

St. Mark Preschool Parent Handbook 2021-2022



**“And now abide Faith, Hope, Love, these three; but the
greatest of these is LOVE”**

1 Corinthians 13:13

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Welcome

We are pleased to have you and your child at St. Mark Lutheran Preschool. We are a non-profit organization sponsored by St. Mark Lutheran Church. We are a Christian preschool whose mission and ministry are to share the Gospel of Jesus with children of our community by providing a Christ-centered education. The Christ-centered environment provides your child with the opportunity to know and experience the unconditional love of Jesus through Bible stories, prayer, songs, and Chapel.

Research shows that quality preschool programs help a child succeed in future grades and that the first five years of development are the most formative ones in his/her entire development. Our qualified and caring staff provides quality experiences that will increase your child's knowledge, enhance his/her self esteem, and aid in the development of social and educational skills necessary for future learning.

Family involvement and communication are essential to your child's success in our program. As a parent, you are your child's first and most important teacher. We provide many opportunities for you to participate both in the classroom and at home. This handbook has been designed to help answer any questions you may have in the future regarding our program's policies and procedures.

Lastly, thank you for allowing us to join in partnership with you during this wonderfully exciting time in your child's development!

The Staff at St. Mark Lutheran Preschool

Our Program and Philosophy

Mission Statement

St. Mark Lutheran Preschool exists to share the Gospel of Jesus with children of our community by providing a Christ-centered education.

Purpose

It is the position of St. Mark Lutheran Preschool & St. Mark Lutheran Church that all children need to hear and experience Jesus' love on a daily basis. We believe that each child is a unique and special gift from God that learns best about their world through play, exploration, and developmentally appropriate activities.

St. Mark Lutheran Preschool will strive to provide a warm and loving, Christ-centered environment where children can develop to their greatest potential-spiritually, socially, cognitively, emotionally and physically.

Our program philosophy incorporates the following principles:

We Believe . . .

- A young child needs to discover his/her own unique significance in God's world.
- Children should be given every opportunity to develop various gifts God has given to them.
- In helping children grow in heart as well as mind.
- Our program is a joint ministry that involves the child, the family, the staff, the congregation, and the community.

We also believe children are competent and capable learners. We believe children learn by doing! Play is an integral part of the classroom, encompassing all your child's activities. Our classroom environments contain hands-on experiences for the children in the areas of: Christian Education, Music, Letter and Number Recognition, Perceptual Skills, Literature, Creative Movement, Art, Gross/Fine Motor Coordination, Character Building, Cooking, Social/Emotional Awareness, Math, Science and Language Development.

While our program revolves around your child's individual needs and interests, we believe that education should also include a focus on his/her relation to a community of others. Our curriculum emphasizes the development of your child's social skills, including building friendships, respect for others, conflict resolution, and advocating for one's needs and ideas. Our goal is to promote self-esteem and problem-solving abilities, which help children gain the confidence to face new experiences. Through developmentally appropriate practice, collaboration, observation, documentation, and planning, our qualified and caring teachers will respect and nurture the unique gifts and developmental levels of all the children in our care.

Spiritual Goals and Development

The children in our program will be . . .

Seeing, hearing and experiencing God's love on a daily basis through:

- Weekly Bible Stories
- Daily Prayer
- Songs
- Weekly Chapel services
- Classroom Experiences

Our hope is that these experiences will allow the children to get to know God, understand that they can love God, and that they can talk to God anytime, anywhere.

The children in our program will know . . .

- That God loves them.
- That God created them as a gift.
- That they are unique, special & valued.

Through supporting and encouraging their individual differences, the children will see their ideas being valued, explored and documented in their classroom.

The children in our program will have . . .

an opportunity to share God's love with others.

Parents As Partners

Parents are invited to participate in enrichment programs held throughout the school year. Parent observation is always welcome. We would encourage you to contribute at least 1 hour a month to the school to enhance your child's learning experiences. *Please note:* Younger siblings may not accompany parents during volunteer hours. Typical tasks for **volunteer** hours include playground prep, watering the plants on the playground, preparing class snacks, reading to a class, fundraising, being a room parent, etc. We welcome any special talents you may have.

