



Palma Ceia

Presbyterian Preschool

Strong roots. Strong branches.

Learning in the Shadow of the Steeple

Mission Statement

Palma Ceia Presbyterian Preschool supports the learning, social, relational and spiritual needs of children in a part-day Christian fully inclusive early childhood program. Typically developing children, their developmentally challenged peers, and families are supported with individualized assessment and learning through play. Employing the highest standards of quality and best practices in early childhood education, Palma Ceia seeks to model a compassionate, joyful and playful learning community for all enrolled children.

The Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church Preschool is an early childhood program of national distinction enfolded into the life and mission of the Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church. (“All of the things we are teaching our students to do, they are doing there.” Dr. Patricia O’Grady, University of Tampa Education professor.) The preschool was founded by its current director, Nancy Little, in 1979, and was nationally recognized as the best model of its kind. In its over thirty years, the graduates of the preschool have successfully been accepted to and thrived at all of the private and public schools in the area.

The preschool seeks to enact God’s love for children in two particular ways:

First: the children are regarded as competent learners and innately precious. With respect for the children, we employ evidence based “best practices” from the professional field of early childhood education. Very young children are nested most importantly in the lives of their families and the preschool seeks to assist families as they nurture their children. Preschool provides a way for families to make lifelong connections.

Second: the preschool includes and supports children with special need for support. Whether a child needs speech or occupational therapy, classroom accommodations, or a special support plan, all children are supported by staff professionally prepared for this task. All children are fully included in the life of the school. Inclusion is integral to our

overall mission as a way of enacting God's love for all people. Both typically developing and challenged children learn from each other.

As children have the opportunity to learn to trust the first people outside the intimate family circle, the preschool hopes to model a sort of "holy attachment." Where there is trust, children can begin to learn the self regulatory, social and academic skills that support future success in formal schooling. **Love prepares the heart and the mind for learning.**

The whole school operates under an integrated school wide curriculum, in which the many elements of the Palma Ceia experience are brought together in a unified whole. Concurrently, our school experiences some of the same academics, music and movement, fine art, worship, Godly Play stories, performances, literacy and cultural understandings at the same time. These themes unite the preschool community. The interests of the children and the cultures of our families flow into the curricular stream.

We utilize the Creative Curriculum: <http://teachingstrategies.com/curriculum/>. This curriculum is aligned with Florida Early Learning Standards and the Common Core Standards. It utilizes the project approach and provides many books and resources to support planning. For assessment of continuous child progress, the preschool uses the companion tool: Creative Curriculum Gold <https://shop.teachingstrategies.com/page/GOLD-assessment-online.cfm-product-overview>.

Palma Ceia Presbyterian is a Reggio Emilia inspired school. The schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, have been called the finest example of early childhood education in the world. The Reggio influence is seen here at PCPC in the primacy of child initiated art, the beauty and peace of the classrooms, the visual documentation of the children's learning, and respect for the child as a competent learner.

The arts, including visual fine art, dance, drama, movement, and yoga are infused into our classrooms, and are supported by the Joseph P. McKell Arts initiative. We employ an arts coordinator for this purpose. Art is one of the languages of children and expresses their understandings of language, math, geography, colors, and attributes. Sacred art prints and worship liturgy express the core teachings of the Christian faith. We are fortunate to have visiting performers, including organ, cello, violin, voice, professional acting, and dance.

The preschool is a worshipping community. Every Monday at 9:30, we are led in worship by The Reverend Dr. John T. DeBevoise or his designate. Gathered in our lovely sanctuary, we worship with prayer, hymns, and a sacred story. The service is under fifteen minutes and appropriate for God's youngest children.

Children of other faiths are welcomed and supported and demonstrations of the elements or stories of their faith are welcomed.

Additionally, we utilize a Montessori worship guide called Godly Play. Using beautiful handcrafted materials, Bible stories are told with liturgical action and silence. The children love both of these expressions of faith.

We maintain close ties with the local universities.

We collaborate with U.S.F. in the areas of social emotional competency, behavioral support and inclusion. Our schoolwide rules for positive behavior support are one example of our work together. Our staff contributes board service, we have published and presented with our friends at U.S.F. and U.S.F. students have written two master's theses and one doctoral dissertation here. Curricular materials, including training modules showcasing our staff's interaction with children, are in use in over 50,000 school districts. As a result of this collaboration, our director received the Community Partner award from the DeLaParte institute at U.S.F.

With the University of Tampa, we maintain ties that include the practicum hosting and employment of their students, and the involvement of faculty members in ongoing relationship.

Young children are most importantly a part of families and are a contributing part of our community. Almost all families volunteer gifts and talents in some way, enriching every aspect of our school. Some of the ways families contribute are by writing, staff nurture, photography, foreign language, medical support, cultural sharing, building maintenance, governance, financial contributions, and prayer. We have participated as our church supported the development of a preschool in Uganda. We host their teachers, exchange materials, information, and objects of material culture. We thank them for their influence on our school.

Academics are important at preschool. We believe in preparing our children for more formal schooling. Children go from PCPC to local public and private schools with great success. We are knowledgeable about developmental norms and educational standards. Using professionally agreed on standards and a robust assessment, children are prepared for their next school placement. Because of our longstanding reputation, parents need have no concern that graduates not be ready for school.

Best practices in academics at the preschool level include contextualized learning, and not overreliance on worksheets. So, with the Academy of American Pediatrics, we affirm the value of play in the lives of children. Through play based activities, our children develop knowledge and skills that will help them succeed in academic life. Through deep and loving relationships with their teachers, in the shadow of the steeple, they take first steps toward independence. With respect for their unique family cultures, they take their places in a group for the first time. Within this group, they participate with the adults in building a beloved community filled with music, art, play, and friends, and build lifetime memories. The Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church welcomes you to participate in the building of our community.

6/15

GENERAL POLICIES

The preschool staff and committee intend for our daily operations to reflect our care and concern for each child and family. Parents are encouraged to visit our classrooms at any time, by contacting an administrator for guidance. There are parent volunteer opportunities both formal and informal throughout the year, and the preschool enjoys a high level of parent involvement. You will have an opportunity to sign up for these opportunities, and if you have talents we may not know about, we would welcome an offer. Parent engagement greatly enriches our program. Two conference days are available for individual conferences, but others can be scheduled with very little notice, by asking the teacher or an administrator. Parent input throughout the year is encouraged.

