

SAINT MARK ***Early Learning*** ***Center***



**PARENT
HANDBOOK
2019-2020**

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SAINT MARK EARLY LEARNING CENTER

Mission Statement

At Saint Mark Early Learning Center, we consider it a privilege to guide your child, as they grow and develop through the most important formative years of their lives.

- ✿ We are dedicated to assisting families in all areas of their child's education: spiritual, mental, physical, social and emotional.
- ✿ Emphasis is placed on the whole child, and our goal is to provide experiences that will help the child develop to his/her full potential as an individual.
- ✿ To facilitate the understanding that all people are special to God.

SAINT MARK EARLY LEARNING CENTER WEEKDAY CHILDREN'S MINISTRY STAFF

Director of ELC:	Sandy Jenkins
Assistant Director ELC:	Amy Wykle
Senior Minister:	Rev. Drew Clayton
Associate Minister:	Rev. Ryan Karr

**Saint Mark Early Learning Center
2019-2020 School Year *Subject to change**

August

Tuesday 6 Parent/Teacher Night no children 6:30 PM Sanctuary
Wednesday 7 Meet the Teacher 9-10 AM
Thursday 8 First Day for Students
Wednesday 14 National Creamsickle Day – We will try a tasty treat

September

Monday 2 Labor Day Holiday – ELC Closed
Monday 9 Teddy Bear Day- Bring your favorite bear to school & wear PJ's

October

Thursday 10 Children's Theatre at Saint Mark ELC 10 AM Fellowship Hall/PJ's
Thursday 17 Pumpkin Patch Day @ Saint Mark
Tues-Thursday 22-24 Picture Day-Schedule TBA
Thursday 31 Head to Toe Orange Day- Party Day

November

Tuesday 5 Parent Teacher Conferences-2K-4K
Monday 11 Veterans Day- ELC Closed
Thursday 21 Thanksgiving Program 10:00 AM 3K & 4K Gym
Wed.-Fri. 27-29 Thanksgiving Holidays- ELC Closed

December

Thursday 12 Polar Express Day wear your PJ's!
Wednesday 18 Happy Birthday Jesus Party
Thursday 19 Last Day for students Dismiss @ 1:00
20-January 5 Christmas Holidays ELC Closed

January

Monday 6 First Day of School for Students
Thursday 16 Western Day 3K-4K
Monday 20 Martin Luther King Holiday- ELC Closed

February

Thursday 13 Valentine's Parties
Friday 14- Mon. 17 President's Day Weekend ELC Closed
Thursday 27 Around the World Day

March

Monday 2-Friday 5 Dr. Seuss Week More info to Come!
Thursday 5 Children's Theatre at Saint Mark ELC 10 AM Fellowship Hall/PJ Day
Monday 23-Friday 27 Spring Break- ELC Closed

April

Tuesday 7 Parent/Teacher Conferences 2K-4K
Tuesday 9 Easter Parties (All Classes)
Friday 10- Mon. 13 Good Friday/ Easter – ELC Closed
Wednesday 15 Doughnuts for Dad 7-8:30 AM Fellowship Hall
Thursday 30 Muffins for Mom 7-8:30 AM Fellowship Hall

May

Thursday 14 4K Graduation & 2K & 3K Sanctuary at 6:00PM
Wednesday 20 End of Year Parties
Thursday 21 Last day of school Dismiss @ 1PM

ENROLLMENT

Hours of Operation: 7:00 AM to 4:30 PM
 Monday through Friday
 Mother's Day Out 9:00 AM-1:00 PM
 Pre-School/Core Curriculum 9:00 AM-1:00 PM
 Before Care 7:00 AM-9:00 AM
 After Care 1:00 AM-4:30 PM

* We ask respectfully that you arrive by 4:20 PM so that the teachers may have ample time for the end of the day routine. Our building closes promptly at 4:30.

APPLICATION

All application forms must be completed online at

<https://register.runsandbox.com?form=a21ad409-6e17-4057-bc57-d7e51cd0ebf6>

Registration fee of \$175 must be paid online to complete enrollment. Names on the waitlist are eligible for the school year in which they are accepted. When a vacancy occurs, an administrator will contact the family. Families will be given 5 business days to accept placement. Application fees are non-refundable.