To help children and teachers get to know each other and feel comfortable, teachers will conduct **home visits** prior to the beginning of school. Communication is essential!

Parent-teacher **conferences** are a wonderful way to share information, as are the daily communication with the staff as well as weekly updates in the form of a newsletter recapping the weeks events. Each classroom has an email address for you to use for on going communication with your child's teacher. Formal parent/teacher goal setting and conferences will be scheduled in October.

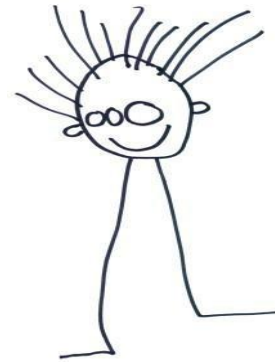
School Policies and Procedures

We offer a half day, or full day programs with a positive, nurturing, non-biased environment where children can grow and learn in their own unique way. The preschool is operated on a non-discriminatory basis offering equal treatment and access to all children without regard to sex, race, color, creed, or political belief.

We serve children ages 2 to 5 years of age with all schedules. Our school policy requires that each child must be at least two years old to begin at St Mark's. In order for them to move into the Poppy Room of 3-4 year old's they must possess independent toileting skills.

For your protection, state policy requires the following forms to be on file before the first day of class for each child enrolled:

1. Admission & Tuition Agreement
2. Identification and Emergency Information
3. Physician's Report of Health
4. Immunization Record
5. Consent for Medical Treatment
6. Child's Preadmission Health History – Parent Report
7. Parent's Rights
8. Personal Rights



Sign-in/Sign-out Procedures

Each day your child attends our program, please sign in on the appropriate clipboard on the porch and then walk your child to class. In the event of rain, the clipboards will be in your child's classroom. Please put down the correct time (actual time dropped off) and sign your first and last name. We ask that you be on time and arrive by 8:30. The school will open promptly at 8:00 a.m. A teacher will greet you at this time. If you have any questions or special requests, your child's teacher should be able to help you. Be sure to allow a few extra minutes for good-byes. In the event something arises which will cause you to be late, please call the preschool to let us know as soon as you can.

It is equally important for a child's feeling of security and trust to be picked up on time. When you pick up your child at the end of their day, you will sign him/her out. Again, be sure to write down the correct time (actual time picked up) and sign your full name.

A \$1.00 charge will be assessed for each minute you are late. For example, if you are 10 minutes late, a \$10 fee will be charged. This charge will be due with your next month's tuition payment. No child will be released from the preschool to anyone other than those persons authorized by the parent in writing on the emergency form. These persons must be at least 18 years old. If you are in a carpool, include all persons in the carpool authorized for pick-up on your Identification and Emergency Form.

Daily Schedules

Arrival Times and Dismissal

Morning Program

8:00 am to 12

Noon

Full Day

8:00 am to 3pm

The playground will open promptly at 8:00 am please make sure your child is signed in by 8:30 am so that they can join their friends on the playground and settle in before heading up to the classrooms.

Each classroom schedule may vary and will be shared by the classroom teacher as well as posted at the sign in table & outside of the classrooms.

Tuition Payments

A \$150.00 non-refundable registration fee is charged annually. This fee must be paid in full in order to hold your child's place on the class roster. There is a \$35.00 fee for nap mats for children who nap.

You may choose to pay your tuition payments by check, cash, or through our school's Venmo account. If you choose Venmo, you will need to add 2% of the total, Venmo charges us 2% for each transaction. Our account is @Annette-Conrad-1, St Mark Preschool account will pop up. The tuition amount will be the same every month & is due on the fifth day of each month (August-June). There is no deduction for holidays or absences.

All tuition is non-refundable. If tuition is not paid by the 10th of the month, a \$10.00 late fee will be assessed. If tuition is a more than 2 weeks late, we will suspend care until the balance has been paid. Returned checks will incur a \$25.00 fee. A 30-day written notice will be required for any child dropping or reducing hours from their program. Tuition must be paid for this 30-day period. If no notice is given, an additional month's tuition will be added to your final bill.

