles application. We request that parents bring their children on time. Structure and routine are important to maintain for children. We request that you arrive between 7:30am and 8:45am. The ELC requires parents to pick up their children before 5:30pm. **Please call the ELC emergency cell phone if you believe you will be later than 5:30pm. The ELC emergency cell phone number is: 720.270.3579.** A qualified staff member will stay with your child until they are picked up.

**Children will be turned over to the local police to be placed into shelter care if they have not been picked up by 30 minutes after the closing time of the center and the ELC staff member has been unable to make contact with the parent/guardian. For late pick-ups, the family is charged \$20 plus \$1/minute after a five-minute grace period.*

Key Card Access: Each ELC household will receive two key cards, labeled with the child's last name. These key cards will give each cardholder access to the front entry doors, as well as the ELC Playcourt entry doors, during our ELC drop-off and pick-up windows. The drop-off window is from 7:30am-8:45am, and the pick-up window is from 3:15pm-5:30pm, Monday through Friday. If a parent or guardian wants to come into the building outside of the drop-off and pick-up windows, the key cards will not allow entry into the building. He or she will need to ring the doorbell and an office employee or teacher will attend to him or her.

If a child has multiple households, please communicate directly with the ELC Director, to ensure that the appropriate number of key cards is distributed per household. If one of the household key cards becomes lost, someone in that household must contact the ELC Director or Director of Operations and fill out a Lost Key Card Form. Upon submission of a Lost Key Card Form, the key card reported missing will be deactivated. A payment of \$50.00 will be required, paid to St. John's School & Early Learning Center via cash or check, in order to acquire a replacement. When your child is no longer a student in the Early Learning Center, all key cards must be returned to the ELC Director. If you do not return your key cards, \$50.00 per card will be charged to your Blackbaud Tuition account, and will be due by the next draft date. Unreturned key cards will be deactivated when your family leaves the program, and you will no longer have key card access to the building.

Authorized to Pick-Up: Persons authorized to pick up your child must be listed on the emergency contact form. We must have at least two additional emergency numbers on file. Your child will be released only to those persons listed. If you know that someone beside yourself will be picking up your child, please let the teacher know or phone the ELC office so that we can let the teacher know who will be picking up your child. Unless we have advanced notice, we will question anyone attempting to pick up your child for the safety of the child. Identification will be required of all people besides parents picking up children. If in doubt, we will call you to verify that the person has your permission to pick up your child.

Attendance: All children enrolled in ELC programs are enrolled for the full program year defined as 12 months (August of the enrollment year through August of the following year).

The Registration Form-Tuition Agreement is also the contract that states which days your child will attend St. John's School. Children will be supervised at all times. Head counts will be taken periodically throughout the day. Teachers are responsible for identifying each child's whereabouts at all times and letting parents know by written sign when leaving the classroom for extended periods of time. Attendance is tracked with the Tadpoles by Teaching Strategies application, in order to keep an accurate record of the location of each child at all times.

Billing, Fees, and Tuition: Registration fees are non-refundable. Completed registration form and advance payment of registration fees will insure your child a place in the program of your choice. Families that enroll into the program after the start of the program year will also be required to make a full month's tuition payment at the time the billing contract is signed. Billing contracts remain in effect until a two-week written notice of withdrawal is received by the ELC office.

Tuition billing is handled via Blackbaud Tuition. For billing purposes, the annual tuition costs have been divided equally by the number of months for the program year. Services you have agreed upon will be charged even if your child is ill or absent. Children who are absent because of illness or vacation are still charged the agreed upon tuition. An exception would be a long-term illness in which an adjusted agreement can be made with the director. There will be no reductions in tuition for snow days, conferences, in-service days, holidays, Spring Break, Christmas Break, illnesses, absences, or pandemics. All tuition payments are due the 15th of the month beginning August 15 and Blackbaud charges a \$40 late fee after a 5 day grace period. A \$30 fee is assessed from Blackbaud for any returned payments. Blackbaud will waive one late payment fee per family per school year. Returned payment fees may not be waived so please be sure the bank account number provided is correct. Families that fall more than two months in arrears with their tuition payment may be subject to termination of services provided by the ELC for non-payment of their account. Families who withdraw from

an ELC program are responsible for tuition through the last day of the school attended. No school records shall be released until the tuition balance is paid in full. Final tuition billing shall be calculated upon a per diem basis when a two-week written notice of withdrawal is received by the ELC office. All tuition refunds will be handled directly with St. John's according to its refund policy. We recognize that difficulties may arise with a family's financial situation during the year that may make payment difficult. However, it is the family's responsibility to contact the School Ministry Team through the ELC Director when these difficulties arise. Please understand our situation in that we want to pay the staff and our bills regularly. Your cooperation is appreciated as we continue to strive to provide the best possible Christian early care and educational support for you and your family at the most modest cost possible. Thank you for your help!

Other ELC Fees:

Class/Program Change Fee: Any contract change that results in a decrease in scheduled days will incur a \$95 change fee, which will be invoiced through Blackbaud Tuition. However, an increase in scheduled days will not be subject to a change fee. A 'change' is defined as any modification to a class, program, or number of days requested by a family after the ELC office has processed and accepted their enrollment application. Any increase in tuition due to a program change will be billed immediately, while any reduction in tuition will be reflected in the next monthly billing cycle.