Staff have been trained to follow our program policies, and we have found that adherence to them is critical to the health, safety, and effective administration of our program. Teaching staff do not have the authority to change policies due to family input, or to selectively adhere to policies.

At Palma Ceia Presbyterian, the partnership between families and the school is paramount. Accomplishment of our mission can only be based upon the positive and constructive cooperation of both parties. If a situation arises in which the Director concludes that actions of a parent or guardian make such a positive and constructive working relationship impossible, or that such a situation interferes with the needs of other students, administrators, teachers, or other parents, thus impeding the ability of PCPC to accomplish its mission, the school reserves the right to terminate the child's enrollment. Both parents will be asked to sign an agreement indicating support of these policies. Please have all alternate caregivers read as well. Any concerns may be relayed to the Director verbally or in writing.

Continued enrollment at PCPC is contingent on the staff's agreement that enrollment is productive for both the child and the group as a whole. Staff may request, and parents must provide and release assessments and evaluations of their children as needed to insure our ability to make this determination and to provide or refer to appropriate services. If enrollment in another community agency seems more appropriate, staff will assist families in transition.

A current preschool directory including names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses will be distributed electronically during the first week of school, and may not be reproduced or circulated for use outside of the purpose for which it is intended, which is to allow families to connect with one another.

While this handbook is intended to cover many of the circumstances surrounding the operation of the school, it must be understood that it cannot cover all possibilities or situations arising during the school's operations. Discretion regarding operation must finally rest on the staff, committee, and the church which have final responsibility for the

school. There will be changing factors which will determine whether practices are continued or altered, therefore, while everything in this book is assumed to be true and correct at the time of this writing, no guarantee and no promise is made as to its future application. 6/15.

Closing of School

If by 7 AM, the Director has determined that the preschool cannot be sufficiently staffed in accordance with Hillsborough County Child Care Licensing standards, the preschool will be closed for that day. A sign will be posted on the main entry door to the school to indicate the closure.

Orientation Procedures

Staff work with parents in a very individualized way to help children become acclimated to the program. Families may come on a tour, during which policies, philosophy, and daily program are discussed. Families with children on the waiting list should access the website and read the posted handbook before scheduling a tour. This will allow them to familiarize themselves with preschool policies. Families are requested to come on a tour before the admissions cycle begins in February. A preschool tour completes your waitlist application. If a space is offered, families will then have the information needed to make a timely decision, and will have 48 hours to accept a position. Tours are generally scheduled on a monthly basis and dates are posted on the website. To reserve a space on a tour, please check the website (pcpcpreschool.org) for tour dates and email Pia Martin at preschool@palmaceia.org for a tour reservation. Family drop-in days are held for children and parents before school starts. Staff spends special time forming a close relationship with the child, and extra staff may help out in the classroom as needed, so that one person can be the “point” person for that child. Attachment is important, and a church preschool has a special responsibility to model holy attachment. Working with families, for example, we may decide on a shorter day for a child for awhile, and a child may need to work up to a full day. We often call families on the first few days to give a status report, and they are welcome to call us. Children who are sad are held, comforted, and made to feel that their emotional needs are understood and accepted. Soon enough, we will find things in the classroom that interest them, and they will make friends. If any child is not making a good adjustment, you can be sure that you will be notified, so that we can discuss it, and make plans to support your child.

Communication With Parents

The following are some of the ways staff and parents may communicate at PCPC:

- *Maintenance of preschool website.
- *Parent orientation by clergy and preschool administration.
- *Family interest survey.
- *Request for and use of family pictures, including homes, pets etc.

- *Regular school wide electronic newsletter.
- *Parent handbook.
- *Pre-conference issue surveys.
- *Parent-teacher conferences scheduled twice a year.
- *Conferences scheduled at the request of families or teachers.
- *Teacher availability at drop-off and pick-up to **briefly** exchange information.
- *Early Learning Plans for supported children.
- *Ongoing assessment of child progress.
- *Communication on topics or changes related to preschool.
- *Communication to families on topics related to child development.
- *Daily communication boards outside of all classrooms.
- *Opportunities for parents to offer feedback.
- *Daily schedules posted in the classrooms and on doors.
- *Administrator availability at arrival and dismissal.
- *Articles in church newsletter and speaking engagements at church and community events.
- *Multiple parent involvement opportunities.
- *Support for family and religious culture.
- *Encouragement of parents to volunteer and observe child's classroom.
- *Display of children's work outside classrooms and in hall gallery.
- *Parent informational events.
- *Invited parent participation on preschool committee, end of year party committees, and volunteer coordinator.
- *Director's chats.
- *Reports of accidental injuries.
- *Email notes from administrators and staff.

Church policy requires that all physical space in the preschool, including bulletin boards, walls and countertops are to be used only for the bulletins and notices relative to activities of Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church and which have been cleared with the program staff. Examples of requests to post information that are not permitted include but are not limited to: advertisements for businesses, solicitation for participation or contributions for other organizations, schedules or invitations for various community programs, and advertisements for child care.

Q: How does PCPC Preschool prepare children for future schooling?

A: In all that we do, we have identified academic, social, emotional, and spiritual goals for the children. Lesson plans are prepared with all these goals in mind, and are individualized for the level of each child. Children who have higher ability levels in some areas are encouraged to move ahead. Florida Early Learning Standards are embedded in teaching strategies, which include play, discovery learning, and direct instruction. Teachers are aware of what young children should know at each stage, and create lessons which will encourage children to reach the next level. PCPC Preschool utilizes a web based curriculum and assessment called Creative Curriculum and Creative Curriculum Gold, a revolutionary approach to child assessment based entirely on observation of children in their natural

environment. It is grounded in 38 research based objectives and is aligned with common core standards and Florida State early learning standards, in order to assess and report on children's progress. PCPC also employs "Emergent Curriculum" which builds curriculum on the interest of students.

Church Governance

The preschool is an integral part of the mission and ministry of the Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church. Oversight of the preschool is by sessional committee which governs its policy and direction. Decisions concerning its operation are at the discretion of the director. The preschool derives its support from the tuition paid by parents, estimated to cover about 1/3 of the costs, "in kind" support of the church, and generous gifts from donors. The Committee hopes this outreach can continue to benefit both the children we serve and the community at large, serving as a model of a compassionate church school community.