Emergency Forms

Please be sure to keep your emergency form up to date. This form gives us permission to obtain medical care in case of an accident. There should be three local telephone numbers of people who are authorized to pick up your child if needed. When you change addresses or telephone numbers, or if your friends do, please be sure to make the necessary changes on the emergency form.

Sick-child Policy

Our school is licensed to handle “well children” only. For the health and safety of the children in our care, please keep your child home if he/she has any of the following symptoms:

- Fever (100.1 F) or has had one during the previous 24 hours
- Sneezing, runny nose, or coughing for multiple days
- Weepy, watery, pink, or crusted eyes
- Vomiting
- Undisclosed Skin Rashes
- Diarrhea
- Possible Contagious Disease (Chicken Pox, etc.)
- Unable to fully participate in the program



Parents should be aware that a normal, healthy child will become sick 5 to 6 times a year. You will be notified and expected to make arrangements for your child to be picked up within 30 minutes or as soon as possible. Your child will remain in the office until you arrive. Please keep your child at home at the first sign of illness symptoms, not only to prevent the spread of illness to others, but also to assure that your child is not susceptible to another illness. When asked to take your child to the doctor, please request an authorization note to return to school.

If your child has a contagious illness, please notify us. We will in turn, notify you if your child has been exposed to a contagious illness at school. Your child must be symptom-free without medication for 24 hours to re-enter school.

Naptime

A rest period follows lunch for children who stay past noon. If your child naps they will need to bring a small blanket and lovey if they choose to. We will provide a rest mat as well as a rest roll for each napping child. There is a \$35 fee for the purchase of the rest roll. We will send the rest roll home once a week for laundering. The rest mat will remain at school.

Rest-time

A rest period follows lunch for children who stay past noon. Licensing requires us to provide a quiet 20 period in the early afternoon for a rest/quiet time. This will include a variety of restful activities such as, yoga, story time, journaling, and quiet music.

Immunizations

The following is a list of immunizations. These are required for preschoolers over the age of two:

<u>VACCINE</u>	<u># DOSES REQUIRED</u>
Polio	3
DTP/ DTap	4
MMR (measles, mumps, & rubella)	1 (given on or after 1st b-day)
HIB	1 (given on or after 1st b-day)
Hepatitis B	3
Varicella	1
TB is recommended	

DTP vaccine required. Other combination vaccines (DT and Td) do not count in meeting the state requirement. Inadequately immunized, susceptible children must either receive missing doses of DPT or obtain a valid medical exemption.

Medication

All medication must be in the original container with the child's name and date on the prescription label. No expired medications will be administered. Over-the-counter drugs will be administered only under a doctor's prescription. Parents must complete a medication form indicating dosage and length of time medication is to be given. Please speak to the director for ongoing and/or emergency medication authorization.

Allergies

In order to provide a safe environment for your child, please be sure to make the director and your child's teacher aware of any food allergies. If severe, talk with the staff about letting the classroom families know. Food allergies are posted in the kitchen and in each classroom. Please also report any allergic reactions to bee stings, insect bites, or medications.

Snack/Lunch

Parents will provide a daily snack and lunch for their child. Please pack their items in an insulated lunch box with an ice pack inside. Pack the foods you know your child will eat; children can get stressed at mealtimes when away from their family. If you know they like what you packed, they will eat it when they are hungry. We will let children eat at non mealtimes if they are hungry!

Toys

We recommend that all toys be left at home as the teachers will ensure your child has ample materials to work with while at preschool. This will prevent home toys from becoming lost and/or broken.

Pets

Family pets are not allowed on campus without prior permission of the director. This policy has been set into place to ensure the safety of our children.

Dress for the MESS

Please remember that this will be a time of play and exploration of new experiences for your child. In order to make this experience as meaningful as possible, please have your child wear . . .

- Play clothes that can withstand art projects and paint!
- Sturdy, low-heeled shoes with a closed toe that is secure behind the ankle. Velcro tennis shoes or Crocs are the easiest for the children to work themselves. They are allowed to go barefoot inside as well as outside.
- Clothes that are appropriate for the weather-we go outside in the rain and cold!
- Easy manipulated attire that will enable your child to attend to his/her own toileting needs. (For example, belts sometimes make it tricky for children to get to the restroom on time. Self-sufficiency in this area is an important step in your child's development.)

