

# Mission Statement

Children First School provides a quality academic program with Judeo-Christian values. We accomplish this through:

- \*an innovative academic curriculum featuring personalized attention, low student-teacher ratio, a multi-age learning approach and qualified, dedicated teachers;

- \*a nurturing environment in which a child is given continuous encouragement and opportunities to succeed;

- \*opportunities for families to participate in their child's school experience;

- \*encouraging Judeo-Christian values, including respect for one's self and others, concern for the needy, care for the Earth and respect for other cultures and religious traditions.

## Administration and Organization

Children First School began in 1957 as a pre-school. The 2006-2007 academic year marks the school's 49th year at First Presbyterian Church. We now offer a three or five day preschool for three and four-year-olds, a three or five day pre-kindergarten for four and five-year-olds, and elementary classes from kindergarten through sixth grade.

Our goal is to prepare students with a foundation in basic educational skills, good citizenship and good work habits and to instill a constructive curiosity with love for learning. Achieving this goal requires open communication and cooperation between home and school. We encourage parent participation at Children First School.

**Director:** The director is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school and enforcement of school regulations. She is responsible to, and under the supervision of, the Board of Directors of Children First School.

**Board of Directors:** the board is comprised of parents, members of First Presbyterian Church, a faculty representative and community volunteers. The director and the pastor of First Presbyterian Church are non-voting members. The board meets each month and reports regularly to the Session regarding the operation of the school.

# **Children First School Faculty**

Administrative Coordinator/Teacher: Heather Knapp  
Academic Director: Scottie Mabry-Howles (233-1350)  
Program Coordinator/Three-year-old Teacher: Lisa Olson (390-5793)  
Pre-Kindergarten Teacher: Sharon Sampson (238-5052)  
Primary Teacher: Jessica Davis  
Intermediate Teacher: Scottie Mabry-Howles (233-1350)  
Physical Education Teacher: (MWSU Student)  
Music Teacher: Ashley Ackley  
Spanish Teacher: Consuelo Davis  
Extend-A-Day Teacher: Betty Grimm  
Swimming: YWCA Staff

## **Board of Directors**

Chairperson: Mary Larson (279-1476)  
Vice Chairperson: Lisa Olson (390-5793)  
Secretary: Amy Conant (232-9093)  
Treasurer: Jill Williams  
Mick Kneale  
Joan Coffman  
Nancy Sharp  
Joanne Anderson  
Scottie Mabry-Howles  
Penelope Kress

## **Tuition and Fees**

Registration: \$50 per child for all students

Other fees: For kindergarten through sixth grade only  
\$100 book fee, \$50 technology fee, and a \$25 activity fee  
For Pre-3 and Pre-K only  
\$25 activity fee.

Tuition: Kindergarten through sixth grade - \$275 per month Sept - May.  
Pre-3 and Pre-K for 3 half days a week - \$90 per month Sept-May.  
Pre-3 and Pre-K for 5 half days a week - \$165 per month Sept-May.  
Pre-3 and Pre-K for 3 full days a week - \$165 per month Sept-May.  
Pre-3 and Pre-K for 5 full days a week - \$275 per month Sept-May.

Discounts: Available for members of First Presbyterian Church and families with multiple children enrolled. Discounts cannot be more than 10% to any given child.

## **Children First School Policies Admissions**

Children First School (CFS) admits children of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students of the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions, policies and other school administered programs. CFS reserves the right to refuse admission to any applicant or to require the withdrawal of any student when such refusal or withdrawal is in the best interest of the school.

CFS accepts students with the expressed understanding that the student and parent will comply with the rules and regulations of the school as explained in the Parent Handbook and that the student will remain in the school until the end of the academic year.

## **Attendance**

**Absences:** Student absences from school can never be fully made up because the student missed class discussions, teacher presentations and guided practice. Absences for reason such as personal illness, serious illness in the family and others judged as legitimate by the Director will be excused.

When a student is absent due to illness or other reasons, the parent/guardian **MUST** call the school as soon as possible. If a student is not at school by 9:30 a.m., the Director will call the parent/guardian to verify the student's safety.