Daily Procedures

1. Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

According to law, children must be signed in upon arrival and signed out upon dismissal by their teachers. Upon arrival and sign-in, parents must separate at the gate entrance to the classroom. This means that the classroom teacher assumes responsibility for the child and parents depart at that time.

Arrival time for children will be from 8:30 until 8:50. There will be a grace period from 8:50 until 9:00. After 9:00 scheduled school activities will begin and children will not be able to attend school on that day if they have not arrived by 9:00.

Arrival Procedures:

8:30-8:50: Please walk your little ones back to their classroom doors, sign them in, and drop off at the door, saying goodbye to your child so that it is clear to all that the teacher is taking over from there. We will take your child into our loving arms and make them feel at home. Parents should, unless signed up to volunteer, move out of the hallways so the children can get settled. When they can see you, parting is harder.

Grace period 8:50-9:00: The same as above, as the children inside are winding up and preparing for the next activity.

After 9:00: Children will not be accepted into the program that day. Entry doors will be locked by a computer at that time for security. Please do not ask any staff member to bend the rule, or make staff feel that they have done something wrong when they act according to this policy.

Dismissal Procedures 12:00 – 12:30:

Please refer to communication sent to your home for dismissal locations.

No child will be released to a person not authorized by their parent to pick the child up. Please notify the staff, preferably in writing, if your child is to be picked up by another person. If the person who comes for your child is not well known to us, we will ask for a driver's license. If identification is not conclusive, we will not release your child.

Occasionally, parents will ask us to deny the other parent access to a child. We can do this only if we have a court order to that effect. Otherwise, we cannot legally keep a child from a parent. **PCPC preschool will not serve as a custody exchange site for any enrolled child.**

All children are to be picked up by 12:30 P.M. School is over at that time and staff has other obligations. If an emergency keeps you from picking up your child on time, please call and explain provisions made for your child. At 12:30, you will be called, as well as any emergency numbers you have given us. Late charges are as follows: \$20.00 for every 5 minutes over 12:35 p.m. Please do not ask if late charges apply to you. If you are late, they do apply. If children are not picked up after a reasonable time, and staff must go, the Department of Children and Family Services or the police department will be called.

Arrival and dismissal are not times when parents and teachers can have a conference. The reason for this is that the teacher is still required to provide sight and sound supervision for all the children in her care. She cannot do that while paying extended attention to a verbal exchange. A **brief** exchange of information is appropriate, but please respect the teacher's need for ongoing supervision of the class. Problem solving is best left to a conference, which can be scheduled with very little notice, so that classroom coverage can be arranged.

If you hope to pick your child up before 12:00, remember, our building will be locked and secured at that time. The Administrative Assistant has other responsibilities. So, please let us know if you need to pick up your child early, and we will try to accommodate you and the others making the same request. Emails and messages left close to pick up time may not be received.

After children have been dismissed from the classroom, they must remain under the sight and sound supervision of their parent. They are not allowed to run in the hall or to be out of the sight of parents.

When parking is impossible due to an unpredicted storm or flooding, unexpected use of our parking lot, etc., we will fly a flag at the exit door from Fellowship Hall, facing Plant High School. That way, if we don't have time to notify parents, you can check and see that the flag is out, and we will be able to safely dismiss your children to you from inside the Fellowship Hall as you pull up in a line.

Parking is limited, and dropping off children quickly will allow others to use the space. We know that parking is a challenge, but we have no way of changing the available parking and law enforcement may issue tickets to those parked illegally. Parking signs on the streets surrounding the church are enforced. Please read the signs to see the exact wording.

During the first week of school, staff will be available to assist you. When we have the information in advance, we will try to warn you via email of upcoming events impacting parking. Parents are responsible for the careful supervision of children while at the church. Please do not permit children to walk in the parking lot or street without holding hands. Because we are right next to Plant High School, and because there are many church and community activities here during the day, there can be a lot of traffic. Not all drivers in the vicinity use appropriate speed or safety, and children can be difficult to see. The church and school continue to try a variety of strategies, but caution is merited.

We have fewer than fifty parking spaces, three of which are reserved for handicapped parking and **six of which are reserved for Preschool pick-up and drop-off in the mornings**. This leaves about 35 spaces for the Preschool and Church staff which on an average day can total over 40. We must ask you not to park in areas that are not designated as parking spaces (i.e. next to the flowerbeds, in the entry ways, etc) since this can further restrict flow and presents additional dangers for the children.

We will not allow anyone under 18 to drop off or pick up a child. Supervision must go from parent or other adult designate to the teacher.

2. Separation Issues

Often a child cries and clings when a parent or caregiver says goodbye. This is normal, and your child is demonstrating the strong bond between the two of you. Crying at the moment of separation does not indicate poor adjustment or a dislike of school, and may come and go. If your child is unhappy at school, we will tell you, and work together to strategize how to help. At PCPC Preschool, concern for the emotional well being of our children is paramount. During adjustment, we will work with you on a plan to best support your child as he or she begins school. We may recommend shorter days to start with. After your child has adjusted, if he or she cries or balks at separation, the best thing you can do is to calmly express positive expectations, such as “you will find some fun things to do”. Our experienced teachers will take your child, acknowledge his feelings, direct his attention to something interesting, and then it will be time to say goodbye, tell your child when you will pick him up, i.e. “Mommy or Daddy will see you after snack”, and turn and leave. We will let your child know we see that he feels sad, we are sorry, but that Mommy or Daddy always comes back. We will acknowledge his or her feelings and comfort your child. A ritual is valuable, but prolonged or changing ritual can be hard on children. Most often, children will settle down and become engaged very quickly, but if not, you can be sure that we will let you know. You are always welcome to call us during the morning for an update.

During arrival, teachers are trained to do a cursory health check. If your child has not slept well, if she has had a “boo-boo”, please tell the teacher briefly about it. A child who is ill under our policies may not be received. For those policies, please see the section: **Health, Safety and Nutrition**. Teachers are required to follow program policies concerning health

and exclusion from preschool. Please do not attempt to bring a child who is ill. If you need clarification, call before bringing the child to school and check.