CCCAP or Grant-in-Aid Parent Fees: Families that received low-income subsidized child care assistance or tuition assistance through Grant-in-Aid are required to pay associated parent fees on the first of each billing month. Failure to make parent fee payments on time may result in dis-enrollment of their child from the ELC.

Drop-In Care Fee: Drop-in care is a service offered for currently enrolled students on a space available basis. Drop-in care must be arranged 48 hours in advance. Parents must provide lunch and snacks on that day. The drop-in rate is the current daily rate due on the morning of the drop-in day, in the form of check, cash, or automatic withdrawal. A Drop-In Form needs to be completed in the ELC office.

Late Pick-up Fee: After a five-minute grace period following the daily closure of a child's program, a late charge of \$20 plus \$1.00/minute/child will be assessed. You may pay this in cash at the time or this late fee will be invoiced with your next month's tuition payment via Smart Tuition.

Transmittal Fee: A charge will be set, by the Principal, for transmittal of records.

Babysitting: If you employ one of our staff members to baby-sit for your family, please be advised this should not interfere with the employee's ELC work schedule and the ELC will accept no responsibility for the person's actions or performance.

Birthdays: Birthdays are very special occasions for children. On your child's birthday, you are welcome to bring a packaged treat to share with the entire class during snack or lunchtime. Please let the teacher know in advance of this treat. Remember, we try to be a tree nut-free, peanut-free center. No treats containing nuts or peanut butter are allowed. Be sensitive to tender feelings; if your child has a birthday party that does not include the entire class, please mail/email the invitations, and pick-up guest children and their party paraphernalia outside of the classroom and away from the center.

Center Hours: St. John's ELC is open Monday through Friday from 7:30am to 5:30pm during school days.

Chapel: All children will attend chapel each week. This activity includes praise singing and a Bible story or brief object lesson. One week, chapel is on Wednesday at 9:45am; the next week, it is on Thursday at 9:45am.

Child Abuse: St. John's makes every effort to provide a safe environment for children. We are required to contact Colorado Department of Social Services whenever there is a suspected case of child abuse. If staff observe a child being abused or if a child has been abused, that person is obligated to seek assistance from the County Department of Social Services or the local department. It is not our responsibility, however, to investigate or prove child abuse or neglect.

As a parent of a child in licensed child care, you may report any suspected abuse by calling:

Division of Child Care
Colorado Department of Human Services
1575 Sherman Street
Denver, CO 80203
303.866.5958

Child Abuse Hotline: 1-844-264-5437

If you wish to make a complaint or have a concern regarding your provider you may call:

Colorado Division of Child Care: 303.866.5958

Denver Public Health Inspection Division: 720.865.5485

Communication: It is beneficial for parents and teachers to work together for the benefit of the child. If a question or problem arises, parents/guardians should feel free to contact the child's teacher. The ELC office sends an electronic newsletter out each week. Each classroom has a weekly lesson plan and newsletter. Each classroom has its own phone extension so that parents may call into the classroom at any time. We ask that you avoid calling during naptime. The ELC cell phone is always available for emergency calling during the center's hours of operation.

The ELC emergency cell phone number is: 720.270.3579.

If you have a question about an incident or occurrence, please follow this procedure:

First, talk to the Lead Teacher in the classroom.

Then talk to the Director if concerns are not satisfied or if it would be more appropriate for the Director to address the concern.

The staff, students, parents, and volunteers of St. John's are expected to be a positive, Christian influence to each other and the greater community. Our whole lives reflect an attitude of Christ-like concern for the development and strengthening of each other as members of the family of Christ. Staff, students, parents and volunteers show love, concern, and respect for each other. All communication, whether oral, written, or electronic shows love and respect for all. Within the Christian community, occasions of conflict, offense, and sin will occur. In order that we might deal with each other within God's prescribed Word, all members of this Christian community are expected to abide by the principle of Matthew 18:15-17.

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

Steps for Conflict Resolution:

1. Speak privately with the individual with whom there is a concern or conflict.
2. If necessary, both parties meet with the Lead Teacher involved in the area.
3. If necessary, both parties and a staff supervisor will meet with the ELC Director.
4. If necessary, both parties, Lead Teacher, and Director may meet with the Principal.
5. If necessary, both parties, Lead Teacher, Director, and Principal meet with the School Ministry Chairperson.
6. If necessary, both parties, Lead Teacher, Director, and Principal meet with the School Ministry Team. It is assumed that this not be used for frivolous, personal, or

petty matters. Everyone should be aware of the steps to deal with a concern or conflict. In all discipline and conflict resolution situations, every attempt should be made to maintain the dignity and self-respect of all parties involved in the steps and process.

Diapering policy: Toddlers, 18-35 months, are not required to be toilet trained as a condition of acceptance into any toddler-aged program. Children in diapers will have their diapers checked a minimum of every two hours and children's diapers changed as needed. Parents are required to supply diapers and wet wipes for their child. Staff will notify parents when diapering supplies are getting low and need to be restocked.