When the student returns to school, the parent or guardian must send a written and signed request for the absence, providing the student's name, date(s), of absences and cause or reason for the absence. CFS will request a doctor's verification for any student who has too many absences due to illness.

Class assignments **MUST** be made up at the teacher's discretion. Teachers must inform the Director when grades have been lowered because of irregular attendance. When absences become excessive, the Director will send a letter to the parent/guardian.

**Tardiness:** Student promptness is very important. They are at a disadvantage when they arrive late and have missed instruction. It also disturbs the teacher and other students when a student interrupts by entering late.

**Students who arrive after 9:00 a.m. are tardy. Tardy students should report directly to the school office to receive a late pass that is given to the teacher. We require a note from a parent/guardian to excuse the tardiness.**

# Children First School Policies

## Extend-a-Day Program

Our EAD program is available to all CFS and non-CFS students in the family between the ages of 3 year-olds and sixth grade.

**Hours:** Morning Session

7:30 a.m.-9:00 a.m.

(depending on enrollment ½ or full day)

Monday through Friday for each session

Afternoon Session

12:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.

**On early dismissal days the EAD program will be provided as regularly scheduled unless otherwise stated.**

**EAD is closed for school holidays and snow days.** In the event that our school is in session and other schools are closed, we will provide EAD only during our regularly scheduled hours for non-CFS students in the family.

**Fees:** \$2.50 per hour for the first child for the first 50 hours per month, then \$1.25 per hour after. Additional siblings are charged at \$1.25 per hour flat rate. There will be no charge to parents serving as volunteers at school-sponsored events during regular EAD hours who must use EAD for those activities. **It is the parent's responsibility to let the EAD caretaker know when they are using EAD for this purpose.**

**Arrival/Pick-up Policy:** Children are to arrive no earlier than 7:30 a.m. Parents must sign in their children with the time of arrival. A student who arrives between 8:45 and 9:00 a.m. will not be billed for EAD time.

All children are to be picked up by 5:30 p.m. Parents must sign out their children with time of departure at the end of each day. **A late charge of \$1.00 will be collected for each one-minute period after 5:30 p.m.**

**Payment Policy:** EAD billings are issued on the first (1<sup>st</sup>) of the month for charges in the previous month and are due upon receipt of the invoice and are considered delinquent by the fifteenth (15<sup>th</sup>) of each month. See following pages for payment, late fee charges and reasons for termination.

**Financial Contract:** All families of CFS students are required to sign a financial agreement with Children First School. This agreement outlines their financial responsibilities for the school year with CFS.

**Donations:** CFS gladly accepts donations and will provide a receipt for your tax records.

The Finance Committee reserves the right to revise this policy at any time. Written notification of changes will be sent to parents/guardians.

# Children First School Financial Guidelines

1. Members of the First Presbyterian Church will receive a 5% discount for each child enrolled.\*
2. Non-members of First Presbyterian Church will pay full tuition for the first child enrolled and receive a 5% discount for each additional child enrolled.\*
3. Those receiving financial aid are not eligible for any other discounts.
4. Those who wish to pay the full year's tuition by the first day of school of each academic year will receive a 5% discount.\*
5. The Finance Committee and the Director will make all decisions regarding reduced tuition jointly.
6. All outstanding balances from the school year must be paid in full in order for a child to start the subsequent academic year or to attend any school sponsored summer programs.
7. All summer programs will be paid in full before the child is allowed to participate. No payment plans are available.
8. If you would like to begin paying for the 2004-2005 school year, payments will be accepted during the summer months.
9. Fees will not be discounted and are non-refundable. The registration, book, technology and activity fees are due on or before "Back to School" night. Tuition and lunch/drink fees are due on the first (1<sup>st</sup>) day of the month. Extend-a-day (EAD) fees and other fees such as swimming are due upon receipt of the invoice. All fees will be delinquent after 30 days. Payment plans for fees and tuition are not available.
10. Any family that has a delinquent account will be given seven (7) working days to make full payment, which includes current charges. If full payment is not made, the child will be suspended. No more than two late payments will be accepted per school year. You are expected to know if your account is overdue; however, verbal or written notification will be given to you by CFS when your account is delinquent.
11. An early withdrawal penalty equal to one half (1/2) the remaining tuition for the year will be due, if a student is withdrawn from school during the school year. Under certain circumstances the School Board reserves the right to waive this condition.
12. Service fees charged by the bank and paid by the school for checks returned because of insufficient funds plus a twenty-five dollar (\$25.00) penalty fee will be charged to your school account.
13. All records and transcripts will be held until all financial obligations have been met.
14. Those families with incomes of \$40,000 or above are not eligible for tuition reduction.
15. Tuition reduction is for the stated academic year. You must apply each year for a reduction.