3. Confidentiality

Children's diagnoses and conditions are confidential. This includes your observations while volunteering at preschool. Please be sensitive about discussing these in front of the children and their parents. We are open with the children about things they notice, giving them sensitive words to use. We may say: "You're right, that is harder for her". Or, "He needs that wheelchair to get from place to place." No confidential information will be released without a signed consent form, or under legally defined conditions.

Media images taken at our school and/or events, if they include children other than your own, should not be sent electronically or posted on any social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. Please be considerate of other families when posting pictures or comments on social media. In order to protect the privacy of Palma Ceia Presbyterian Preschool, children, families and staff, parents and staff cannot share, distribute, or post images of others via telephone, email, online social networking or other websites without prior consent of the Preschool Director.

4. Clothing

Children should be dressed in comfortable play clothes, which are free of complicated fastenings, and comfortable, **closed toed**, rubber soled shoes, which allow for running, jumping, climbing and all physical activities. Injuries and accidents such as stubbed toes and twisted ankles can occur if children wear sandals. Please do not send children to preschool dressed in distracting or inappropriate clothing or accessories. Examples include but are not limited to: cheerleader and football player uniforms, pajamas, any sort of costumes, tutus or dance costumes, hats or caps, watches, jewelry, boots, umbrellas, sunglasses and unneeded hair accessories.

Messy activities are part of any good child development program, and clothes will at some point, probably become soiled. We will try to minimize this by using smocks, but you should know that it will sometimes occur. Getting dirty is a sign that your child has been engaged in some sensory experiences, which are part of a high quality program. Please send your child to school in clothing that allows for experimentation with messy materials.

Children will need a complete change of clothing in a zip lock bag, labeled with their name, to be left in the classroom in case of spills, and during toilet learning, many changes are needed. Please keep weather changes in mind and supply clothes appropriate for changing weather, as well as growing children and sizes. If you forget, we will have extras on hand. If your child comes home in "extra clothes", please remember to wash and return them to school as soon as you can.

5. Conferences

Conferences are scheduled twice a year, but your concerns can always be addressed very quickly. We can best do that on site, where we have records and calendars to consult. Please do not call staff at home or if this is the only way to talk, please set a phone date in advance so that the teacher can arrange for her own family needs to be covered. Also, some teachers are willing to email with parents using the school email address. To contact any staff member, you may email the preschool at preschool@palmaceia.org. Families should maintain an awareness of their requests for staff time. We encourage our teachers to maintain an appropriate professional distance with families.

6. Toys and Other Items from Home

Toys and other items from home are not allowed. Please do not allow the children to bring toys even into the hall. Once the children enter by entry door into our program, (double glass doors in the front), they should be both finished with breakfast and should not be carrying any items from home into our hallways or classrooms (**NO TOYS and NO FOOD inside the glass doors**). They may **not** briefly show them to their friends or to their teacher. Please do not ask the teacher to “be the bad guy” and return a toy to the parent at arrival. This sets a negative tone for the day. Our experience with toys at school has been that it encourages jealousy, “turfism”, and “one upmanship”. It has even been dangerous. We are encouraging community at school, and are blessed by the diverse and rich inventory of toys and educational materials that we have. If your toddler has attachment or security needs that are met by a “lovey” of some type, please talk with the staff about how to handle this together. Children in the three and four year old classes should not bring these at all.

Please mark all items with your child’s name. It is especially important to mark cups with first and last name. This is a statutory requirement.

7. Diapers

Diapers are sent by parents for their child. Please label with your child’s name. Toddlers may bring a small diaper bag of the size that will fit in their cubby. **No backpack is needed or allowed for threes or fours.** Please be sure to label everything with your child’s name. When you are ready to begin helping your child potty train, please contact the teacher **ahead of time** to set up a plan that will work for both child and classroom. The teacher should know **ahead of time** when children are going to start wearing “big girl” or “big boy” pants. As it is difficult for children to distinguish the difference between diapers and “pull-ups”, we ask that your child remain in diapers until potty training with underwear is initiated.

8. Birthdays and Other Holidays

Birthdays are a wonderful part of childhood culture. The preschool staff will plan a small celebration to make each child feel special, and to focus on how precious his or her life is to us, as we know it is to you. This celebration will include a rousing chorus of Happy Birthday and juice popsicles for the class on the day the birthday is celebrated. *No food including cake, cookies or any food items, goodie bags, or decorations, may be brought from home.* The children may **not** distribute birthday or other invitations at school. We strongly suggest mailing birthday invitations. Children are very astute at recognizing them, and talk about them at school. If you are limiting the number of invitations, please handle the entire matter outside of school. Please consider the possibility that birthday parties may be an opportunity to participate in our preschool mission of reflecting God's love for all children.

On the child's birthday, parents are invited, as part of the celebration, to purchase a favorite book to be placed in the preschool library in their child's name, and to read that book to the class.

It wouldn't hurt to remind busy teachers the day before! No goodie bags, favors, or other items from home are allowed for birthdays or other holidays.

9. Volunteering in the Classrooms

Parents at Palma Ceia Presbyterian Preschool are true partners in the health and vitality of our school. All parents are welcome to volunteer and visit at the preschool. In the past few years, we have had over 90% volunteer participation by parents, in substituting, in governance, in staff nurture, preparation of materials and in loving support of all kinds. Each year, we have a parent volunteer coordinator. Be sure to fill out the "volunteer form" found on our website, and if you have a hidden talent you wish to share that we haven't thought of, then please say so!

The opportunity to serve as a substitute is one way parent volunteers can assist our program. In order to do this and to be counted into the ratios, parents must be screened, including fingerprinting. If you would like to be included in this way, you can contact the administrative assistant for directions. To volunteer or visit, please let the director know what day you would like to come in, and we will put you on the schedule. You will be assigned to the classroom where you are most needed, or help with any tasks that need completion as directed by the teaching staff. Staff reserves the right to assign visitors to classrooms so as to manage the effective operation of the whole school.

Palma Ceia Presbyterian is committed to administering all educational programs and activities, and hiring, without discrimination on the basis of gender, race, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, or handicapping condition.