Discipline: Discipline is training and guidance intended to produce Christ-like character traits and patterns of behavior that will enable children to grow to become responsible and respectful. Such training is equally as important as the knowledge and skills that the center offers to its children. The center's method of discipline begins with helping children understand the rules of the classroom to keep children safe. The routines, schedule, and rituals that the classroom establishes creates a safe and predictable environment for your child. Reinforcing positive behavior, giving children choices when appropriate, and allowing children to experience natural consequences is all a part of discipline. The staff will redirect children to other activities when they are having a difficult time in an area. Positive choices are recognized and encouraged. The teacher will use a guidance talk with a child to discuss their mistaken behavior. A cozy corner is used as a tool to allow the child to regain self-control of emotions. Corporal punishment is never used. Our teachers will be fair, consistent and nurturing. Expectations in the classroom will be clearly stated. If a teacher has specific concerns about a child's behavior, he or she will talk with that child's parent(s)/guardian(s) directly about those concerns, and together, will determine the best action to take. It is our goal to help children develop problem-solving skills and allow them to settle their own differences as often as possible. We do, however, monitor this process of social interaction and its resolution. We do not allow bullying situations to continue. *Love and Logic* and *Conscious Discipline* are two excellent resources for both parents and classroom teachers.

Dress Guidelines: Clothing appropriate for early childhood activities is suggested including closed-toe shoes and washable clothing. Bring an extra set of clothes, labeled with the child's name, to be placed in that child's cubby. Occasionally children have an accident and teachers will aid the child in changing clothes and cleaning up. **Please label all children's clothing especially jackets, sweaters, hats, mittens, and gloves with the child's name.**

Enrollment Policy: St. John's Early Learning Center serves children from 18 months to 5 years of age. St. John's ELC admits children of any race, color, nationality or ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities of the center. It does not discriminate based on race, color, national, or ethnic origin in the administration of its policies. The center is not equipped for children with severe disabilities, but will try to work with limiting disabilities whenever possible. Services are offered for children with special needs in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Children are admitted on a rolling basis, depending on availability. Entrance Requirements:

- Children are encouraged to be toilet-trained prior to entering Preschool or Pre-K programs. We understand that potty training is a process and is not required to enroll in toddler-aged programs.
- Children must meet the age requirement of the program to be eligible to enroll. September 15th is the cut-off date.
- All required forms must be completed and signed before the child will be permitted in the classroom as a student. Registration fees must be paid.
- Each child must have a medical report and immunization record completed and signed by a physician annually. Children entering the center who are not fully immunized must have signed an exemption. Not all children in the ELC are fully immunized.

Field Trips: The teacher in coordination with the instructional program may plan field trips. Parents will be notified in advance and must sign a permission slip for any field trip beyond Washington Park. Parents driving for school activities must give the school office a copy of their car insurance policy proving they have coverage for passengers, and a copy of their driver's license. Children requiring car seats will need their car seat for the field trip. All children must wear safety belts when traveling. If a child arrives late and their class is on a field trip, the child should be taken to the office. If possible, the child will be placed in another classroom until their class returns.

Food Services: St. John's partners with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to provide a healthy lunch and an afternoon snack to our children. These meals are provided at no additional cost to your family. To stay up to date with the CACFP, staff members take the annual Civil Rights Training and Introduction to the Child and Adult Care Food Program Training in PDIS, the Professional Development Information System. St. John's tries to be a peanut/nut free center. No foods containing nuts, peanuts, or peanut derivatives are served at school due to children with severe nut allergies that attend our programs. If you are bringing in snacks for teachers or for special occasions in your child's classroom, please bring in pre-packaged food only. (No homemade items, including birthday treats.) Staff will check the

ingredients list for potential food allergens. Milk substitutes will need to be parent-provided for children with milk allergies.

Holidays and Days Off: The entire center is closed for the following holidays:

*New Year's Eve *New Year's Day *President's Day *Martin Luther King Jr. Day *Good Friday
*Easter Monday *Memorial Day *Juneteenth *Independence Day *Labor Day *Thanksgiving Day
and the Friday after Thanksgiving *1 week at Christmas, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.

- Please consult the school calendar for specific closure dates. These may vary from year to year. Additional days will be noted in the school calendar at the beginning of each school year. The ELC will be closed for a week at the closing of summer. Please read the newsletter for additional closures. Holidays are celebrated in the ELC.
- As a Christian school, we do not celebrate Halloween. The center may not be open on all dates set forth in the ELC calendar for varying reasons, including but not limited to weather and/or inability to use the facilities. **There will be no reduction in tuition for snow days, Spring Break, Christmas Break, conferences, in-services, holidays, illnesses, pandemic, or absences.**

Home Language: Here at St. John's ELC, we are committed to effective communication with children and families who speak a language other than English. We will make reasonable efforts to connect with the child and parents/guardians in their home language. This may involve assigning the child to a teacher who speaks their language, using an interpreter for meetings, or utilizing translation apps. If a teacher is unavailable to provide translation assistance, we will provide interpretation services through TransPerfect Translation Services, covering all associated costs. Additionally, we will ensure that written communications are translated through professional services or Google Translate. Your understanding and cooperation are appreciated as we strive to support every family in our program.