16. If you are receiving tuition reduction, any change in your ability to pay your financial obligations to CFS must be reported to the Director of the school immediately. This includes but is not limited to change in employment status, etc. Failure to report these changes may result in loss of part or your entire tuition reduction amount.
17. Those paying full tuition are required to donate five (5) volunteer hours per semester per child for the CFS's projects and programs. Those receiving tuition reduction are required to donate twenty (20) volunteer hours per semester per child. An adult family member or friend may perform these hours for you. If volunteer hours are not met, you may lose part or all of your tuition reduction. A twenty-five dollar (\$25.00) per hour fee will be assessed if volunteer hours are not performed. Payment of volunteer hours does not affect any other fees or tuition payments.
18. No newly hired school or church staff will receive reduced tuition. They are however allowed the same discounts as stated above for church members and multi-student families. Those who are currently receiving reduced tuition will continue to do so for the children currently enrolled. If other children in these families become eligible for school, they will pay full tuition for these children. Reduced tuition benefit may be reconsidered when the school's finances are such that we have a consistent trend or revenues exceeding expenses. This trend will be of at least one year's duration.

**\* Total discounts cannot exceed 10% for any given child.**

Revised March 2004

# Health

**Immunizations:** Children First School must have a copy of a current immunization record for each child. If your child is exempt from a specific immunization, we must have a letter for our files from the child's doctor or a parent/guardian stating why the child cannot be immunized.

**Illness or Accident:** If your child becomes ill or is involved in any kind of accident where health care other than minor first aid is needed, the school will contact you. If we cannot reach you or the person(s) listed as an emergency contact, Children First School will take responsibility for getting medical attention for your child. If it is necessary for the child to go to the hospital an ambulance may be used to transport your child. All expenses incurred due to the accident or injury are the responsibility of the parent/guardian. Each accident or injury will be documented, explaining what happened and what action was taken. The documentation will be signed and witnessed by attending teachers and/or staff members and a copy of it sent home for parental signature. The signed form will be kept in the student's personal file.

**Contagion:** When the school becomes aware of any contagion (head lice, impetigo, pink eye, etc.) we will notify the parent/guardian immediately to pick up the child. We will also provide information on the treatment for the contagion to all students. The child must receive appropriate treatment and bring documentation of that treatment before he/she is allowed to return to school. If your child has contacted lice, they must be **100 % nit free** before they can return.

**Fever: Students must be free from fever for 24 hours prior to returning to school.**

**Administering Medicines:** CFS personnel will not administer medicine without proper authorization from the parent/guardian. Parents must complete a form annually, giving the school permission to administer medicine.

Medication will be given to students during school hours only if absolutely necessary. Parents/guardians are encouraged to schedule the medication to be given before or after school if possible. However, if not possible, the following instructions must be followed:

**Prescription Medicine:**

1. Medication container must have a label attached by a pharmacist or a physician and include the child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage of the medication, and the doctor's name.
2. We must have written permission from the parent/guardian to

- give the medication.
3. The permission note must indicate the time of day to administer the medication.
  4. Dosage is limited to a one-day supply. The container will be returned home daily.

**Non-Prescription Medicine:**

1. Medication must be in the original container.
2. The child's name must be on the container.
3. Only the instructions indicated on the container will be followed.
4. We must have written permission from the parent/guardian to give the medicine.
5. The permission note must indicate the time of day to administer the medication.
6. Dosage is limited to a one-day supply. The container will be returned home daily.

The Director of the school is responsible for giving the medication if she/he is in the building. If she/he is not, the teacher will give the medication. The parent/guardian must assume the responsibility of informing the school personnel of any changes in the child's health or medication.