Allergies, Health, Safety, and Nutrition

At PCPC Preschool, we take seriously the health, safety and nutrition of our children and staff. The close contact of young children, especially of those who are not potty trained, can lead to the spread of bacteria and viruses from one to another. It is our intention to run the safest, most sanitary and healthy preschool possible. We believe our families want those practices to continue and so our policies reflect those community standards. To do that, we must abide by all national and local health standards, as well as set policies which support that goal. By following our policies, you join with us in accomplishing our goal.

At the preschool, we adhere to the following standards:

- * The preschool is disinfected daily. Bathrooms and tables are cleaned with a CDC specified bleach solution, and cleaned after usage as well.
- * Disposable paper products are used for snack, water, and drying hands.
- * Staff is trained in and follows protocol for safe and sanitary diaper changing and hand washing. Hand washing is the best way to ensure a healthy program. Ongoing supervision makes sure they follow standards set by licensing and best practice standards. Staff will wash their hands upon entering the building each morning.
- * When any of our children (to our knowledge) have been exposed to any recommended reportable communicable disease, notices will be distributed to parents with information about what to expect, incubation, symptoms, and exclusion guidelines. Parents should report these to an administrator so that plans can be made for the safety and health of all children.
- * Appropriate health records are maintained for staff and children.
- * Mouthed toys are disinfected daily, others as needed.
- * Toys are constantly checked for small parts that may break off, such as eyes and noses on stuffed animals, buttons or shoes. Please help us keep on top of chokeable items.
- * Staff has required training in First Aid, CPR and AED.
- * Fire drills are held once a month and disaster and lockdown drills as required.
- * Health records are checked once a month.
- * One recent study showed that one source of infectious agents in the preschool is germs from parents and children as they come in. Washing your child's hands, and yours, before they come would help us keep the preschool healthy. In any event, they will be asked to wash their hands first thing in the classroom.

* Pest control is handled on a monthly basis, by a licensed pest control operator when the children are not here.

* Any hazardous materials are locked up.

* Classroom materials are laundered as needed.

* Child/staff ratios are maintained for the children’s health and safety.

Hillsborough County Guidelines			NAEYC Guidelines			Palma Ceia Presbyterian Preschool Guidelines		
Age of Children	Group Size	Ratio	Age of Children	Group Size	Ratio	Age of Children	Group Size	Ratio
1 Year		1:6	12-28 Months	6	1:3	1 Year	8-9	1:4 or 5
2 Years		1:11		8	1:4	2 Years		1:6 or 7
3 Years		1:15		10	2:4	3 Years		1:7
4 Years		1:20		12	2:4	4 Years		1:9
5 Years and older		1:25	21-36 Months	8	1:4			
				10	1:5			
				12	1:6			
			30-48 Months	12	1:6			
				14	1:7			
				16	1:8			
				18	1:9			
			4 & 5 Years	16	1:8			
				18	1:9			
				20	1:10			

1. Health and Registration Forms

PCPC preschool requires, for all enrolled children, a current health examination form (DH 3040), and immunization certificate (DH 680), with proof of immunizations as specified by the American Academy of Pediatrics’ published guidelines and immunization schedules. Children with a religious exemption certificate in lieu of DH 680 will not be enrolled.

Before August 17th, all medical and registration forms, including both health forms must be **complete**, up to date and on file at the preschool. If, for reasons of insurance, you are unable to meet this deadline, please contact us. If forms are not received by August 17th, your child's enrollment will be considered withdrawn. Parents should make a note of the date their child's health card expires, and note that on their calendars so that they can make another appointment. These records must be on the specific Florida form available at most physicians' offices and at the county health department. Please be aware that we have our own legal requirements, and sometimes must expire a health form before your Doctor does, requiring another visit. As a courtesy, we will try to let you know the date of expiration and after that date by law, your child will no longer be allowed in school. **It is a parent's responsibility to notify PCPC Preschool in writing of any changes to this information**

Please advise the staff of any allergies, physical difficulties, or health related information which may be important to know in an emergency or may cause problems in your child's daily activities. Staff will work with you to develop a support plan for your child.

In case of an emergency, the parent/physician will be notified. Please be absolutely sure that we have your current contact information. It is the parent's responsibility to maintain this information in an up-to-date manner. Every year we attempt to reach parents who have new numbers and have not told us. This could be very dangerous so please remember to notify us when you have changes.

2. Medication

Medication will not be dispensed, as this is a part day program, unless it is prescribed medicine necessary for a life threatening condition. If this is the case, such as an inhaler for asthma, or an EpiPen, the medication must be given directly to an administrator, not a teacher for storage or refrigeration. We will be able to dispense medicine under the following conditions:

With EpiPens, we need two pens.

*** Medication must be delivered to school in the container in which it was purchased. It must be prescribed by a Doctor. All medications will be located in the director's office, or in a safe location close to the child, or both.**

* The label must indicate the child's name, the name of the medication, the physician's name, the dosage, and the frequency of dosage.

* A separate supply of medication must be kept at school. Medication cannot be transported back and forth daily.

* If medication requires equipment for administration, (measuring spoon, dropper) the parent is responsible for supplying them. Please mark with the child's name.

* The parent or caregiver must deliver the medicine. Under no circumstances may it be left in the child's backpack or bag.

* Parents must fill out a form from Hillsborough County childcare licensing. These forms are available at the preschool.

* Medicine cannot be mixed with any food.

* No topical medication or treatment, such as diaper rash cream, disinfectant, or sunscreen can be applied by our staff or left at school or in the child's bag.

3. Minor Accidents

Because of their age, size, and developing coordination, active children tumble about frequently. If your child receives a bump that leaves a mark, a scrape, scratch or bump, you will be notified in writing and you or your designated caregiver will be asked to sign an accident report. If the accident report is signed by anyone other than the parent, you will be contacted by phone or email. You must respond to Nancy Little (nancy@palmaceia.org) during that business day to let us know that you have received the message. If children are signed out sick, an incident form must be signed at the time of pickup.

If we observe any health related change in your child, we will discuss it with you. There may be an instance where a tumbling child who looks fine at the time may later bruise. Or, if a child does not cry, or tell the teacher, the teacher may be unaware that the child has been hurt. If you are at home and wondering, please feel free to call us at home. We do not want you to worry. We will always tell you if we think a child has been hurt, but sometimes it is hard to tell if physical activity is fun or causes an unseen hurt.