ADMISSIONS

Applications are accepted throughout the year on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Registration forms may be accessed at

<https://register.runsandbox.com?form=a21ad409-6e17-4057-bc57-d7e51cd0ebf6>

- ☼ All payments for Saint Mark ELC are **ONLY** payable online.
- ☼ August tuition as well as yearly supply fee are due July 1st.
- ☼ Failure to pay by July 15th will result in loss of child's enrollment.
- ☼ Tuition is due on the 1st of each month, and is considered late on the 5th and a fee of \$50 will automatically be added to your account.
- ☼ At any time a family wishes to withdraw a two week notice is to be given in writing. No fees are refundable.

REQUIRED FORMS

We are honored to be a DHR licensed facility and due to that we adhere to all DHR policies and procedures. DHR requires the following forms in your child's file complete. (All blanks must be filled in use N/A when applicable)

Required by August 1, of each school year:

- ☼ Alabama Immunization Form for your child to attend
- ☼ DHR required Enrollment form-Online
- ☼ Signed Parent Agreement- Online

FEES AND TUITION

We are a self-supporting, non-profit organization and all fees are used to provide the best teachers, equipment and supplies possible.

- ☼ Registration Fee-\$175/yr Non-Refundable Due upon registering
- ☼ Waitlist Fee-\$175/yr Non-Refundable Due upon waitlisted
- ☼ Supply Fee-\$250/yr Non-Refundable Due by July 1st each year
- ☼ Tuition Non-Refundable Due by 1st of each month
- ☼ August Tuition Non-Refundable Due by July 1st each year

Class	Days	Monthly Fee 9-1	Monthly Fee 7-4:30	Monthly Stay & Play 1-2 (3K/4K Only)	Due
Infants	5	\$500	\$950		*** All Tuition is due on the 1 st .
Infants	3	\$400	\$650		
Infants	2	\$350	\$500		
Toddlers	5	\$400	\$850		
Toddlers	3	\$300	\$550		
Toddlers	2	\$275	\$450		
2K	5	\$400	\$700		
2K	3	\$300	\$550		
2K	2	\$275	\$450		
3K-4K	5	\$350	\$575	\$125	
3K-4K	3	\$300	\$475	\$100	
The Following fees are Non-REFUNDABLE					
Registration			\$175		Upon Registration
Wait List Fee			\$50		Upon Placement
Credit Card Fee (EBT/Debit no fee)			15%		Monthly
Supply Fee			\$250		Due July 1-Per Year
Late Paperwork			\$50		After July 1
Change in Service			\$50		Upon Change
Late payment			\$50		After the 5 th of the month
Extra Curricular Fee			\$30		Per Month

Late Pick Up Fee			See Late Policy		
Drop In Early Care 7-9	\$25				
Drop In After Care 1-4:30	\$25				
Drop in Day 9-1 only	\$50				
Extra Drop In Day 7:00-4:30	\$75				

DROP IN DAYS

*When space is available we will accommodate “drop ins”

*To schedule please fill out the Change/Request Form in your Sandbox Portal 24 hours in advance.

*No drop ins during the month of August.

SAFETY

STAFF:

We require that our faculty be responsible and loving people with a broad knowledge in child development. We require that they exhibit Christian convictions.

It is our objective to employ highly qualified staff who love working with children. We seek staff members with a background in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, professional certification, or proven experience teaching preschool children. We require that staff exhibit Christian convictions in everything they do.

STAFF TO CHILD RATIO:

Infants	1-4
Toddler	1-6
2's	1-8
3's	1-11
4's	1-12

CENTER SECURITY:

The Early Learning Center is located in the Children’s building of Saint Mark United Methodist Church. Doors into the ELC require a code for access. Please do not allow children to obtain door code or use key pad.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES:

- Parents should share the code only with people who will be picking up their children.
- **IF YOU DO NOT KNOW THE PERSON DO NOT LET THEM IN!** This is for the safety of all children. Please do not let your children run ahead of you to the welcome area or to the parking lot.

DHR SIGN-IN POLICY:

- Children must be signed-in daily on class sign in sheet. Children must be left in direct care of a teacher no child may be left unattended. We must have the full signature of the adult who delivered the child to the classroom. **Children may not write on the sign-in form.** If the students are not in the classroom, the sign-in form will be wherever the class is. Children must be signed in & out by a parent or other adult listed over the age of 18. Younger siblings are not allowed in the infant or toddler rooms.

