



First English Lutheran Preschool

2025-2026 Family Handbook

Celebrating our 44th year in Early Childhood
Education with learning through play!

16495 Ireland Road, Mishawaka, Indiana 46544

Office Phone: 255-4234 FAX: 255-4473



***Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young
Children since 1986.***

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We are happy that your family will be a part of our preschool program. To acquaint each of you with our important policies and procedures, we have listed a few in this handbook to help our preschool operate more effectively and to keep you informed. Please read the Policy/Procedure booklet for more program information. On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for choosing FELP for your child!

Wishing you all well as we begin our year, Mrs. Tracy Gleissner



PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

It is the fundamental belief of the First English Lutheran Church that every **person** will be treated with respect and value, whatever their age, ability, ethnic, socio-economic, or religious background. Being with other children and adults in a Christian environment fosters Christian faith and life, conducive to successful and fruitful living in a changing world. The preschool as an integral part of the Christian education program will involve the congregation and provide experiences to reach out to other families in the community. Quality direct learning experience in a safe and nurturing environment will be provided with a focus on Early Learning Foundations for preschool development. We believe that children learn best through play, interaction with others and decision-making processes. Children and their families will have a sense of belonging and affirmation of their uniqueness while contributing to our program. Staff will support and work as effective teams while collaborating with families to foster each child's development.

PRESCHOOL



STATEMENT

It is the mission of First English Lutheran Preschool that children from 2-5 years of age will experience growth and learning in their social, emotional, physical, communicative, and cognitive development. They will garner a cheerful outlook about school while gaining a greater appreciation and understanding of their peers and the world around them. Children will participate in activities to explore & practice skills to become a valued, contributing member of their class community.

PRESCHOOL VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is that our children will flourish in joyful and developmentally appropriate learning to the best of their abilities.

ACCREDITATION



First English Lutheran Preschool is accredited by NAEYC, the National Association for the Education of Young Children. This accreditation means that our preschool meets the highest standards in early childhood care, including staff qualifications, materials available, activities offered, quality curriculum, movement activities in the large motor room and playground, nutritional snacks, and family partnerships. We have followed and kept these quality care standards since 1986. For more information on NAEYC, you may visit their website at www.naeyc.org.

LICENSING

FELP is a registered ministry through the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration and voluntarily complies with VCP licensing requirements. Additionally, we are a Level 4 Paths to Quality provider as well as a High Scope certified program with several teachers obtaining personal High Scope certification for their individual classrooms.



ADMISSION

Children are admitted into our preschool program who:

1. are of any race, color, socio-economic background, religion, or gender.
2. have completed forms in their confidential file: Application with paid registration fee, general child Information, Health form with immunizations, emergency card, articles of agreement signature, discipline policy and parent notice as well as proof of the child's age with birth certificate documentation.
3. are at a stage of growth and development which enables them to benefit from the program and whose age level is staffed and equipped to provide care for them.

AGE PLACEMENT School Year 2025-2026

Two's/Three's class: children who turn 2 by August 1st.

Three's/ Four's Class: Children who turn three by August 1st.

Pre-K Class: Children who turn four by August 1st.

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL

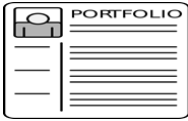
1. Classes will have an adult accompany the child into the building and await with them until their classroom door entry. The use of the family lounge can be utilized until teachers are ready to supervise their classroom duties.
2. School restrooms and sinks will be used shortly after arrival using the **proper Hand washing technique.**
3. Dismissal will be at various times in the day. The 2/3's and 3/4's classes will use the NORTH side exit doors while the Pre-K class will use the SOUTH exit doors for dismissal. 2/3's class will dismiss at 11:30, 3/4's and Pre-K classes at noon or 2:15 pm on Pre-k extended days. If a child is not picked up promptly, the child will wait in the building with a staff member. However, late fees will be assessed. See Arrival Policy in Policy Booklet for further information.
4. Children WILL NOT be released to ANYONE other than those listed on the Emergency Card unless we are notified in advance by one of the family or primary care providers. We may ask to see photo identification as well.
5. For the security of everyone, church doors will remain locked, and staff will greet families into the building each morning. If you need to enter during school hours, please use the North entrance and ring the doorbell to notify the church secretary.