If your child is hurt and we think it is not an emergency, but might be significant, as in a bumped tooth, possible need for stitches, etc. we will get in touch with you so that you and your physician, if desired, can decide.

If you are concerned for your child, that he or she may have been hurt or need information regarding a serious concern, you may call Nancy Little at home, 251-0376. We ask that you reserve these calls for matters of a serious nature.

4. Emergencies

In case of more serious accidental injury or illness, we immediately try to contact you, and your emergency contacts. If necessary, we will also call your child's physician, 911, ambulance, or paramedics. Staff is not allowed to transport a child to the emergency room. Parents will be financially responsible for any decisions made before their arrival.

5. Illness

All absences should be emailed to: preschool@palmaceia.org, and not to Nancy or the teachers.

If your child is not able to fully participate in school activities, or if staff is unable to provide any special care needed without compromising the classroom ratios and activities, children should be cared for at home. If staff feels this is the case, children will not be received, or will be sent home if symptoms of illness appear during the day.

As a teacher greets a child in the morning, she is also performing a daily health check. If your child has not slept well, has allergies, bites, injuries, is on medication, or has any other health issues, first thing in the morning is the time to make us aware of them. **To best serve your child, we must know about these.**

In her sole discretion, the director, or her designee, will decide if a symptomatic child may be received or may continue at school.

Following are symptoms for parents to consider when determining whether a child will be able to participate in all school activities and will not require special care from staff. In our experience, the following are examples which prevent children from full participation.

- * fever
- * cold with a frequent colored nasal discharge
- * constant cough
- * diarrhea
- * undiagnosed rash
- * irritability, fussiness, lethargy or generally out of sorts
- * vomiting
- * reddened eyes, eye or ear discharge, sore throat, headache, or abdominal pain

We understand that it may be an inconvenience for your child to miss school, but we are committed to running a healthy program. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Please notify the school if your child is ill and staying home. We worry! If we don't hear from you for a few days, we will call to check. Children should be well at home for 24 hours (without fever suppressant) before returning to preschool. If your child has been recently ill and you are not sure if he or she can return to school, you should call at 8:30 a.m. and check with an administrator before bringing the child.

There may be circumstances when a physician's note is required for reentry into school, if, in the directors' judgment, such a note would be helpful.

6. Nutrition/Allergies

Snack is served at 10:30.

A menu of snacks is posted on classroom doors. A snack is available each day, along with fruit juice, served daily.

With more children than ever who have dangerous allergies, we have created a policy, which makes it extremely unlikely that any child at PCPC will come into contact with any food that can harm them. After all, our first and most important job is to keep your children safe in our care. So, our policy states that there will be **no food allowed from home** into our classrooms or inside our building at all. We will have snack options that we will purchase that meet the needs of all children. This way all the children can eat together with options available for all. The allergic child need not feel set apart.

We do thank you for understanding our need to be in charge of food for the children in our program. We have done substantial research on the possible outcomes of a more flexible approach, and the consequences are frightening. Thank you for trusting us with these issues. If a food item from home is needed because of a life threatening condition, please talk with an administrator.

7. Choking

Children may choke during meals or playtime because they use their mouths to explore and experiment with unfamiliar objects.

Objects that are smaller than 1 1/4 in. in diameter should not be accessible to preschool children. This includes any food or object, such as coins or the removable eyes of stuffed animals. Please examine your child's backpack or lovey for small decorative items, which may pose a choking risk.

8. Severe Weather Safety and Emergency Evacuation Plans

We live in an area that experiences various forms of severe weather including severe thunderstorms, hurricanes, and tornadoes. In order to protect children, we have a written emergency procedure to address each kind of weather emergency. Drills are held to test these procedures.

PCPC Preschool will be closed if the Hillsborough County schools are closed due to such an occurrence, or if some other circumstance precludes operation. If the public schools are open but we must close, we will post a sign on the front door of the preschool and use any other means of communications available to notify parents.

The National Weather Service usually gives us enough warning when a hurricane is approaching. However, severe thunderstorms and tornadoes can occur rather suddenly. A

storm is classified as “severe” when one or more of the following conditions occur: winds 58 MPH or higher, hail 3/4 or more in diameter, or developing tornadoes. A severe thunderstorm or tornado “watch” means that a severe thunderstorm or tornado is possible. A severe thunderstorm or tornado “warning” means that a severe thunderstorm or tornado has been sighted or indicated by radar.

If the National Weather Service gives our area a hurricane or tornado watch, you will immediately need to pick up your child. If a warning is given, hurricane or tornado has been sighted, you should remain at home and we will take care of the children according to our procedures. Be assured that we will take all necessary precautions when dealing with this type of situation. We are prepared and trained for severe weather.

1. We have a battery operated weather band radio in the preschool administrative assistant’s office to stay in touch with current weather conditions and emergency instructions. We also can access radar reports and alerts on our cell phones.
2. If pick up from preschool front doors is impossible, we will fly our storm flag from the door on Himes Avenue where the road is most likely to be open. If the flag is out, please form a pick up line on Himes by the flag.
3. We have assembled a “survival” kit with first aid supplies, flashlights, extra clothing, and non-perishable foods, which can be used for sheltering in place.
4. We have identified and posted evacuation routes if full evacuation is ordered. The shelter will be identified at the time of the emergency. Our flood evacuation center is: PIERCE MIDDLE SCHOOL 5511 N. Hesperides (north of Hillsborough Ave.)
5. If we had to take the children to an alternate pick up point that would be: Bayshore Presbyterian Church, 2515 Bayshore Blvd. (Access is from Palm Dr.)
6. Attendance and nametags would be taken.
7. We would put into place the disaster plans on file for each emergency.

Local radio and television stations will have weather and evacuation information.

THERAPIES AND COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Palma Ceia Presbyterian Preschool and the University of South Florida collaborate in an entity called "First Steps Together". Nancy Little, Preschool Director, and Dr. Lise Fox, Professor and Director of the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities, College of Behavioral and Community Sciences, University of South Florida are the principal collaborators, along with Rochelle Lentini, M.A. Early Childhood Special Education.

Through this collaboration PCPC preschool staff have received extensive training in strategies for teaching social-emotional competence, the Teaching Pyramid model, and functional behavior analysis.