- Saint Mark will not release children to a person who is visibility impaired due to a medical condition, alcohol consumption, substance abuse, prescription drugs or other causes. In the event the parent or legal guardian is impaired, the Director will call someone designated on the release form.
- Please end all cell phone calls before entering the campus so that your full attention can be on the parking lot and your child.
- When parking to come into the building, park in a designated parking space only.
- Turn off your car and lock it. Do not leave it running.
- Do not leave children of any age unattended for any reason.
- Saint Mark is not responsible for any personal items left in your vehicle.
- All children are to be brought to their designated area. Please make this transition time quickly. We ask that you do not enter the rooms as the staff has children to care for and they can not engage in a conversation with parents. We will be happy to schedule a conference if you need to discuss anything in depth.

AUTHORIZATION FOR PICK-UP:

Parents must list those persons that have permission to pick up their child from Saint Mark. Anyone other than parents must be listed on the registration form along with a telephone number. Any person not recognized will be asked to show their drivers license for identification. It is a good practice for the parent to notify the staff and Director when other persons are expected to pick up the child. We also need to know if anyone is not authorized to pick up for any reason such as the other parent etc. If this is the case we must have a copy of the divorce decree or custody letter stating that they are not allowed to pick up. This must contain a judge's signature and time stamp. Legally we can not keep a parent from picking up a child unless we have that documentation on site.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION:

If we need to evacuate Saint Mark campus we will notify parents of our location via SCHOOL CAST.

INCLEMENT WEATHER:

*In case of inclement weather, Saint Mark ELC will make the decision to close. Parents will be notified via SCHOOL CAST SYSTEM.

*Please do not call the office during inclement weather.

Health

PERSONAL HYGIENE:

All possible provisions have been made to assure that children and teachers follow appropriate rules of personal hygiene. Teachers will use gloves at all times when changing diapers or assisting older children in the restroom. Antibacterial soap is used for hand washing before meals and after toilet use. Disposable paper towels are used for drying hands. Saint Mark is a smoke-free environment.

MEDICAL RECORDS/IMMUNIZATIONS:

All children are required to have a current State of Alabama immunization form. When your child's form expires you are responsible for obtaining an updated form within 30 days. After 30 days you will be charged a late paperwork fee of \$50.00 per month. After 60 days your child will no longer be allowed to attend Saint Mark ELC.

CHILD ILLNESS POLICY:








DHR states that a child who is ill should not attend school. "Determination of illness may be based on: the child's inability to participate in school activities, signs of serious or contagious disease or condition, such as but not limited to fever, diarrhea, vomiting, unexplained rash, scabies, head lice."

If your child is sent home at any time during a school day, they may NOT return the entire next day. Example: If your child leaves on Tuesday at ANY time they may not return on Wednesday at all. They may return on Thursday PROVIDED they have been symptom-free for 24 hours (without medication).

In addition, we have these guidelines for parents:

- **Fever is considered 100.4 or higher.**
- **Do not give your children medication for fever then send them to school.**
- **Children should be fever free 24 hours before returning to school without medication.**
- **A child with a bad cold should not attend. Green runny nose, coughing and sneezing.**
- **Any child who has vomited or had diarrhea within 24 hours of school time should not attend. They must be symptom free without medication for 24 hours prior to returning.**
- **Any child with a suspected concussion should not attend.**
- **Any child treated for head lice must have no evidence of nits in his hair in order to return.**
- **If your child can not participate in their daily routine of activities such as going outside they must stay home.**
- **The ELC reserves the right to send any child home at our discretion based on inability to participate in school activities.**
- **It is best to obtain a doctors excuse for return to school.**

Please refer to the chart on the next page for any questions you may have.

I NEED TO STAY HOME IF...						
I HAVE A FEVER	I AM VOMITING	I HAVE DIARRHEA	I HAVE A RASH	I HAVE HEAD LICE	I HAVE AN EYE INFECTION	I HAVE BEEN IN THE HOSPITAL
						
Temperature of 100.4 or higher	Within the past 24 hours	Within the past 24 hours.	Body rash with itching or fever.	Itchy head, active head lice.	Redness, itching, and/or "crusty" drainage from eye.	Hospital stay and/or ER Visit
I AM READY TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL WHEN I AM....						
Fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication i.e. Tylenol, Motrin	Free from vomiting for at least 2 solid meals	Free from diarrhea for at least 24 hours	Free from rash itching, or or fever. I have been evaluated by my doctor if needed.	Treated with appropriate lice treatment at home and proof is provided to nurse.	Evaluated by my doctor and have note to return to school	Released by my medical provider to return to school.