Illness: *Please call the center or send the ELC Director an email if your child will be absent for any reason.* Any child running an above normal temperature at home should remain home. Children who were sick the previous evening may not be ready to attend school the next day and should be kept at home. Medication can only be given at school with written orders from the child's parent/guardian and physician. Children may not keep medication in their possession. A child running an above normal temperature at school must be taken home. Parents will also be called if the child is lethargic or acting in an uncharacteristic manner, suggesting they may be sick. Parents/guardians will be notified when their child becomes sick at school. Colorado state law requires notification of any contagious illness your child may have, in order that we might notify other parents/guardians, staff members, etc.

- How sick is too sick to be in childcare?

Young children frequently become mildly ill. Toddlers and preschoolers experience a yearly average of six respiratory infections (colds) and can expect one to two gastrointestinal infections (vomiting and/or diarrhea) per year.

Children's Hospital ParentSmart Healthline: 720.777.0123

Deciding whether to keep your child home or when to send a child home from childcare can be difficult. It is important for parents and caregivers to discuss what observations have been made and agree on a plan of action.

Three reasons to exclude sick children from child care or school:

1. The child does not feel well enough to participate comfortably in usual activities, such as extreme signs of tiredness, unexplained irritability, or persistent crying.
2. The child requires more care than program staff is able to provide without affecting the health and safety of the other children.
3. The illness is on the list of symptoms of illness for which exclusion is recommended.

Inclement Weather/School Closing: There are times when operating our school on its normal schedule is no longer safe due to the weather, and in these instances we will communicate with you that we are putting in action one of the three alternate plans below.

1. School Closure

In instances where local conditions make travel to/from the school particularly dangerous, we may issue a school closure for both ELC and K-8.

When school is closed, no remote learning or further schoolwork requirements will be expected on that day. All before and after school activities, sports and events, including Extended Care, will be canceled.

2. Delayed Start

In instances where local conditions make early travel dangerous, but later travel is likely to be possible, we may issue a Delayed Start for both ELC and K-8. Delayed Starts are common in public school districts throughout Colorado.

On a Delayed Start all morning school activities/procedures will be delayed by approximately 90 minutes.

- Before School Care will begin at 8:30am.
- ELC doors will open at 8:45am.

- K-8 School doors will open at 9:30am
- K-8 School day will begin at 9:45am.
- All school schedules will then run according to real time (i.e. if a class is normally scheduled to begin at 10:00am, it still begins at 10:00am. If a class is normally scheduled to begin at 9:00am, it is missed). Teachers may make small adjustments to the schedule as necessary.
- ELC dismissal is at regular times. K-8 dismissal will remain at 3:15pm.

3. Early Dismissal

In the event that changing or deteriorating weather conditions indicate that a usual ending time is likely to be hazardous, we may issue an Early Dismissal.

For everyone's safety, collecting children at the Early Dismissal time is strongly advised. However, if a child is unable to be collected at the new time, they will be supervised at school until the standard dismissal.

During an Early Dismissal, After School Care, and all after school activities, sports and events, will be canceled.

How will you know about School Closures?

Parents and families will receive notification of an alternate plan by email by 6am on the day (for School Closures and Delayed Starts) or during the day (for Early Dismissals). Closure or Delayed Start information will also be broadcasted on TV stations 4, 7, or 9 or their websites for cancellation announcements.

If you would like to sign up for an additional text message about school closures, and any other emergency event for the St John's ELC and K-8 School, please text the message @sjelc-k8 to the number 81010. If possible, we ask that only one person per family sign up for texts. This text notification will only be used to provide you with immediate information in the case of schoolwide closures or emergencies.

How does St John's determine when to close the school ?

St John's School will typically align with Denver Public Schools when issuing a School Closure, Delayed Start, or Early Dismissal. However, we will always make what we believe to be the best decision for our community.

The alternate schedules above are implemented to protect our families, children and staff from traveling during the most hazardous weather conditions. All families should additionally consider their own circumstances when making the decision to travel to school during inclement weather. If a family decides against bringing their children to school during adverse weather conditions, they may call the ELC office or your child's Lead Teacher and let us know that they are staying home.

When the weather is extremely hot or cold, children will not be taken outside. In normal ranges of cold weather, children must be dressed properly before going outside. In extreme hot weather, children will not be taken outside for long periods of time. Sun protection must be provided for all children. We will apply sunscreen as directed by State guidelines.

Injury/Accident: In the event of an accident that results in an injury during school hours, emergency first aid will be administered and the parent/guardian will be called. In case of serious injury, the Director/parent/guardian will be informed immediately and necessary action taken. In extreme cases 911 may be called. If medical care is needed and a parent/guardian cannot be reached, the school personnel will take the child for emergency treatment as instructed on the emergency form (signed by the parent/guardian). An incident report will be filed with the Director and a copy sent to the parent/guardian. In cases of injury or accidents that result in the parent/guardian seeking medical care, the State will also be notified.

Learning Environment: St. John's ELC environment is arranged in centers with the teachers facilitating learning through selected and planned activities. Play is an important part of children's maturation and social development. Special events are scheduled throughout the year for children to perform or display artwork.