PARKING



Parking for arrival and departure times will be on the NORTH end of the building for the 2/3's and 3/4's classes (near the playground) and on the SOUTH end (off Ireland Rd.) for the Pre-K Class. Please note that the SOUTH drive is a ONE WAY with exit onto Ireland Road.

Please keep the sidewalk and door entrance space open when parking your vehicle. Cars need to be turned off and not idling when on school property.



ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

1. Families administer a developmental screening tool shortly after school entrance (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) and teachers have been trained to share the results at fall conferences with families.
2. Continuous evaluation of the child by the teacher is a part of the daily program. Staff have been trained in methods to document and interpret development information for families. Each child will have a portfolio, called Child Observation Record which contains samples of classroom work, photographs, and anecdotal notes. These will be shared with families throughout the week. Family reports will be generated in December and May.
3. Conferences will be held in the fall and spring, as well as whenever requested by the child's teacher or parents.
4. A permanent, confidential file is kept on each child containing all forms filled out, including special services. This file will be open only to the child's parents, preschool staff, and licensure agency personnel unless written parental permission is given. Please refer to the full Assessment Policy included in the Policy/Procedure Booklet for more information.



CHILD-FAMILY OUTCOME STATEMENT

Children will experience growth and learning in their social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive development. Children will garner a cheerful outlook about school and learning. Each child will reach his full potential based on current development. Children will gain a greater appreciation and understanding of their peers and the world around them. Children will learn skills to prepare them for kindergarten requirements and beyond.

Families will appreciate their children for who they are. Families will feel supported in their child rearing efforts. Families will feel comfortable sharing with preschool staff any issues affecting their child. Families will become advocates for their child throughout his/her schooling.

ATTENDANCE/ILLNESSES



- Families are encouraged to send their children regularly.
- The church carries Liability insurance on the children during school hours.
- Please call the church office if your child will be absent (255-4234).
- Families are required to have emergency phone contact information on file during school hours. The emergency card signed by the parent/guardian will indicate the parent's accessibility and whom to contact in case they cannot be reached.
- Children who are ill are asked not to be brought into the building.
- Families are asked to keep children home when fever, vomiting, or diarrhea occur, so other children will not become infected. See Illness Policy in Policy/Procedure Booklet for further information.
- Children must wait at least 24 hours before returning to school when the above symptoms have been present.
- Children who become ill during the school day will be isolated from the group and the parents will be notified to pick the child up as soon as possible. We do not wait for the end of the class session to contact parents.
- When absenteeism occurs, families still pay the entire monthly tuition due to the slot occupied by their child in the program.
- Check WSBT or WNDU television or their websites, our Facebook page, and personal email in the event of threatening weather causing a school closing. When the school does close due to weather conditions, tuition is not refunded or credited.
- Only medically essential medications will be administered by the preschool staff. They will be stored in a fashion to comply with our Illness or Medication Policy in Policy/Procedure Booklet (refer to it for more information.) Copies of the booklet are available outside each classroom and emailed to each family.



FELP COMMUNICATION- SHARES WITH FAMILIES:

*This annual family handbook and policy/procedure information.

Please read them thoroughly.

*Monthly newsletters and classroom weekly lesson plans via email

*Phone calls to share essential information.

*Written notes/photos weekly about child's development/progress.

*Designated days to conduct parent teacher conferences.

*Preschool staff ensures that all families, regardless of circumstances, are included in all parts of the program, including volunteer opportunities. Opportunities through the year to help with a classroom event or within your child's class, i.e., visit for a morning, drive for a field trip, share a special skill or background with the class, or help with a project.

*Daily whiteboards note pertinent information.

*Updates, reminders, and class activities (and additional source of program information posted on Facebook page:

First English Lutheran Preschool or our

Website: www.firstenglishlutheranpreschool.org

*Daily conversations between teachers and caregivers can occur at arrival and dismissal times. If a lengthy conversation is needed, please let the teacher know, and an appointment can be made.

*School wide activities/events to foster relationships with other families in the program.

*Emergency response plans as we conduct monthly fire drills and practice fall/spring storm drills to foster an awareness of situations needing procedures to remain safe.