School personnel will not provide non-prescription medication at any time. Medications administered to students will be the responsibility of the school only if the above medication policy is followed.

## **Day-to-Day Operations**

**Arrival and Departure:**

All students must enter and leave the school by the north door in the courtyard. From 8:45 a.m. until 9:00 a.m. there will be a staff member at the door to greet students. At that time parents are free to simply drop off their children. If a student arrives at school prior to 8:45 a.m., a parent/guardian must walk the student to the Extend-a-Day room and sign him/her in.

The school day for students in kindergarten through sixth grade starts at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m. with the exception of scheduled early-out days indicated on the school calendar.

Half-day preschool classes begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 12:00 noon. Full day preschool hours are the same as those for kindergarten through sixth grade. Early arrivals should sign in at the Extend-a-Day room. Please do not arrive before 7:30 a.m.

At the end of the school day for students in elementary grades and in the pre-kindergarten, teachers will accompany students to the main door for pick-up or to the Extend-a-Day room if the student will be staying. Parents of children in the three-year-old preschool should collect their children at the classroom.

**If you are sending someone else to pick up your child, they MUST have a note and we must have their name and picture i.d. on file in the**

**office. If we do not have these things, your child will not be allowed to go with this person. We have to keep our children safe.**

### **Dress Code:**

Students must dress appropriately for school. Clothing that detracts from or inhibits the learning process is inappropriate. Attire should be clean and promote the general good appearance of the child.

**The following are some specific guidelines:**

- 1. Clothing with offensive logos and/or pictures (beer, liquor, bars, wrestling/violence, etc.) is not acceptable.**
- 2. Tube tops, strapless tops and bare midriff tops are not allowed.**
- 3. If low rise pants or “sagging” pants are worn, a long top is required to make them appropriate.**
- 4. Shoes must be worn at all times. They must be comfortable and permit a student to safely and effectively participate in all school activities. Thongs, flip-flops, open-toed or plastic “Jelly” sandals and high heels are not appropriate. Sandals are acceptable if they are sufficiently safe and adequately secured to the feet.**
- 5. Tights or shorts must be worn under short dresses or skirts.**

### **Holidays:**

School closings dates and holidays may or may not coincide with those of St. Joseph Public Schools. We have tried to follow the public school calendar as much as possible, but be sure to check your CFS calendar regularly.

### **Inclement Weather:**

In the event of inclement weather the Director will determine if Children First School will close. The decision is based on the safety of students and parents. Because our classrooms are air-conditioned, we normally do not close school or dismiss early due to extreme heat.

In the event school should close due to inclement weather, an announcement will be made on KQTV as close to 6:00 a.m. as possible.

If extremely bad weather develops during the day, the school may be forced to close at 1:00 p.m. Parents will be notified by TV, radio and/or phone. You **MUST** pick up your child/children as soon as possible after being notified, as EAD will close also.

### **Lunch Room:**

Students eat together in the Fellowship Hall from 12 noon to 12:30 p.m. Children bring a lunch from home, which may include items that require heating. ***Please, no items that take more than 1 ½ minutes in the microwave.***

Proper lunchroom behavior is discussed in each classroom. All children are expected to abide by these rules.

If a child has a lunch from a fast-food restaurant that includes a toy, the toy will be given to the child's teacher. It will be returned at the end of the school

day.

On Wednesdays the children may participate in the hot-lunch program, with pizza from Little Caesar's. Parents may sign up for the hot lunch program at the beginning of the year. The cost is \$10 per month per child. Parents of students who participate in the hot lunch program are asked to bring vegetables, fruit, chips, and dessert on a rotating basis. A schedule will be sent home.

For \$5 per month, students may also receive a beverage with their daily lunch. We provide milk on Monday and Wednesday, juice on Tuesday and Thursday, and chocolate milk on Friday. Each participating student receives eight ounces of beverage at lunch. **Please do not send pop, or any kind of high sugar drink or money for pop with your child for their lunch.**

We encourage parental presence in the lunchroom. Parent volunteers are asked to assist with the lunchroom. Volunteers are asked to arrive by 11:45 a.m. to get the lunchroom ready for the children, to assist with beverages and heat-ups during the lunch period, and to remain for a few minutes after to clean up the lunch room. Parents are also welcome to come and eat lunch with their children.