Special Needs: St. John's is committed to partnering with and providing high-quality inclusive support and care for families and children with **special needs** to the extent that the environment supports those needs. We will strive to support the inclusion of all students and families in the classroom and program, while working with families to help their students meet their learning and developmental goals. Lead Teachers coordinate and collaborate with therapists and specialists when they come to St. John's to work with students. The goals and objectives determined by the specialists and parents, that are shared with the teachers, are used to work with the students to reinforce the learning activities. Teachers at St. John's will make adaptations or modifications that are feasible in the classroom, including but not limited to specialized seating, providing individualized schedules, materials specifically selected for their unique physical and/or social-emotional needs at the recommendation of the therapist or specialist to support the outcome of goals. The Director supports this process when requested.

Our goal at St. John's ELC is to work collaboratively with families to help their children be successful. Families with a child who has identified special needs and an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), or a 504 plan, are encouraged to schedule a meeting with the child's Lead Teacher and the Director to go over these plans, so we can best accommodate the child. These plans will only be shared with the child's

teachers and the Director. Sharing the plan ensures that the recommendations found in the plan are being followed while the child is in this program. This would include making accommodations in that classroom that would help these students meet their learning and developmental goals. Accommodations may include giving students special seating, heavy work, sensory toys, or giving students more time to complete activities, if necessary. If there are any changes to the information in the plan, please make sure that the child's teacher and the St. John's ELC administration are made aware of those changes. Providing us and the doctor and therapists with a signed release allowing free exchange of information also encourages better communication between all parties and allows the program to better collaborate with families and medical personnel to better meet the needs of the child.

It is important to note that although St. John's ELC will work with all children to address a variety of disabilities, our staff does not have specialized degrees or expertise that may be needed to address every disability or health need. In the event that parents or the teachers have a concern regarding any one child's development, the parents and the teachers will meet and discuss all available options that will provide the child with necessary help and interventions. This is a collaborative effort and therefore participation and cooperation of all involved parties is needed to meet the learning and development needs of the child. In some cases, the administrative staff in consultation with the family, the nurse consultant, and/or other specialists may determine if we are unable to meet the needs of the child and the family. If that happens, we will work closely with the specialists to refer the family and the child to a more appropriate placement.

Teacher-Child ratios: At St. John's ELC, we meet *teacher-child ratios* in six of our seven classrooms as recommended best practices by The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). For children aged 12-24 months, there is one adult for every 4 children, with a maximum group size of 10 children. This classroom is staffed with three teachers for 10 children. Children aged 24 months to 36 months are at a 1 teacher to 6 children ratio, with a maximum group size of 13 children in one classroom and 11 children in the other classroom. Both of our 24 to 36-month classrooms are staffed with three teachers. When children are 30-36 months, the ratio is 1 teacher for every 8 children, with a maximum group size of 16 children. When children are 36-60 months, the ratio is 1 teacher for every 10 children, with a maximum group size of 20 children. We maintain this practice by having an Assistant Director and a Toddler Team Coordinator who float between classrooms to meet ratio guidelines as well as always having a third person employed consistently for each classroom.

Licensing Authority: If a parent wishes to file a complaint about a child care center or suspected licensing violation, please contact:

Division of Child Care Colorado Department of Human Services
1575 Sherman Street, First Floor - Denver, CO 80203 Phone: 303.866.5958

Medication Administration: Staff is not permitted to give or administer any prescription or non-prescription medication to children without written parental consent and doctor permission. If it is necessary to take any type of prescription or non-prescription medication while at school, bring the medication in its original container and the medical permission form signed by the child's doctor. Only staff with medications administration training are permitted to receive and give medications. If a controlled substance is brought in, special care and policies apply to the administration of these types of medications. If the prescription changes, a new signature is required. Medical permission forms may be obtained from the ELC office. All medications are stored in a secured location in the classroom, inaccessible to children. Emergency medications are transported in a backpack worn by the teacher that follows the child when not in the classroom.

Naptime: Children in attendance for more than four hours are required to have a rest period. If they do not fall asleep, they will be provided with quiet activities. You are asked to launder your child's tot cot and bedding on a weekly basis.

Non-Discrimination Policy: St. John's forbids discrimination because of race, color, sex, age, disability, or national origin. Any person who believes that he or she has been discriminated against should speak immediately to the ELC Director or school principal.

Observation Policy: Parents may observe their child at any time. As a courtesy, please notify the child's teacher in advance.

Parent's/Guardian's Role: Our parents/guardians are involved, informed, and appreciated! The parents and/or guardians are partners in setting and prioritizing goals, assessing gains, and implementing strategies. Parents and/or guardians often provide skills, resources, and support for field trips and special classroom activities for holidays and enrichment such as art appreciation. Parents are encouraged to contribute ideas to the Director or staff who will communicate to the PTO or School Ministry Team.

Personal Belongings: Children are welcome to bring stuffed animals or blankets to school for naptime, but we ask that it is limited to 1-2 items per child. Please label these items with your

child's name or initials. Toys or other items for show-and-tell are encouraged, but we ask that other items stay at home to prevent the loss or accidental breaking of special items at school.