MEDICINE:

- It is not our policy to administer medicine. However, if a child has a chronic condition and requires medicine please notify the Director for the correct procedure.
- **Medicines, bug repellent, hand sanitizer sunscreen, chap stick etc. should never be sent in a child's bag or lunchbox. All medicines must be hand delivered by the parent to the office.**
- If there are any contagious diseases reported to us we will inform the parents of the class. Such as strep, chicken pox, flu etc.
- We ask that if your child does contract an illness please let us know so that we can inform the other parents. We never give names or details of illness to others.
- DHR prohibits us from applying sunscreen, bug repellent, chap-stick or hand sanitizer.

ACCIDENTS/MEDICAL EMERGENCY:

If your child becomes ill at school we will call a parent or designated caregiver. If you can not be reached we will move down the child's emergency list. Please make IMMEDIATE arrangements to pick up your child.

If you plan to be unavailable while your child is at school, notify someone on your emergency list and send a message through the parent portal. If a parent cannot be found in an emergency, it can be frightening for your child.

In the event of an accident or illness requiring immediate emergency care, we will call 911, followed by the child's parents. If the child requires ambulance transportation an ELC staff member will accompany the child. Accidents and emergencies will be documented with an Incident report. A copy will be sent home to the parent, and an additional copy will be filed.

HEADLICE:

The Jefferson County Department of Health has issued the following advisory concerning treatment for head lice:

“Even though it is sometimes difficult and time consuming, all nits must be removed to insure complete treatment. Lice products do not kill all the nits (do not be fooled by manufacturer’s claims to the contrary) and survivors will hatch into crawling lice within 7-10 days. This causes a continuing cycle of lice infestation.”

If your child needs head lice treatment, he or she may not return to school with nits in evidence in his/her hair. Following nit removal, a daily check is advisable for at least 10 days following treatment. We will work with parents to keep all children lice free.

If a child is found to have head lice we will send a letter home to each parent in the child's class.

FOOD AND SNACKS & POLICIES

We ask that you try to make your lunches are as healthy as possible. No fast food lunches are allowed. **Saint Mark is a nut free facility.** This includes tree nuts, peanuts, and hazelnuts. Some of our children have severe allergies, and it is our policy that we do not permit the use of peanut butter or nuts of any kind for lunches, snacks, crafts or in-class cooking. If sending Lunchables for your child, be sure to remove any peanut butter candy/cookies that may be included. If you use a peanut butter substitute, it must be labeled otherwise it will be assumed it is peanut butter.

The school provides mid-afternoon snacks and water for children that are in after care. Please send only one dessert in your child's lunch. Our policy is that the dessert is eaten last after eating a healthy lunch.

- If your child arrives by 7:30 you may bring your child's breakfast to school.
- Jefferson County Department of Health requires that “potentially hazardous” foods be refrigerated until lunch. These foods will not be refrigerated after lunch.
- Under direction of the Fire Marshal we are not allowed to cook or heat food for children.
- When sending a sandwich, please cut it in fourths or in half so they can handle it easily.
- Fruit and a few chips or crackers are fine.
- All foods need to be cut prior to sending them to school. (veggies, cheese, meat, fruit)
- We do not allow carbonated drinks of any kind. If your child has a “lunchable” please remove any carbonated drinks. According to the USDA food guidelines, a child must have milk with lunch. We request that you provide milk (ex: milk box). We will place your child's milk box or Sippy cup of milk in a refrigerator.
- Please plan for your child's lunch to be as convenient and neat as possible. If they need forks or spoons please supply them. If you send food in a thermos please send a small bowl or plate, so that they can have easy access to it. No glass containers are allowed.

- Water is provided throughout the day.
- No candy, gum, popcorn or medications should be in a child's lunchbox or school bag.

Cooking for instructional purposes IS allowed and will be conducted as part of Saint Mark curriculum and activities

PLEASE LABEL EVERYTHING! Please make sure your child's name is clearly marked on their lunch box and each container. Saint Mark is not responsible for any lost items.