**If your child does not have a lunch and it is a continuous happening, we will have something to feed them at a cost of \$5 to the parent(s).**

### **Discipline:**

The purpose of discipline is to teach self-discipline and to foster a positive learning environment for all students. It is vital that students be familiar with and follow the discipline policy of the school. A discipline contract will be sent home. Parents should explain the contract to their child and then have the child sign the contract or sign in their place if the child is unable to write at this time, and return the signed contract to school.

**Classroom Rules:** (additional rules may be added at the discretion of the Teacher)

Students should always:

1. Follow the teacher's direction
2. Keep their hands, feet, or objects they are carrying to themselves
3. Be kind to others
4. Stay in their seats

### **Playground Rules**

Students should always:

1. Follow the directions of the playground supervisor
2. Play games that are safe
3. Only throw authorized equipment

### **Lunchroom Rules**

Students should always:

1. Follow the directions of the lunchroom supervisor

2. Speak softly
3. Walk and move in line without distracting others
4. Eat only their own food, no trading food

### **General Rules of Conduct**

Students should always:

1. Be respectful to teachers, staff and fellow students
2. Take care of school and personal property- one's own and that of fellow students. **DO NOT BRING TOYS, ETC., FROM HOME AS WE CANNOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT MAY HAPPEN TO THEM.**
3. Refrain from using profane and/or vulgar language
4. Avoid disrupting school or class activities
5. Walk quietly in the halls

### **Consequences**

Failure to follow the rules will result in the following consequences:

- First offense - Warning
- Second offense - Warning
- Third offense - Office Visit
- Fourth Offense - Call parents

The teacher and/or Director will assess an appropriate punishment for the transgressions.

### **Summer Programs**

Children First School often offers summer school for children from pre-school through sixth grade. Summer school is a continuation of the school year, with a few added summer extras. Students do not need to be enrolled in CFS during the school year to participate in the summer programs.

## **Multi-Age Education**

By John Tapper

If one thousand eight year old students were asked to do a task the majority of them would perform at a given level. This level is indicated graphically by the bulge on a bell curve. It represents "grade level" or what is considered acceptable performance for children who range in age from "just eight" to "almost nine" (depending on school admission requirements). Graded curriculum tends to be geared to this particular level of performance. Published curriculum supports this level. Expectations reinforce the idea that this is where a child should be.

A good metaphor for this approach might be a staircase. First you get everything you needed on step one and then you go onto step two. This continues until you reach the end of the staircase (if there is an end).

In multi-age classroom we would use the learning metaphor of a path.

Students come to us somewhere along the path. Sometimes they run swiftly, other times they seem to wander slowly. When they get to a particular place in the path, they leave us.

Multi-age learning is effective academically because less time is spent each year getting to know the individual strengths of students. Instead of spending the first few weeks getting acquainted every year, teachers and students jump right in. Since non-graded or multi-age programs focus on individual students in an adverse setting the curriculum is geared to everyone on the curve, not just those in the middle. This helps special needs children who know that they can fit in and challenges talented children because “grade level” is no longer enough to get by. If you look on the wall at writing in a multi-age classroom you can see everything from one sentence stories to stories with many pages and sophisticated language. Everyone fits in.

Finally, being in a multi-age program lets kids grow into responsibility. When they're little they are taken care of-they get help with spelling, fire drills and tying their shoes. As they get older they learn they must do this for others. There may be no special program, or approach but students learn through the example of others that they must help those who are younger or less capable.

## Volunteering

Children First School encourages parental involvement with students' education. There are many opportunities for volunteerism at the school. Parents will be made aware of these opportunities at the beginning of the academic year and periodically thereafter during while school is in session.

**The school asks each family to donate at least 5 hours volunteer time per semester, 20 hours volunteer time per semester if on tuition reduction.**

There is a volunteer coordinator who will streamline the process of matching volunteers to tasks. **There will be a volunteer log book in which volunteers are to record the hours they have contributed. The book is located in the school office. If you do not sign in your hours, you will be charged for them at the end of the school year.**

A large and diverse group of volunteers is essential to the smooth running of Children First School.