Primary Caregiver: The Lead teacher in your child's classroom serves as your child's primary caregiver. The primary caregiver works with other program staff to ensure a positive child care experience for children and their parents. The primary caregiver system ensures that every child has a special person and that each parent has a primary contact. The responsibilities of the primary caregivers include: *Communication*--A primary caregiver is the essential link in the communication chain between parents and program, and children and program. Primary caregivers ensure that every day, each child's experience is communicated to parents and the needs of parents are communicated with other staff members. *Advocate*--A primary caregiver empowers parents and children by translating their individual concerns and needs into action through the efforts of all program staff. *To Nurture*--A teacher who is the primary caregiver tunes into each child and develops a special bond while ensuring all needs are met and all caring times are carried out in ways that empower the child and establish a sense of security and basic trust. *To Teach*--A primary caregiver is a teacher who cares for children in ways that maximize the language experiences and learning potential in all interactions, and who ensures that the learning environment works for all children. *To Observe, Monitor, and Evaluate*--A primary caregiver makes sure children's experiences in the program are positive and that parents' concerns are addressed by continually assessing each child's and parent's experience. Observation of the child, discussions with other staff and parents, and analysis of the actual experience of the child and family are regularly made and noted. *The primary caregiver will be the teacher who leads your child's parent conferences and documents your child's progress throughout the year.*

Continuity of Care is the practice of keeping a group of young children and their teaching team together for more than one year. This promotes the formation of trusting relationships, secure attachments, and long-lasting bonds. Though our students stay with the same teachers for a full calendar year, their time with those teachers may or may not exceed one year. Some teachers may be moved to different classrooms from year-to-year, which could mean they stay with some children for more than one year at a time. Our classrooms combine in the mornings and afternoons so that children begin to know all the teachers within the school in their age area, even if they do not stay in the same classroom with the same teachers for over a year. This structure creates a stable, secure, and predictable environment, ensuring that when a primary caregiver is absent due to illness or other reasons, there is always a familiar teacher available for the children to connect with. Additionally, we maintain a roster of reliable substitute teachers who are well-known to the children. With a majority of our staff being full-time educators, we provide a high level of stability within the classroom, enriching the

overall experience for our students.

Physical Activity: All children participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day.

Procedure for Handling Emergencies and Evacuation:

- *Fire:* In case of fire or suspicion of fire, children will be removed from the building immediately, with previous fire drill training. Fire drills are conducted on a monthly basis with numbers taken of adults and children participating in drill.
- *Tornado Watch/Warning:* Children will be removed from the classroom immediately and taken to the lower level of the school. If time does not permit going to the lower level, children will be taken to the nearest inside brick wall, where there are no windows. Tornado drills are practiced per state guidelines.
- *Lost Child:* If a child is missing, the adults in the building will be informed and a search will occur. If the child is not found, the parents/guardians will be notified and authorities called. If the parents are unavailable, the proper authorities will be informed.
- *Evacuation:* In case of an evacuation, St. John's student body has permission to evacuate to the Washington Park Recreation Center, 701 S. Franklin St. Denver, CO 80209; 303.698.4960. If we evacuate St. John's, we will reunite with parents at Washington Park Recreation Center, 701 S. Franklin St. Denver, CO 80209. 303.698.4960

Progress Reports: Parent/guardian teacher conferences are held twice per year, typically in November and April. A parent may request additional meetings with the teachers throughout the year. Information about pupil progress will be given to that child's parent(s)/guardian(s).

Resources: St. John's ELC understands that families experience well-being when all family members are healthy, safe, and financially secure. When families face challenges in one or more of these areas, their ability to support child outcomes and school readiness can be affected. With that knowledge, St. John's ELC wants to help families connect with community-based services, training, and information resources that can increase their overall well-being. Community-based services include a variety of supports and services for children and families. Just to the right, when walking inside the main ELC doors, there is a Parent Resource Center that includes books, DVDs, and other resources for parents around the topics of parenting, discipline, potty training, and special needs. In our Parent Resource Center, one can find contact information for family services including the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), the Denver Preschool Program (DPP), the Child and Adult Food Program (CACFP), and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) assistance for groceries and milk. Additionally, the parent Panther Paws newsletter contains information about extra activities for kids to be involved in at the school. A binder of referral resources is available in

the Parent Resource Center. Staff are aware of these resources so that they can refer parents to them.

When a family first joins our program or when a student starts in a new classroom, the classroom teacher will have families fill out a “Getting to Know You” questionnaire. This questionnaire will help your child’s teacher and the Director better understand your family and your child, as well as gain insight into the needs of your family and your child’s development and learning needs. With this knowledge, the Director and teacher will be better able to address those needs. Parent-Teacher Conferences are an example of another time when your child’s teacher will be asking questions about successes and challenges families may be having and any concerns they may have about the child’s social, academic, and physical development. If a family needs support or has specific concerns, you can always contact us any time by speaking personally with your child’s teacher and/or the Director, or you can send us an email.

Trauma: If you or your family is experiencing trauma or other adversity or challenges and in need of the support of a community-based resource or service, we can help you connect with those supports. Trauma refers to a deeply stressful experience or its short and long-term impacts. Research has shown that children’s exposure to trauma can cause a host of problems with potentially lifelong consequences, which can impact children’s abilities to learn, to create healthy attachments, to form supportive relationships, and, among other effects, to follow classroom expectations. Early screening and intervention is, therefore, significant in that it may produce better outcomes for children and families. It is also important that early childhood settings be safe, trauma-sensitive spaces where teachers support children in creating positive self-identities. It is the policy of this program to create those spaces. Our teachers are all expected to complete a training called Trauma-Informed Practices in Early Childhood Settings.