NAP/REST TIME

DHR requires to have a designated nap or rest time, the child does not have to sleep however, they are required to rest.

Toddlers-4K are required to provide a "Nap Mat/Napper". Their name must be clearly seen. You are required to take the Nap Mat/Napper home each Friday and wash and return it to school on Monday. Children are allowed a blanket if there is not one attached to the nap mat.

Naps:

Toddlers & 2's – 1 to 3:45

3k & 4K 2 – 3:30

Children will be required to keep their shoes on during nap, snack is served after nap.

CLOTHING/SHOES/ACCESSORIES

Children are required to wear play clothes. We are not responsible for any damage to children's clothing during the day.

We encourage independence in our children and a child can better attend to their own bathroom needs in garments that are easy for them to handle alone.

Children that are toilet training should wear bottoms that can easily be pulled up and down by the child. (no bubble suits, overalls, belts, long dresses or tights). When toilet training we require pull ups with the side access Velcro. We can not wash any soiled clothing.

Put your child's name on all clothing, coats and other belongings to help ensure their safe return. All children will play outside each day that weather permits, so dress them accordingly.

- Parents are required to furnish the school with a "change of clothes", including socks, underwear, shirt and pants. These also need to be upgraded as they grow throughout the year. All clothes will be returned at the end of the year.
- Extra shoes would be nice if they are toilet training.
- It is recommended that all girls wear shorts underneath their dresses.
- Children must wear athletic shoes.
- Children are not allowed to wear any jewelry, scarves, sunglasses or other accessories.
- We are not responsible for children's hair bow's.

POTTY TRAINING POLICY

Children in 3K and 4K are required to be potty trained.

The policy concerning the 3K & 4K:

1. Children are never allowed to wear pull-ups or diapers.
2. Any preschooler can regress for a short time because of life changes, emotional concerns or physical problems.
3. If a child that we know has been successfully potty trained begins to have accidents, we will work with the parents to help the child find success again.
4. If a child must return home to potty train, monthly tuition must be continued to be paid. If a parent wishes to hold a place for the child at Saint Mark while he/she is not in school, the parent must continue to pay tuition monthly.
5. Children may be asked to leave Saint Mark if they are not potty trained.

ADJUSTMENT PERIOD

Starting school for the first time often causes anxiety for children. We recommend that you visit the center with your child before the first day of school. We will work with you and your child to make this adjustment period a positive experience. We recommend that you give your child at least one month to adjust to the early education center experience. It is usually the parent who has the hardest time adjusting, Please do not linger, the longer you do the longer it takes them to calm down. Please be assured that we will call you if your child cannot be consoled, or we feel that they are unhappy.

PROGRAM

CURRICULUM:

Our goal is to provide young children with a program that is developmentally appropriate. Children learn best through exploration at their own pace. The program is designed to meet their cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs through a balance of structure and discovery. Children need opportunities to explore their environment and to be guided by teachers who understand child development.

Along with letter and number recognition, literacy, colors, and shapes, our program also considers mealtime, outside time and rest time as parts of the curriculum. Opportunities for learning happen when children interact with each other, use their imaginations, complete a task, follow directions, and use good manners. Learning happens all day, every day in many different ways. We want the children to be fully engaged in their world by asking questions and sharing their thoughts and ideas in a safe nurturing environment.

Saint Mark incorporates a balance of planned activities designed to help children progress toward meeting developmentally appropriate goals, as well as improvised activities that emerge from the children's interests or from unexpected experiences. Throughout the day, our teachers observe and document the children's learning to create plans that will continue to meet each individual child's needs and encourage them to explore and meet new goals. Our goal is to give children a foundation that will foster a love of God and learning.

ASSESSMENT:

All children are assessed through observations of peer interactions and play, developmental checklist, and portfolios of their work. Areas of assessment include: socio-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, math, science, technology, social studies, creative expression, and health and safety. This information is shared formally twice a year during parent/teacher conferences. This process encourages parents and teachers to develop a plan that will best meet the needs of the child. It will be sensitive to the family's values, culture, identity, and home language

If, through the above mentioned process, teachers suspect a developmental delay or other special need, the teacher will communicate the concern to the Director. The administrator will observe the child, document the findings, and meet with the teachers to discuss the concern. A meeting will then be scheduled with the family to share the concern in an honest and supportive manner. We will suggest future steps and assist the family by providing information and resources for further assessments. . If we feel that we do not have the best environment for the child's learning we will work with the family in providing resources and information of other centers in our area that will best fit the needs of the child.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

We offer dance classes from Birmingham Dance Foundation and Karate from KID TIGERZ. Children must be 3 years or older to participate.