*Program philosophy on discipline/guidance to give children the skills necessary to develop socially and emotionally (see the Discipline Policy in the Policy/Procedure booklet for further information).



FAMILIES COMMUNICATE WITH SCHOOL:

1. Any medical problems, fears, or emotional upsets to your child
2. Concerns and suggestions to make your child's experience the best it can be.
3. A contact number while your child is at preschool; Keep the school informed about any changes in the emergency contact information.
4. Phone messages may be left at the church office (255-4234) about any illness that will keep your child home from school.
5. Family's opinion/suggestions to improve the quality of our program via an annual survey.
6. Discuss problems with the teacher or director. You are always welcome to call the staff, at home or the preschool, to talk with them directly. Consider using e-mail to communicate as well.

***There will be an annual Preschool Board meeting between board members, staff, and parents to provide an opportunity to assist in making decisions to improve the program. Watch the newsletters for more information about this meeting held during the school year. We also would like to conduct Parent Advisory meetings to help the Director discuss program improvements or necessary information.



CONFIDENTIALITY

Working closely with families, teachers/staff realize the confidential information that will be shared. When discussing said information we will make sure to keep matters private. Additionally, your child's file will be kept in a manner that others will not be privy to personal information.

CURRICULUM

Curriculum is what happens in an educational environment. Our curriculum is based upon Indiana's Early Learning Standards and children's interests following the High Scope Philosophy.

The goals of our program are implemented by a daily schedule consisting of the following:

1. a balance of child-directed learning and teacher planned experiences.
2. large group, small group, and individual instruction.
3. a wide variety of experiences at diverse levels of difficulty for individual rates of progression.
4. interaction with other children and adults.
5. flexibility combined with routine.
6. play as a significant role for engaging in learning.
7. a combination of active and passive, noisy and quiet activities
8. a happy, loving, Christian environment...it is fun here!



DAILY ACTIVITIES

Each class has a designated monthly list of early learning standards used for lesson focus. The following activities are included in our daily/monthly schedule:

Christian values, communication skills, creative expression, critical thinking, early literacy, health, math readiness, movement activities, music, phonemic awareness, problem solving, safety, science, sensory activities, social skills, social studies, and writing.



DRESS CODE

1. Please dress children in clothing that will not be a hindrance in art or physical activities and is manageable by the child. Pants without belts are immensely helpful when first learning independent dressing skills.
2. Shoes should have a non-slip tread. Dressy or slip-on shoes can be hazardous and restrictive to a child's play. Open sandals (like crocs) allow playground materials inside which can also be uncomfortable. Enclosed toe shoes with socks are highly recommended and preferred.
3. Please send your child in play clothes as **they will get messy** and stained during play and art.
4. We ask that children come prepared to play outdoors. Jackets, coats, and covered legs are necessary when the weather is cooler; hats and mittens will be needed with cold temperatures as well.
5. Please label ALL belongings—jackets, mittens, lunch boxes, etc.



FIELDTRIPS/VISITORS

Our preschool program will participate in group field trips unless the child's parents/caregivers request for them not to attend. Each child should have their own child restraint seat inside the vehicle before departing on the field trip (provided by each family). A signed permission slip will be needed for each trip that might be scheduled over the course of the school year. More specific information will be distributed prior to any given trip. Children's parents/caregivers will be drivers unless other arrangements have been made*. When it is not possible to visit a facility to learn more, then a visitor will come to our program to share photos and materials to share their services.

***OTHER FIELD TRIP DRIVERS WILL NEED TO SUBMIT A COPY OF THEIR DRIVERS LICENSE AND CURRENT INSURANCE TO BE KEPT ON FILE IN THE SCHOOL OFFICE PRIOR TO DRIVING FOR A TRIP FOR ANOTHER CHILD.**



FUNDRAISERS

To help our yearly budget and keep tuition costs down we do appreciate families' participation in annual fundraisers:

1. Family Night events
2. School T-shirt sale
3. Class Pictures --Fall
4. Family Dinner with Talent show
5. Fall Fun Fair

*Additional fundraisers may be planned each school year.