Referral Process: When a teacher has concerns about a child’s development from reviewing the child’s formal assessment results and informal observations in the classroom, they will bring their findings and concern to the director and then a meeting will be scheduled with the family to review and discuss next steps. When a family has concerns about a child’s development and brings it to the attention of the staff (teacher or Director or both) either through an in-person discussion, phone conversation, or email, or through completing our “Getting to Know You” questionnaire, the Director will meet with the teacher to discuss the information provided and schedule a meeting with the family to explore their concerns and talk about appropriate next steps to identify any delays in development. One of those steps could include a recommendation that the family speak with the child’s pediatrician and early intervention services. Support could include completing a referral to Child Find or Early

Intervention, filling out any questionnaire requested by the agency, and adopting remediation strategies, if recommended, in the classroom. This may also include a referral for an independent specialist or vision or hearing screenings.

Security: The ELC takes the safety of children very seriously. The ELC has a controlled entry environment into the classrooms and playground. All other entries into the ELC are kept locked. In addition, a security camera records an image of all individuals who enter or leave at the main ELC entry and the main school entry. Parents are asked to use the main entry into the school in lieu of the gates that access the playgrounds to ensure the integrity of the security system. Parents can assist us with security by checking their child in and out with our KidCheck system. Parents also provide the center with a list of individuals who are authorized to pick-up their child on the emergency contact form given at the time of enrollment. Children are always kept in the presence of an adult teacher at all times. If an individual comes to pick up a child and the staff does not recognize the individual, the staff person will ask for appropriate ID and check it against the authorized list of pickup people for your child; if their name does not appear on the authorized list, a phone call will be made to the parent/guardian to verify identity and request a verbal authorization to release the child to the individual in question.

Supplies Needed: The classroom teacher will give you a list of supplies needed for your child. Please plan to send an additional change of clothes, diapers and wipes if used. Children should not bring toys or money to school. Exceptions would be for show and tell days when toys may be brought to school. If money is brought to school it will be placed in an envelope and kept by the director until parents pick up.

Teacher Retention: We have a low turnover rate for our teachers. Most of our teachers stay for several years. When we do lose a teacher, it is usually because of having a baby or moving out of the area. In order to retain our highly qualified educational staff, we pay a fair wage according to a salary matrix, and provide a tuition discount for our teachers' children to attend St. John's School & ELC. We offer good medical, dental and vision benefits, plus retirement benefits, flexibility of hours, and offer the support of teaching teams that promote lower student/staff ratios, friendships, and a caring environment. We walk together toward renewed hope and life in Jesus Christ. We support our teachers in this mission and foster a caring Christian community that inspires families to walk with Jesus. Our goal is to teach students how to love others as Jesus loves us, all while pursuing personal and educational excellence. When St. John's needs to hire a new employee, the current staff is asked for referrals. Our subs are often first considered for a permanent position. Additional recruitment of teachers is done through our parent Panther Paws newsletter, the church and school newsletter, the

Healthy Child Care Colorado job board, local college websites, and Indeed.com.

ELC staff are given feedback throughout the year. Staff are evaluated by a CLASS observation from the director with verbal feedback. Additionally, the staff member completes a self-evaluation. These are discussed prior to a new contract being signed. St. John's salary scale is based on education, experience, and responsibility level. Many factors contribute to starting salaries and salary increases including budget availability, yearly performance reviews, staff training, enrollment and cost of daily operations. ELC staff participate in the review, training, decision-making, and implementation of curriculum and assessment tools. Mentor teachers from within the staff are trained in each area to help assist with the implementation of the curriculum. Classroom teachers are a part of the interviews with prospective teachers. When possible, a parent is also brought into the interview process. The hiring process includes input from the classroom teachers and parents with the final decision made by the ELC Director. Lead teachers are expected to plan weekly and complete their lesson plans in a timely fashion. Planning time is factored into their weekly schedule and must occur OUTSIDE of the classroom. All teaching staff (leads and assistants) will be paid at least one hour of planning time per week.

Telephone Number/Address Change: Please inform the school office immediately when there is a change of telephone number, email address, and/or address, especially when there is a change of work or home telephone number. In case of an emergency, we need to have current information. Also, parents are responsible for notifying the office of a change for any people listed on the emergency form.

Television and Video Viewing: Video and Television will be used sparingly and only to enhance learning and with teacher supervision to ensure activities last only as long as children are interested. All selections will be rated "G". Children will not be watching TV/Videos on a regular basis. Children under the age of 2 will not be permitted to watch TV/Videos.

Transitions: Transition refers to the process of a child moving from one program or setting to another, for example, the transition from home care to formal care, to a new classroom within a program, from one program to another, or from Pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten, either here at St. John's School or a different Kindergarten. At St. John's ELC we recognize that stability and consistency are important for a child's development and acknowledge that young children accomplish different developmental milestones at different rates. Smooth transitions support children's academic and social success and contribute to the well-being of the child and his or her family. At St. John's ELC, we support intentional and thoughtful transition practices for children and their families that are planned in partnership with all involved,

including families.