- ☼ Parents will enroll their child in the program through the respective programs website.
- ☼ All tuition for these classes will be paid through their respective website.
- ☼ An additional convenience fee of \$30 will be charged to your parent portal each month
- ☼ All uniforms and attire are to be labeled and sent to school in their Saint Mark provided extra curricular bag.
- ☼ Saint Mark ELC is not responsible for any lost items. Saint Mark will NOT call parents if uniforms are not sent and children will NOT be allowed to participate.

DISCIPLINE POLICY:

Child guidance has an important place in the program at Saint Mark. Parents and teachers will work together to be consistent and effective in training children to make appropriate choices in a classroom setting. We have developed a formula that is appropriate in shaping and encouraging responsible behavior. First, we will communicate to the child, by name and about the choice they made, and try to redirect their focus. Secondly a hand on the shoulder is a gentle reminder of choices. The time out will be either in the class, or if the behavior has warranted, the child may be in time out, in the office. If needed, the parents will be called for a conference.

DISMISSAL:

Saint Mark reserves the right at any time to suspend or permanently expel a child from enrollment.

STAFF BEHAVIORS THAT ARE PROHIBITED:

- ☼ No Saint Mark staff shall discuss or disclose personal information regarding children.
- ☼ Physical or aversive punishment
- ☼ Withdrawal of food, nap, or bathroom opportunities
- ☼ Abusive, profane, or derogatory language, including yelling or belittling
- ☼ Any form of public or private humiliation
- ☼ Any form of emotional abuse

BITING:

In the case of biting, every effort is made to ensure the safety of every child. Biting is typical for toddlers and children whom are not yet verbal. When biting occurs the following steps will be implemented:

- ☼ When a child bites they will be isolated. The bitten child will be given First Aid. Also a report of what action was taken will be provided to the parent of the biter and to the parent of the child that was bitten. If the bite breaks the skin, the parents will be notified. A report will be given to the biter and bitee.
- ☼ If the biting persists, we will then have a mandatory conference with the parents and a prevention plan will be set in place.
- ☼ If the biting still persists the parents will be required to attend a parenting class on biting. (The fee for this class is \$50.00)
- ☼ If the biting still persists, it will be at the discretion of the Director but may result in dismissal of the child.

HITTING/ROUGH PLAY POLICY:

No child should ever be afraid to come to school because he fears another child. Therefore we have a hitting and rough play policy.

- ☼ During the day if a child has been corrected 3 times for hitting or playing roughly they will then removed from class to the office.
- ☼ After the child returns to class if the behavior continues the parents will be contacted.

PARENT/STAFF RELATIONS**CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY:**

All children's records shall be kept confidential.

SMOKING POLICY:

Saint Mark United Methodist Church is a non-smoking campus throughout the week. Smoking is never permitted on the grounds or in the building.

FIREARMS POLICY:

No firearms are allowed on the campus of Saint Mark unless you are a member of the police department.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY:

Children will have an opportunity for appropriate amounts of active play each day. Children who are here for 4 hours will have at least 30 minutes of active outdoor or gym play daily. Those who are here from 7:00-4:30 will have at least 60 minutes of active play daily.

COMMUNICATION:

- ☼ Daily reports are available online through the Sandbox portal.
- ☼ Each child is to bring the Saint Mark Early Learning Center tote bag and folder each day to carry art papers, notes, etc.
- ☼ The teachers will send home a weekly newsletter containing specific class information for each class.
- ☼ One of the most important forms of communication is through your Sandbox portal. You may send messages to the teachers and or the Director.