GOALS OF THE

PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAM

1. To provide opportunities for early loving interaction among children and adults outside of the family.
2. To provide new opportunities and activities, fostering a healthy self-concept.
3. To promote growth in visual, auditory, and tactile perception.
4. To help the child relate to others and be a part of a group.
5. To enhance creative abilities through materials and experiences.
6. To increase awareness and control of the physical body.
7. To assist the child in a gradual adjustment from home to school life.
8. To identify the child's developmental stage.
9. To encourage each child to reach his potential.
10. To prepare each child for their elementary school education.

GRIEVANCE POLICY

Families who have a grievance with First English Lutheran Preschool, be it a problem with a staff member, school policy, or financial discrepancy will report their situation to the Director, Board President, OR the parent representative to the Preschool Board of Directors. They in turn will bring the issue to the monthly board meeting where it will be discussed by the entire board of directors. The Director, Board President or parent representative will report back to the family the following day with a response to the situation.

Any family member is welcome to attend a board meeting him/herself to address the issue at hand.

First English Lutheran Preschool School board meetings are open to all interested parties with one annual meeting when families are requested to specifically attend and participate.

When conflicts arise, High Scope conflict resolution steps will be followed:

1. Approach calmly.
2. Acknowledge feelings.
3. Gather information.
4. Restate the problem.
5. Find solutions parties can agree on
6. Follow up as needed.



OPEN DOOR POLICY

First English Preschool has an open-door policy. Families are welcome to visit the program any time. However, to protect our facility the outside doors will remain locked from through the school day. The doorbell at the North entrance or knocking on the doors will notify staff. Once you have been identified, you are welcome to join the classroom. Hand-washing procedures must be followed for those who are staying in the classroom areas.

HAND-WASHING POLICY

Studies have shown unwashed or improperly washed hands are the main reason for the spread of infections. Proper hand washing has been proven to reduce the number of colds and diarrhea in children in childcare settings. Children will be asked to wash their hands each morning before entering their classroom, before snack time, after bathroom use as well as after outdoor play times.



- Check to be sure a clean, disposable paper towel and liquid soap is available.
- Turn on the water.
- Wet hands with water and apply liquid soap.
- Rub hands together until a soapy lather and continue for 20 seconds. Rub areas between fingers, around nail beds, under fingernails, jewelry, and back of hands.
- Rinse hands under warm running water. LEAVE WATER RUNNING.
- Dry hands with disposable paper towel.
- Shut off water with a paper towel.
- Throw the paper towel into a lined trash container.

All families bringing children into the building are asked to start the morning of the school day with a statement: “It is time to use the bathroom and wash hands before school!”

You can give children a choice of “big” or “little” bathroom to use. If you ask a child if they want to use the bathroom or even if they need to use the bathroom, the answer is usually no. We encourage our bathroom facility usage as it extends the time the children are engaged in their classroom instead of using the bathroom facilities. If your child is wearing a diaper or pull up then the use of bathroom facilities will be encouraged as they develop; however, handwashing before classroom entrance will still be required. Please make sure the diaper/pull up is fresh before sending the child into their classroom.

PARENT TIPS

To help your child start each day off right.



1. Insist upon a reasonable, consistent bedtime routine.
2. Prepare a healthy breakfast to eat at 'home.'
3. Make sure your child comes to school in clothing he/she can maneuver, but do not be surprised if clothing gets messy!
4. Before entering the classroom, encourage your child to use the preschool bathroom facilities and wash their hands. (check diaper)
5. Be on time for our school day's beginning and dismissal.
6. Be positive about this experience with your child.
7. Make your departure in a cheerful manner. If separation is an issue, discuss appropriate resolution methods with the teacher.
8. Inquire about your child's day as your child seems ready to share information. Use the lesson plans to help generate conversation.