When families are joining our program for the first time, we encourage them to set up a time to tour the school and the classroom with the program Director, Assistant Director, or one of the Administrative Assistants. We also host an ELC Open House prior to the start of each new school year, which is open to all ELC families, giving them an opportunity to come visit their new classrooms and meet with their new teachers. This also creates an opportunity to connect with other families in the same classroom, so families can exchange contact information and possibly set up playdates for their children.

When a student is moving into a new classroom within the ELC, we give that student the opportunity to spend some time in the new classroom, so the child becomes familiar with the new classroom and feels more comfortable. We also encourage teachers to conduct home visits prior to the transition of the new school year. In these home visits, the teacher has the opportunity to meet the families in an environment that is comfortable, and get to know the families and their children a little better, prior to the start of the school year.

Transitioning to Kindergarten: Each fall, the St. John's Kindergarten teachers hold a Kindergarten Open House for the Pre-K and Preschool students to experience time in the Kindergarten classroom. Parents are invited that evening to speak with the Kindergarten teachers and the K-8 Principal. Both parents and students can explore the Kindergarten classrooms at this Open House and see some of the projects and activities done in Kindergarten. Prior to the Kindergarten Open House, our Pre-K students have a day when their classes will visit each Kindergarten classroom and do an activity with the Kindergarteners (Go Noodle dancing, listening to a story, doing an art project, etc.). Additionally, information is sent to all Pre-K students about how to connect with other elementary schools in the area. Pre-K teachers have many conversations with the students about Kindergarten.

We encourage both families and teachers to have many conversations with the children about the upcoming transitions. We provide resources in our Parent Resource center that can assist parents in having those conversations with their children.

Children also transition out of a school for multiple reasons, such as the family moving to a new area, or because a child will be going to Kindergarten elsewhere. This type of transition can also be stressful for a child and for families. To support the child's transition to a new program, we work closely with the family on the timing and process of that transition. If requested, we will offer an exit conference between families and the lead teacher, share assessment data so families can make it available to the child's new teacher, and

communication between programs, if authorized.

Regardless of whether it is the first time you are leaving your child in a new classroom or have left multiple times, saying goodbye may not be easy. Nevertheless, there are some things that can make the transition go smoother. Before you arrive at the school, it is a good idea to make sure your child understands that you will be leaving him or her in the classroom with their friends and teachers for a while but will always return. The calmer and more assured you are about sending your child to school, the more confident your child will be. When it is time to go, remind your child that you will be back soon, then say a quick goodbye. As tempting as it may be, leaving without saying goodbye can make kids feel abandoned, so it is not a good idea to “sneak” out. A consistent and predictable farewell routine can make leaving easier. Your farewell routine could include waving from outside the classroom window, making a funny goodbye face or performing a special handshake before parting. Providing your child with a transitional object, such as a family picture, a special doll, or a favorite blanket, can also help comfort a child. Keep in mind that most kids do well after their parents leave. However, if you hear your child begin to cry, it is best to not return to the classroom, as returning can justify a child’s anxiety and increase their concerns. We assure you that the child’s teacher will be there to help the child start a great new day in school.

Toilet Training: We will follow the parents’ training guidelines for children. Please speak with your child’s teacher regarding potty training readiness. Children enrolled into preschool or pre-k are encouraged to be completely potty trained. “Completely potty trained” includes communicating the need to use the bathroom, ability to remove necessary clothing, sit on the toilet, and clean up self (wipe) with verbal prompts from a teacher if needed.

Visitors and Visitation: All visitors are required to sign-in at the ELC office, where they will be given a yellow “Visitor” lanyard, before entering the classrooms. This lanyard must be worn at all times while the visitor is in the building. Parents/guardians are welcome to visit or observe the center at any time. Parents/guardians are also required to sign-in at the ELC office and wear a yellow visitor lanyard. Please contact the teacher as a courtesy prior to observation.

Volunteers: The ELC encourages parents/guardians to volunteer in our programs. Parents are encouraged to participate in the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). This group functions with various committees that are staffed with parent volunteers. There is at least one ambassador parent from each classroom who is a liaison between the classroom/teacher and the PTO. Our biggest fundraisers are held and supported through our parent volunteers. We offer a wide variety of volunteer opportunities. These can be one-time or short- or long-term volunteer commitments depending on a parent’s/guardian’s schedule. Because we are a part

of St. John's Lutheran Church, there are many opportunities for parents and non-administrative staff to participate in the decision-making officer roles, committees, and organizations within the church. Voters meetings (members of St. John's) are held at various times throughout the year, usually quarterly. Please see the ELC Director for a list of volunteer opportunities and requirements. The School Ministry Team consists of parents who are members of St. John's Lutheran Church. This entity functions as the school board for the elementary school and early learning center. They meet monthly to support and encourage the principal and director.

Withdrawal from the Program: Please notify the director or the ELC office in writing 30 days in advance of the withdrawal from the program. All fees and remaining tuition due must be paid in full upon withdrawal. Contracts remain in effect until a written notice is received by the ELC office.