PCPC has hosted USF students in research leading up to one Master's Thesis and one Doctoral Dissertation, has served as a site for filming training materials, and has participated in the development of those training materials now used extensively in school districts throughout the country. PCPC staff and USF staff publish together in peer reviewed journals and professional publications, and have presented jointly in the national forum.

This collaboration benefits PCPC whenever evidence based strategies are used to support children both globally in excellent practice and to support children with challenging behavior.

All PCPC children may, at one time or another, participate in activities as part of this collaboration.

Palma Ceia Presbyterian Preschool contracts with therapists to see our students. Only those therapists are allowed to practice here.

1. Referrals: A therapy referral form is completed by the director and forwarded to therapists to initiate the process. A permission slip must be signed.
2. The therapist(s) follow up on referrals by first talking with the parents and then classroom staff. With written parental permission, a screening is completed. If the child does not pass the screening, a comprehensive evaluation is completed with written parent permission. Based on the results of the evaluation, treatment may or may not be recommended. In some cases, monitoring with a reevaluation in 3-6 months is recommended. In others, initiation of therapy is recommended.
3. At PCPC Preschool, therapy may be provided in a variety of places including the classroom downstairs, or upstairs therapy room, or the playground, depending on what is determined to be the best location for meeting the child's therapy goals. In an attempt to integrate as much as possible, PCPC staff will sometimes attend sessions, and family members are welcome.

4. Families must sign a letter of permission for their children to be signed in and out of the classroom for therapy.

If your child is not attending school on a day when therapy is scheduled, please contact the therapist directly as soon as possible, so they do not make the trip here if not needed.

ADMISSIONS AND FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

Application for admission may be made at any time by completing a wait list form, available in the church office, preschool office, or may be downloaded via the Internet from our website. A \$25 nonrefundable application fee must accompany the submission of this form. A child is placed in the pool of applicants when the form and fee are received. The waiting list application is complete only after parents have attended a tour. A tour may be requested by contacting Pia Martin at preschool@palmaceia.org. Children are accepted for admission with considerations noted by the Admissions Committee for the following: (alphabetically listed) children of administrators, pastors, and staff, children of church members, children in special need of support, and siblings of PCPC students. The Director, together with the Admissions Committee, oversees and maintains sole authority for the admissions process. Classrooms are composed with discernment to ensure balance with respect to the following factors: gender, children in special need of support and typical children, optimal birth date ranges and other considerations, although the number of legacy children is also an influence. Application should be made with a waiting period in mind. Placement on the waiting list does not guarantee entry.

Families should be aware that first choice of days may not be available.

The preschool serves those who are 1 on or before September 1, through those who are 4 on or before September 1. Those children who are 5 by September 1 are not eligible for entrance in that year, except that exceptions may be made for the developmental placement of children in need of special support.

Children are placed in classrooms by the following table:

One-year-old class: born on or before Sept. 1, 2014

Two-year-old class: born on or before Sept. 1, 2013

Three-year-old class: born on or before Sept. 1, 2012

Four-year-old class: born on or before Sept. 1, 2011

The minimum number of days a child may be enrolled at PCPC is two days a week. Students are placed in a class according to the dates above. Families will be able to choose only a

Monday/Wednesday/Friday, Tuesday/Thursday, or a five-day schedule. Only five days will be available in the four-year-old class.

The staff at PCPC Preschool believes in a high degree of continuity, yet we must be flexible to meet the many demands of running such a specialized school. To this end, we must, in our sole discretion, decide the makeup of classes. PCPC Preschool does not honor requests from parents for a teacher or classroom.

For classes 1-3-year-olds, a non-refundable \$100.00 per child registration fee is due annually upon submission of the Enrollment Request Form. This fee is paid first by registered students in the spring, and then by new students, to guarantee a space for the next year. In addition, with the Enrollment Agreement each family must pay a non-refundable \$400.00 per child tuition deposit, which will be credited toward tuition in the final months of the school year for which the child is registering. If the child withdraws from the program at any time subsequent to submission of the Enrollment Agreement, the \$500.00 deposit will not be refunded.

To enroll a child in the 4K class, a pre-paid non-refundable tuition amount of \$2,432 will be due. **The \$2,432.00 registration/prepaid tuition amount will be due at registration,** and will be credited toward tuition in the final months of the school year.

Monthly payments of the tuition balance would be at the rate of \$608 per month, beginning in August 2015 and ending with the final tuition payment in January 2016.

If the child withdraws from the program at any time subsequent to submission of the Enrollment Agreement, the \$500.00, or 4K deposit will not be refunded.

PCPC Preschool's Enrollment Agreement is made for the full academic year. Both parents/guardians are responsible for the entire tuition, based on the assigned class schedule, and other fees as specified in the parent handbook for the full academic year.

Full payment of the entire annual tuition and fees is required even if the child withdraws from the school subsequent to submission of the Enrollment Agreement.

However, if a child must withdraw subsequent to submission of the Enrollment Agreement, the family will be relieved of its financial obligations to the extent the preschool is able to replace the child with another who assumes the leaving family's financial obligations. Every effort will be made by the preschool to find a replacement for the withdrawing child, but this is not possible in every circumstance.

If parents determine a need to make a change in the enrollment agreement subsequent to the submission of the signed agreement, they may submit a request for an amended enrollment agreement. Forms for this purpose are available from the preschool administrative assistant and are accepted on or after September 1st. Submission of this form cannot provide any assurance or guarantee that your requested changes will be accommodated. A family may submit one request per child per enrollment year. A nonrefundable administrative fee of \$25 per child must accompany this form. This fee is nonrefundable regardless of whether or not the preschool is able to grant your request.

Your request expires at the end of the current enrollment year. An administrator will notify you if your request is approved.

If a child is sick, the family is still required to pay for that day.

Children are enrolled for set days. The preschool cannot provide random additional days (drop-ins) for convenience. Our classes are fully enrolled each day of the week, and to allow drop-ins would compromise our high quality child/staff ratios.

Referral of a child in special need of support may be made by a parent, physician, therapist, community agency, or our school may determine that a child has need of special support. Placement and classification is at our sole discretion and is decided on the basis of what services most support the child. Families will be asked, and must provide, all diagnostic reports so that sound educational planning can take place.