OFFICE COMMUNICATIONS:

You may call the office during normal program hours with any questions or concerns. Please remember that the Director has many responsibilities. If she is not available you may leave a message and she will return your call as soon as practical. The optimal way to communicate with the office is the parent portal. Lengthy conference and consultations should be scheduled in advance by calling the office.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**INFANTS:**

Because breast milk is recommended as the best source of nourishment for infants, breast feeding is encouraged and supported by Saint Mark. We have a nursing room provided for convenience and privacy. It is highly advised that infants receive their first feeding of the day at home before center arrival. According to Health Department regulations bottles must be identified with the child's name. Stored breast milk must also include the date of storage and the child's name. All bottles must be pre-made at home. We are not allowed to mix bottles. We **do not** warm bottles in a microwave. We use a bottle warmer for this purpose. Infants will be held for bottle feeding. Once they can hold their own bottle that is allowed. Infants will not be placed in a crib with a bottle. If not consumed, formula will be discarded within one hour unless refrigerated and any leftover will be discarded at the end of the day. If baby food is provided by the parent, all containers shall be labeled with the child's name. No previously opened containers can be accepted. All opened containers will be sent home or discarded at the end of the day. Remember no glass containers are allowed.

All infants have their own crib to sleep in. Sheets are changed weekly or when soiled. We keep the same sleeping pattern that they have at home for this age.

Parents should provide Infants and toddlers with bibs for feeding.

BABYSITTING:

Saint Mark hires employees based on their education and expertise within a supervised and managed environment. Center management, therefore, cannot be responsible or held liable if parents hire Saint Mark employees for privately arranged child care outside the scope of its employment. Staff are allowed to transport children enrolled in the program only if they are listed on the parents designated list. While parents may feel comfortable approaching their classroom teachers to babysit, it is prohibited that your child's actual teachers be asked to babysit as this often diminishes the student/teacher relationship that teachers work so hard to establish in the classroom.

BIRTHDAY PARTIES:

All the children enjoy sharing their birthdays with the class. Please discuss with your child's teacher an appropriate time to celebrate. Please keep refreshments simple. Small cupcakes or cookies are best. No homemade items are allowed all food items must come from a bakery such as Publix, Edgars etc. **NO GIFTS!**

Children cannot go to another class party for any reason during the school year. This includes sibling birthday parties. Parents are responsible for cleaning up afterward.

Please do not bring or send party assistants to the classroom (i.e. clowns, Elsa/Batman impersonator, etc.) These disrupt the class schedule and often frighten young children. These should be reserved for your own personal parties outside the school setting.

VISITATION:

- We invite you to visit your child's room for short periods of time. We ask that you limit this to the 3K and 4K classes. Younger children do not understand someone coming to visit then leaving. We also ask that you wait until at least September to visit, so that the children have plenty of time to become accustomed to being away from you and home.
- We suggest that this visit not exceed 15-20 minutes, and that you observe as quietly as possible. That way the teacher's focus is on the class and not the visitor.
- Please do not bring any siblings when visiting, since they do not understand not to interrupt the class.
- You do not need an appointment, but please come to the office to check in before visiting a classroom. Saint Mark has an open door policy and you are welcome at any time.
- This is not the time to talk with the teacher about your child or any other matter. The teacher must stay focused on the children at all times.
- You may schedule a conference with a teacher to take place at another time.

VOLUNTEERS:

- You are encouraged to volunteer to read to your child's class, or to share a special hobby or interest that you may have. Your child's teacher might need help with special art projects, or administration may ask you to help with a party or a school-wide activity.
- According to State regulations, we must have a complete teacher's file on anyone who is left alone with a class, so we can not ask parents to substitute or otherwise watch a group of children unless that parent is also a staff member.

SOLICITATION:

Saint Mark ELC may not be used as a setting for solicitation.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS:

Many young children do have an object of special attachment, such as a blanket or stuffed toy. This can help to ease the transition from home to school. Teachers will help other children to understand and respect such feelings, and once a child is settled the item will be placed in their cubby. Teachers will do their best to keep up with children's belongings, but cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage of personal possessions. Labeling of all personal belongings helps to avoid loss.

Children are requested to leave gum, candy, money or other valuables at home. We also ask that you refrain from sending your child with special jewelry except those of religious purposes. These are a potential choking hazard to them and the other children. Please discourage your child from bringing toys or other "prized" possessions to school except on special occasions planned by the teachers. Such highly valued items are often difficult to keep up with, may get broken and are very hard to share. We cannot be held responsible for any personal items that are lost or damaged

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Our program complies with non-discrimination laws covering hiring of staff, enrollment of children, and termination of staff and children.

If anything in this handbook is unclear to you or if any of your questions have not been covered, please call or come in to see the director. We want to make sure that you feel comfortable about your child's safety and well-being while he/she is at school.