Please be sure to always keep 2 sets of extra clothes at school. All clothing, especially jackets, should be clearly labeled with your child's name on the tag or inside the clothing.

Events

The preschool hosts several events outside of regular preschool hours. During these events, students are expected to follow the same preschool rules that are in effect during regular school hours. It is each parent's responsibility to watch & monitor their children closely during these events. The preschool will not be held liable for any children before or after regular preschool hours.

Emergency Preparedness Policy

As mandated by the State, we practice emergency procedures for earthquake and fire as part of our regular safety program. Emergency food, water, and first aid supplies are kept on hand in the event of a disaster. The Center maintains an Emergency Plan so you can rest assured your child will be safe and cared for in the event of an earthquake or other natural disaster.

*The American Red Cross recommends you list someone who lives outside California as an emergency contact person in case of a major disaster. If your extended family members also use that person as a contact, rather than calling between cities in California, it will help to keep the in-state phone lines in operation.

Protocol for a Natural Disaster

In the event of a natural disaster, the teachers and each classroom have an extensive evacuation plan. The evacuation plan is available in the office. If an evacuation becomes necessary, we will begin the following:

1. Students would be gathered at St. Mark Lutheran Church lower parking lot.
2. Parents would be notified to pick up
3. Supplies would be taken with us such as water, snacks, blankets etc.
4. Parents would pick up and sign out at St. Mark Lutheran Church lower parking lot.

If the center must remain close during a natural disaster or Covid-19 outbreak there would not be a reduction in tuition. If, however, we need to close for extended period, more than 2 weeks, tuition would be suspended. (see Covid-19 protocol below)

Protocol for Covid-19

- Remain open until mandated to do so if no positive results among staff and students. We are keeping the students separate as much as possible so if we get a case just that classroom will need to close for the 2 weeks.
- If someone is symptomatic (see below for symptom definition) but not tested yet, we will inform families and staff. The symptomatic person will start self-quarantine until we know if they have a positive result and recommend families with contact of this person observe voluntary isolation.
- Increase illness exclusion restrictions. Temperatures of 99.5 or higher will be excluded as will other symptoms such as cough or severe fatigue. Children and staff with these symptoms will be excluded for 24 hours after symptoms subside. If symptom free after 24 hours WITHOUT medication the child or staff may return. If symptoms persist exclusion will be required, and a negative coronavirus test may be required.
- Enhanced cleaning procedures will include adding hourly wipe downs of high touch areas, fully cleaning all shelves and toys each day at closure, removing any high risk/hard to clean toys.
- Require staff to wash their hand & child's hands together each time to make sure children are fully washing their hands. If children resist, wash hands next to them modeling proper handwashing and requiring them to follow each step teaching them songs to sing while washing hands
- Masks are **required** for any adult coming into the preschool classrooms
- Teachers will be **required** to wear their mask inside the building but not when they are outside.
- It is suggested that children over the age of 2 with no health risks should wear their mask while inside their classrooms.
- Child will be **required** to wash their hands upon arrival at school daily. They should also be encouraged to wash their hands before they leave for the day. This is a tremendous help in reduce the spread of germs and disease between home and school.

Behavior

When it comes to discipline, our program and curriculum emphasizes the development of children's relationship with God. This includes the development of a child's social skills, including building friendships, respect for God as well as others, conflict resolution, and advocating for one's needs and ideas. Our goal is to promote self-esteem and problem-solving abilities, which helps each child gain the confidence to face new experiences.

We take a guidance approach to discipline through active listening and conflict resolution. Very young children can be explosive, impulsive, and egocentric. As they develop, they become capable of using language to solve conflicts. Teachers anticipate and model proper problem-solving techniques through active listening and positive redirection. Children are encouraged to use their words and find creative, non-aggressive alternatives to solve their problems. This takes time and patience for everyone. The goal of discipline is self-control. Children will learn how to negotiate and solve their own problems through practice. You may observe two children having a dispute with raised voices. As long as they are solving the problem, we will allow them to continue until we observe it is time to step in to help guide them to a solution.