** Approved by PCPC Session 2/8/05

Tuition and Fees

Please refer to Preschool Website (pcpcpreschool.org) for current tuition and fees.

PRESCHOOL FEE STRUCTURE

Preschool tuition is calculated annually and then is divided into **10 equal payments**. It is due according to the monthly schedule below. Monthly tuition includes: tuition, snack fee, and arts and crafts fees.

MONTH	DUE DATE	\$15.00 LATE FEE ADDED
August 2015	Before August 27 th	August 31 st
September 2015	September 1 st	September 10 th
October 2015	October 1 st	October 10 th
November 2015	November 1 st	November 10 th
December 2015	December 1 st	December 10 th
January 2016	January 1 st	January 10 th
February 2016	February 1 st	February 10 th
March 2016	March 1 st	March 10 th
April 2016	April 1 st	April 10 th
May 2016	May 1 st	May 10 th

All payments should be brought to the school or mailed to the church office at 3501 W. San Jose Street, Tampa, FL 33629. NO cash will be accepted by the preschool.

We are not set up to accept credit cards at this time.

The mailing address is:

Palma Ceia Presbyterian Preschool
3501 W. San Jose Street
Tampa, FL 33629 Please mark attention: preschool.

Tuition Assistance may be provided by the preschool to those children with special need for support who are unable to afford our services otherwise. Parents may speak to the director and she will gladly discuss this. A completed application and tax returns from the previous year will be required. Offers of assistance are at the discretion and judgment of the director and preschool committee, and are based upon financial need. Parents must be willing to make their financial records available. Funds for these scholarships come from the Charles Greenwood Scholarship Fund and the Martha Clark Scholarship Fund, and gifts from those in the church and community who love children. Applications are available from an administrator.

Temporary assistance may be available for any child on an emergency basis through the Bea David Scholarship Fund.

The preschool has monthly requirements to meet; therefore, monthly charges are consistent, regardless of absences or illness. Parents should not expect a courtesy statement. The director has been instructed by the committee to notify parents of termination of services if tuition is not paid in a timely manner.

DISCIPLINE, CHILD GUIDANCE & SELF REGULATION

Hillsborough County Ordinance 86-35, Section 2.6, "Child Discipline" requires that parents are notified in writing of the disciplinary practices used by child care facilities. PCPC supports this law, and submits the following:

Positive Behavior Support

One of the central developmental tasks of early childhood is to develop self regulation. This ability is one of the most important factors in later school success. At Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church Preschool, the emphasis is on building a kind and ethical school community which derives from Christian values; a beloved community. Discipline is taught in conjunction with respect for the child's developing sense of self. Guidelines are created using specific knowledge of child development, which informs our practices with appropriate expectations for each age.

Teaching strategies are used that have an evidence basis in teaching young children social and emotional competence.

In particular, we use a strategy called Positive Behavior Support, which allows us to understand why a child has challenging behavior, and to teach the child new skills to replace that behavior.

We abstain from corporal punishment or humiliating, frightening, or shame based disciplinary techniques. Food or beverages are never withheld as a disciplinary device. "Time out" is rarely used, although children may be separated for safety.

Staff uses only positive methods of guidance, including natural and logical consequences, redirection, anticipation of and elimination of potential problems, and encouragement of cooperative behavior in place of competition, comparison, or criticism.

Consistent, school wide rules are developed within the school community and can be applied not only to the children's actions, but are a source to guide the actions of staff and parents.

The following are our school wide rules:

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other. Ephesians 4:32.

Gentle hands.

Listen and do as you are asked.

Use helping words.

Walking feet indoors.

Everybody plays.

Safety Net Procedures Used In Our Program

Some guidance about the development of safety net procedures:

1. *If a child is in danger of harming himself or others, we must first be concerned about safety.*
2. *We might hold a child or remove a child from the situation to keep children safe.*
3. *Safety net procedures should be planned for children who have a history of dangerous outbursts.*
4. *Safety net procedures are developed in collaboration with a team as part of the planning for behavior support.*

The behaviors of concern would be those which are dangerous to self or others. Physical assistance may also be used to move children from place to place when they are not responsive to verbal or pictorial directions, and the teacher must move with the class to preserve ratios.

First Response Strategies (De-Escalation Procedures) are as follows:

- **Verbal** – direction about what to do (e.g., “put the sand in the box”); direction about appropriate behavior (e.g., “ask for a turn”); direction to deescalate (take a deep breath); validate emotion (“it looks like you are very angry”).
- **Physical** – moving the child, blocking the child, interrupting aggressive action with physical guidance, guiding child to correct action.
- **Environmental** – removing materials from area, removing children from proximity of the child having challenging behavior, putting a barrier between child and others.
- **Distinction between physical interventions and physical control. Physical interventions that are effectively used are to prompt, redirect, temporarily restrict movement (e.g., hand on shoulder, block, or physically moving a child). Physical control describes holding or restraining.**
- **Effective options if de-escalation does not work immediately:**
 - Remove child
 - Block child
 - Remove demand
 - Move child to safe place to de-escalate

Physical control is an intervention of last resort to prevent harm to the child or others, when there is dangerous or escalating behavior and first response strategies fail.

LEAD – A method of providing physical control.

Techniques are implemented calmly, with empathy and support.

- **Label** (“You are feeling very angry, you wanted the train. You want to hurt Peter”).
- **Envelop** – “I need to help you be safe” (approach, stabilize, contain).
- **Assist** – “I’ll let you go when your body is quiet”. “I’ll know you are ready for me to let go when your hands are quiet. Use gentle hands and feet”.
- **Debrief and Direct** – Debrief and support the child back to the group “Let’s talk about what happened”. “What can you do if that happens again?”

We will complete an incident report with information pertinent to the incident, notify the family and meet to review the plan.

Staff will communicate and strategize with parents concerning behavioral issues and their possible cause, considering all of the factors that impact a child and family. If needed, functional behavioral assessment may be done. Working together, a plan will be developed to support the child’s needs for behavioral intervention. We will use community resources and collaborate with other experts to develop strategies for support. With encouragement and mutual problem solving, most behavioral and developmental issues can be resolved.

If further problems endanger the safety of the other children or staff, or the future of the program, a parent may be required to withdraw the child.

Version date: July 2015