

GUIDING PRINCIPLES for Early Childhood Education in the Pacific Southwest District

Purpose

As School Ministries of the Pacific Southwest District, our purpose is to be connected in Christ and connected with each other by building and maintaining God-pleasing relationships.

Mission and Ministry Statement

Early childhood centers are an integral part of the church's total mission and ministry, and are a vital evangelism outreach of the congregation.

Goals

The goal of early childhood ministry, along with all educational ministries of the church, is the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) – to preach the Gospel to all nations. By the power of the Holy Spirit, congregational leaders and members work together with the early childhood staff in accomplishing this purpose by welcoming families, encouraging and facilitating baptism and church membership, as well as including all early childhood families as a part of the congregation's circle of care.

Our Core Values for Ministry

- **Christ-centered**
- **Spirit Filled**
- **Ministry Minded**
- **Servant-hearted**

Philosophy

We Believe:

The young child...

is a unique and special gift from God whose individuality is celebrated.
learns best about God's world through observation, experimentation,
exploration, play and sensory experiences.

thrives when cared for and nurtured in an early childhood program
where all of his/her developmental needs are met in a Christ-centered,
age appropriate, play-based and child-focused environment.

Early Childhood Educators...

are called by God to joyfully serve Him in early childhood ministry,
demonstrating a passion for young children, their families, and
teaching.

are qualified professionals in their appearance, attitude and demeanor,
adhering to state and local licensing regulations, and serving as
advocates for young children, families and Early Childhood education.

serve as partners in ministry with pastors, lay leaders, governing
boards, congregational members, volunteers, co-workers, parents,
and the Pacific Southwest District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri
Synod.

plan and implement a warm and loving Christ-centered,
developmentally-appropriate environment where young children can
develop to their fullest potential.

receive and continue Lutheran training to effectively minister to young
children and their families, modeling Jesus' love, grace, and
forgiveness.

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Developmentally-Appropriate Practice In Early Childhood Education

Early childhood centers in the PSD develop their programs based on a Philosophy Statement - a statement of beliefs, based on Scripture and approved by the leadership and congregation. The Philosophy Statement is implemented through the daily spiritual, social-emotional and foundational-learning opportunities and incorporates developmentally appropriate practice.

“Developmentally appropriate practice (**DAP**) is an approach to **teaching** grounded in research describing how young children develop and learn. This is effective **early education.**” (NAEYC)

Principles of Developmentally appropriate practice include:

- Daily schedules that facilitate the unique spiritual, social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth of young children.
- Daily schedules that are balanced and include indoor/outdoor, active/quiet, large/small group, child-initiated/teacher-directed activities.
- Play as a valued avenue for learning. Children are provided with ample time to engage in the exploration of educational materials that are concrete, manipulative and age-appropriate.
- Learning Centers that promote social, emotional and language development. Learning centers include spiritual growth, language/literacy development, math/science exploration, books/puzzles, block/manipulative play, dramatic play and art activities.
- Literacy development that focuses on language acquisition (receptive and expressive) through the use of reading and telling stories, open-ended discussions, songs and fingerplays, and dictated stories.
- Opportunities to develop problem-solving skills.

As our PSD centers develop, implement and annually review their Philosophy Statements for their program, it is imperative that we remember the foundational basis for all our Lutheran Early Childhood Center - FAITH DEVELOPMENT. The curriculum should intentionally address the importance of faith development and provide daily opportunities to assist the children in their spiritual growth. This includes not only prayer time before snack and meals, but also:

- Jesus Time and worship opportunities;
- A classroom worship center;
- Bible stories and activities; and
- Service opportunities.

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Pacific Southwest District CODE of ETHICS for EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

As an Early Childhood Educator, teaching in a Lutheran Early Childhood Center, and a redeemed member of God's family, I commit myself to His service and to the welfare of His children.

I, therefore, in accordance with God's Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit, resolve to conduct myself professionally, at all times, and according to the following ethical code.

I will accept and respect all people.

You are all (children) of God through faith in Christ Jesus... There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3: 26, 28

I will keep the confidentially entrusted to me.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Ephesians 4: 29

I will support the programs and people who share my ministry.

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 15: 5-6

I will be honest and trustworthy in all my dealings.

Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things.

Hebrews 13:18

I will make the welfare of each child the primary basis for all decisions and actions.

Whoever welcomes one of these little children in My name welcomes Me: and whoever welcomes Me does not welcome Me but the One who sent Me.

Mark 9:37

I, _____, agree to enter into this Covenant Agreement with God and my peers as a professional Early Childhood Educator, serving in a Lutheran Early Childhood Center. I accept this Code of Ethics and will, by the grace of God, act in accordance with it.

Signature _____ **Date** _____