The age and developmental understanding of a child are taken into consideration when dealing with inappropriate behavior. A child who is displaying inappropriate behavior and is not able to be redirected toward acceptable behavior may be removed from his/her group and/or taken to the office for a brief time. This will allow the child to cool down and refocus so he/she can rejoin the group.

Challenging Behaviors

St Mark Lutheran Preschool believes that parents and staff must work together to address persistent behavioral issues, such as biting, unusual or dangerous aggression, or other issues. It is our true desire to work with children and give them every opportunity to overcome this behavior, but we also must consider the safety of all the children in our care. Parents will be contacted for a conference when a child appears to be unusually stressed, anxious, or otherwise motivated to engage in negative behaviors. Parent support and open communication with the school is important. Behavior that persists may result in the child being sent home for the remainder of the day, and in some cases, days following, at the discretion of the director. Consent given for a behaviorist to observe and assess may be required for continued enrollment. If the problem does not resolve in a timely manner, the child may need to leave the program until the issue has resolved. In all cases, our goal is to help the child to work through their challenges and overcome their difficulties.

Events

The preschool hosts several events outside of regular preschool hours. During these events, students are expected to follow the same preschool rules that are in effect during regular school hours. It is each parent's responsibility to watch & monitor their children closely during these events. The preschool will not be held liable for any children before or after regular preschool hours

Siblings

When siblings accompany their brother/sister to the preschool, please ensure you monitor them closely during morning drop off and afternoon pickup. Siblings are expected to respect preschool property and follow preschool rules under the watchful eye of their parents. It can be tricky for a teacher to participate with her class and monitor siblings at the same time. The playground climbing structure is only licensed for children ages 2-5 years old. Please do not allow younger or older children play on the structure.

Tax Information

If at any point your family needs receipts from the office for flex plans, we will be happy to print one out for you. Full year tax documents are available, as well. Our FIN #95-1996044

The Preschool Board

The Preschool Board consists of church members and includes our Pastor and church members who are retired teachers. The board oversees the operations of the preschool and meets once per month in order to vote on any new policies, approve the annual budget, and ensure the integrity of the preschool philosophy. The Preschool Board supports the preschool by listening to the needs of the preschool and collaborating with St. Mark Lutheran Church to help meet these needs.

Scholarships/Discounts

There are scholarships available based on need. A rather extensive packet must be filled out and turned into to the Preschool Board. Determinations will be made based on the availability of funds for any given school year and the families need.

The two other discounts available to St. Mark families are a 5% sibling discount and a Church member discount, each family will be awarded the largest one of the preceding scholarships and/or discounts if they qualify.

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD IS GOING TO BE ABSENT FROM PRESCHOOL?

Call the school at 1(760) 231-1917 and leave a message before school begins or email aconrad@stmarkpreschool.org and cc your child's teacher. Please include the reason for your child's absence. Thank you.

WHAT TYPE OF EDUCATION/CREDENTIALS DO THE TEACHERS HAVE?

The levels of education vary at St. Mark we have teachers with Master's Degrees, Bachelors Degrees and degrees in process. One thing every member of St. Mark staff participates in is annual continuing education, multiple years teaching experience and the entire staff is First Aid/ CPR certified.

HOW CAN I PREP MY CHILD FOR HIS/HER FIRST SCHOOL EXPERIENCE?

Set up a regular routine. Make sure your child wakes up at the same time each day and has a healthy breakfast. During breakfast, talk to your child about preschool and what is expected for the day. Visit Shutterfly for each class' planned possibilities. At drop off, assure your child of the time and who will be picking them up!

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD CRIES AT DROP OFF?

This is normal at the beginning of the school year. We have found that the home visits help to alleviate nervousness and/or separation anxiety. If your child is anxious, please tell him/her that you will stay for five minutes. Give a hug and a kiss and then leave. Stick to this! The teacher's will help you set up a routine that will work for you and your child. When a child is upset, it is usually only a few minutes until they settle down after the parent leaves. We will be forthcoming if your child has an unusual amount of stress.

CAN PARENTS VOLUNTEER?

YES! Volunteers usually begin in October. This gives the children/teachers the opportunity to build rapport and trust with one another before any additional adult participates in the classroom.