SERVICES OFFERED at FELP

- ✓ Speech, hearing, and language screening
- ✓ Eye screening
- ✓ Information regarding early childhood development.
- ✓ Formal and informal conferences with teachers
- ✓ Notices about community events regarding preschool children
- ✓ Daily sensory-motor activities during preschool
- ✓ Your child's periodic developmental updates/written report
- ✓ Home visits: teacher or parent requested.
- ✓ Monthly newsletters and weekly lesson plans provided.
- ✓ Parent volunteer opportunities
- ✓ Community guest speakers and visitors
- ✓ Referrals to programs and agencies, as needed, to benefit the child and family (Resource booklet for home use will be shared)



SNACKS and Celebrations:

Nutritious snacks are served daily with snack menus being posted on the parent board for each week. Children can bring **nutritious** food items, when arrangements have been made with the teacher, for dedicated events or birthdays. Every child's birthday or half birthday will be celebrated at school. Appropriate store-bought snacks could be fruit, vegetable, yogurt, cheese sticks, 100% juice, crackers, or dry cereals. Teachers will inform each family of any allergies in the class that would eliminate a food product. Please refer to the Policy/Procedure book for more information about our nutritious Snack Policy.

*Each class may also ask families throughout the year to donate food items/paper goods to help the class celebrate a special activity.



SPRING REGISTRATION PROCEDURE AND POLICY

First English Lutheran Church Members and currently or previously enrolled families will register first for the following year's Registration. Newly Enrolling families will have a specific day to register online or in person for the following year's classes.

1. The registration application and fee are due upon registering with a birth certificate being presented before school begins. A one-time church usage fee will be assessed and needs to be paid along with regular monthly tuition payments once the school year begins.
2. A new packet of forms will be available in May to be returned by the start of the new school year.

TUITION

Payment for our preschool is due on the 1st day of the month from September to May. Tuition will be considered late if it is received AFTER THE 10TH DAY OF THE MONTH. You may also send your tuition by post office mailing, deliver it to your child's teacher, or place it in the hallway locked mailbox designated for tuition. If your mailed tuition has a post marking after the 10th of the month, it will be considered late. A \$10.00 fee will be assessed to all late tuition payments. If your child receives CCDF/OMWPK vouchers, then it is important that your child attend but notify the office when absence does occur so it can be documented with the sponsoring agency.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

1. Program staff and families may work together to plan and coordinate dedicated events. If there is an area that you are interested in leading/planning, please share with the director or your child's teacher.
2. Please consider sharing a special talent or experience with your child's class or program. The children enjoy hearing about new experiences. Each class has a variety of ways to include family members into their learning community.
3. Preschool Board Parent Representatives or the Parent Advisory Committee may coordinate volunteer activities throughout the year.
4. Our preschool program is always open to innovative ideas so if something interests your family consider sharing it with the Director or classroom teacher so others might be made aware.
5. Throughout the year families can volunteer to donate specific items for the program or individual classrooms like snack supplies, paper products, Kleenex boxes, liquid hand soap, or paper towels.

WITHDRAW POLICY

If a family chooses to withdraw their child (ren) from the preschool for any reason, then a minimum of one month's notice is requested.

TERMINATION OF ENROLLMENT

When the individual needs of the child cannot be served by the preschool, or program policies are consistently being disregarded, the director may terminate a child's enrollment in the program. Termination decisions will not be made without parent consultation.

In most cases, parents will be given a two-week period to make other arrangements. However, the preschool reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment any time a situation is determined to be extremely detrimental to the child concerned, and/or the other children or staff in the program. Parents are financially responsible for tuition covering the period of the child's attendance.

Reasons for termination of enrollment: The child's behavior is having a consistent negative effect on the well-being and development of other children. Factors to be considered include:

- the possibility of danger to the child or others in the class
- the impact of problematic behavior on the rest of the classroom
- availability of resources to the preschool and the ability of staff to fully meet the child's needs.
- the unwillingness of the family members to collaborate with the staff and/or to get outside help.

Other reasons for termination of enrollment:

- Non-payment of tuition and fees.
- Non-compliance with preschool policies and procedures.



We look forward to being a part of your child's development this year!

2025-2026 FELP staff

Director: Mrs. Tracy Gleissner

Pre-K teachers: Mrs. Ashley Smith and Mrs. Katie Murray-Emmons (M-F)

3/4 class teachers: Mrs. Emily Burson and Mrs. Jenn Paul (M-F)

2/3 class teachers: Mrs. Melissa Gearhart and Ms. Kaylee Burkey (M-F)

Office staff: Mrs. Marsha Vinson (church secretary/preschool treasurer)

FELC Pastor: Patrick Ballard