ARE YOUNGER SIBLINGS ALLOWED DURING VOLUNTEER HOUR?

Unfortunately, younger siblings are not allowed while volunteering in the classroom or during field trips. We, also, ask that you closely supervise your other children during drop off and pick up.

WHEN CAN I MEET WITH MY CHILD'S TEACHER?

Home visits are centered around the child, but this would be the initial introduction. Come and meet them at the Open House/Orientation and then formally get to sit down and chat at the Parent/teacher goals conferences in early October. Please try to limit the chatting at pick up time, the children that remain deserve their teacher's attention. Emailing the teachers with concerns enables them to answer during their planning time.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ANOTHER CHILD HURTS MY CHILD?

When a child hurts another child he/she is trying to communicate something. The teachers will take this opportunity to explore the situation and find out what occurred and will give each child the tools to solve problems more constructively in the future.

If either child displays behavior that is harmful (physical or verbal) to peers or staff, then a behavior report will be filled out documenting the incident. After two behavior reports are filed, we will request a meeting with the parents to discuss strategies to better guide the child to more appropriate behavior. If the behavior still does not improve, the preschool reserves the right to reevaluate the enrollment status of the child.

Meetings to discuss your child's behavior are encouraged in order to provide support for you and your family.

WHO FILLS IN WHEN MY CHILD'S TEACHER IS ILL?

A certified substitute will be called in to cover the class. We only use a couple of teachers who we know quite well and the children will get to know them as well.

WHEN IS CHAPEL AND MUSIC?

Both Chapel and Music take place in the Church. Music is held in the classrooms on Wednesdays and Thursdays at 10am. Chapel is held in the Sanctuary on Mondays and Tuesdays at 8:30 am. Parents are welcome to attend at any time. *This schedule is subject to change without notice.

BIRTHDAY TRADITIONS AT ST. MARK?

A birthday story and candle will be sent home prior to your child's birthday to be shared with the class during the morning meeting. Children are welcome to bring a class treat; popsicles are very popular. Check with your child's teacher to find an appropriate school treat. Please make sure they are individual wrapped.

IF THE PRESCHOOL IS NON-PROFIT, WHERE DOES MY TUITION GO?

Tuition covers preschool costs such as teacher's salaries, payroll taxes, teacher benefits, preschool supplies, hardware/software costs, playground materials, utilities (trash, water, heating, cooling), yard maintenance, cleaning services, etc. Tuition does not cover all costs required to run this preschool. We have 4-5 fund raisers per year.

The Creative Curriculum®

We incorporate developmentally appropriate practices with an anti-bias curriculum in our daily program. Through careful observation and anecdotal record keeping, our teachers intentionally plan activities designed to foster your child's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. We do this through activities that foster communication, problem solving, creativity, and conflict resolution. Our goal is to encourage children's curiosity about the world at their own unique developmental pace. Each day of a child's life is viewed as one step leading towards growth and development of a healthy, intelligent, and contributing member of society.

The Creative Curriculum® provides an excellent opportunity for your child to develop social, physical, emotional and cognitive skills. Our programs nurture the development of all aspects of your child's growth. Our teachers plan experiences to match your child's developing abilities while also challenging your child's intellectual curiosity and social understanding.

Our goal is to help your child become confident and curious about the world around them. To accomplish these goals, we create activities for your child that emphasize and develop the following four skills.

We emphasize **language development** in a wide range of areas, including art, dramatic play, music, dance, literature and science. Personal communication between student and teacher is strongly encouraged.

Your child will develop **decision-making** skills, such as predicting, classifying, analyzing, and evaluating through a variety of tasks. The children are given many opportunities to make choices and follow through with their own decision, both individually and in a group setting.

Giving children the opportunity to develop their own intellectual curiosity stimulates **creativity**. We encourage children to find alternative solutions for their own problems. By participating and planning their own classroom activities children develop the beginning level of curiosity.

Social awareness of the needs of others, and social problem-solving skills are continually addressed during the course of the program. We encourage the children to find positive solutions to their conflicts by verbal resolution.

Reggio Emilia

Background

The Reggio Emilia Approach is an educational philosophy focused on preschool and primary education. It was started by the parents of the villages around Reggio Emilia in Italy after World War II to eliminate fascism. The destruction from the war, parents believed, necessitated a new, quick approach to teaching their children. They felt that it is in the early years of development that children are forming who they are as an individual. This led to creation of a program based on the principles of respect, responsibility, and community through exploration and discovery in a supportive and enriching environment.

The Approach

The Reggio Emilia approach to teaching young children puts the natural development of children as well as the close relationships that they share with their environment at the center of its philosophy. Early childhood programs that have successfully adapted to this educational philosophy share that they are attracted to Reggio because of the way it views and respects the child.

Partnerships

Parents are a vital component to the Reggio Emilia philosophy. Parents are viewed as partners, collaborators and advocates for their children. Teachers respect parents as each child's first teacher and involve parents in every aspect of the curriculum.

Emergent Curriculum

An emergent curriculum is one that builds upon the interests of children. Topics for study are captured from the talk of children, through community or family events, as well as the known interests of children (puddles, shadow, dinosaurs, etc.). Teachers work together to formulate hypotheses about the possible directions of a project, the materials needed, and possible parent and/or community support and involvement.

Long Term Projects

Projects, also emergent, are in-depth studies of concepts, ideas, and interests, which arise within the group. Projects begin with teachers observing and using open-ended questions about a topic of interest. Based on the children's responses, teachers introduce materials, questions, and opportunities that provoke children to further explore the topic.

Throughout a project, teachers help children make decisions about the direction of study, the ways in which the group will research the topic, the representational medium that will demonstrate and showcase the topic and the selection of materials needed to represent the work. Long-term projects or *progettazione*, enhance lifelong learning.

Hundred Languages

As children proceed in an investigation, generating and testing their hypotheses, they are encouraged to depict their understanding through one of many symbolic languages, including drawing, sculpture, dramatic play, and writing. Revision of drawings (and ideas) is encouraged, and teachers allow children to repeat activities and modify each other's work in the collective aim of better understanding the topic. Teachers foster children's involvement in the processes of exploration and evaluation, acknowledging the importance of their evolving products as vehicles for exchange.

Collaboration

Collaborative group work, both large and small, is considered valuable and necessary to advance cognitive development. Children are encouraged to dialogue, critique, compare, negotiate, hypothesize, and problem solve through group work. Within the Reggio Emilia approach multiple perspectives promote both a sense of group membership and the uniqueness of self. There is a high emphasis on the collaboration among home-school-community to support the learning of the child.

Teacher's Role

The teacher's role within the Reggio Emilia approach is complex. Working as co-teachers, the role of the teacher is first and foremost to be that of a learner alongside the children. The teacher is a teacher-researcher, a resource and guide as she/he lends expertise to children (Edwards, 1993). Within such a teacher-researcher role, educators carefully listen, observe, and document children's work and the growth of community in their classroom and are to provoke, co-construct, and stimulate thinking, and children's collaboration with peers. Teachers are committed to reflection about their own teaching and learning.

Documentation

Documentation of children's work in progress is viewed as an important tool in the learning process for children, teachers, and parents. Pictures of children engaged in experiences, their words as they discuss what they are doing, feeling and thinking, and the children's interpretation of experience through the visual media are displayed as a graphic presentation of the dynamics of learning.

Environment

Within the Reggio Emilia schools, great attention is given to the look and feel of the classroom. Environment is considered the "third teacher." Teachers carefully organize space for small and large group projects and small intimate spaces for one, two or three children. Documentation of children's work, plants, and collections that children have made from former outings are displayed both at the children's and adult eye level.

Signed Confirmation Form

State Licensing requires that all parents read and understand the policies and procedures contained in the Parent Handbook. Please sign below and return to the office.

The nearest local office responsible for Day Care Licensing is:

Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing
7575 Metropolitan Dr. Suite 110
San Diego, CA 92123

Please sign and return this lower portion
St. Mark Lutheran Preschool has provided me with a Parent Handbook, also
available online @ stmarkpreschool.org

Child's Name _____
(Please print)

I have read and understand the procedures and policies that are stated in
the handbook.

_____ Parent/Guardian Name
(Please Print)

_____ Date _____
Signature