ST. THOMAS' PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN

PARENT HANDBOOK

WELCOME TO ST. THOMAS' PRESCHOOL and KINDERGARTEN!

Staff and teachers welcome you to St. Thomas' Preschool and Kindergarten. At STPS we foster a love of learning by supporting children's natural curiosity, perseverance, confidence and risk taking through play and activities in nature. Please be sure to thoroughly read through the Parent Handbook so that you have a full understanding of our school policies and guidelines. If you have any further questions, please contact the office staff or your classroom teacher.

SCHOOL HISTORY/INFORMATION ABOUT ST. THOMAS' CHURCH

St. Thomas' Preschool started as Brown Memorial Weekday School in 1963 at 6200 North Charles Street. In 2018 we moved to our new location at St. Thomas' Church in Owings Mills. St. Thomas' Church is the oldest Episcopal Church in Baltimore County and features a 52-acre wooded campus. St. Thomas' Preschool is excited to continue its hands-on nature-based curriculum at our new location.

SCHOOL ADVISORY BOARD

St. Thomas' Preschool is supported by the School Board, made up of representatives of the school, church and outside community members. The Board seeks out individuals whose philosophy, talents and background align with our school mission and philosophy. The purpose of the school board is to establish a vision for St. Thomas' Preschool that reflects a consensus of the families, staff and church community. The school board has a wide variety of responsibilities which include setting a balanced annual budget, approving school contracts, school curriculums, schedules and overall guidelines for the operations of the school.

PARENT ASSOCIATION

The Parent Association promotes the mission of the school by providing a means for members of the school community to be of service to the school. A vital component of the success of the PA is the committed people who participate in the association's activities. The PA is overseen by the President who works closely with the Director of STPS to plan and budget during the School Year.

General membership helps create the spirit of dynamic good that the association seeks to establish and perpetuate. The PA holds general meetings, school-wide activities, fundraisers, and other events for all STPS families to attend. Parents can contribute "voluntary" dues to facilitate activities (Fall Fest, Teacher Appreciation Week) if they choose.

PARENT ASSOCIATION MEET & GREET - "POPSICLES ON THE PLAYGROUND"

This is an annual event sponsored and organized by the school PA in August to welcome back existing families and to welcome new families to the St. Thomas' Preschool Community. The events typically take place outdoors, with each individual class offered an invite to attend. The Meet and Greet gives families and children the opportunity to connect with one another after summer break. It is particularly helpful for families new to our community to participate in this special event to help foster and build new friendships in the context of the school environment. At this event, parents can sign up for volunteer opportunities offered through the Parent Association. This is a wonderful way to support your child's experience at school, as well as a great way to make new friends in this supportive community of people!

SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

St. Thomas' Preschool is an integral part of the life of St. Thomas' Episcopal Church and is an outgrowth of its pastoral programs and mission. For over 50 years, the school (formerly known as Brown Memorial Weekday School) has served preschool and kindergarten-aged children and their families by providing rich early childhood learning experiences within a developmentally appropriate framework. The school's mission has focused on providing a quality early childhood education experience for children regardless of faith, race or ethnic origin.

At STPS, we believe that each child is a unique individual who learns in his or her own way. To meet each child's needs, we provide a rich **play-based** approach and a variety of **nature oriented** activities and experiences. We endeavor to create a warm, accepting atmosphere in which each child feels secure and ready to explore. Learning is an ongoing process which begins in the home and expands as horizons widen. With help from parents and by means of a curriculum that is sensitive to individual development, teachers guide children as they grow toward maturity and selfhood. It is our hope that each day offers challenge without pressure and many opportunities for success. We want every child to return home each afternoon feeling happy and confident.

BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR STAGGERED ENTRY:

Our preschool has shortened days until we begin our regular routine. This phase enables children to find comfort in their new environment. During this period,

we have heard parents say, "My child is ready to stay for a longer day. Why are they still coming for a short time?" We ask parents to understand that until each and every child is ready for a full day of school, the class is not ready. In addition, St. Thomas' offers the following event to help familiarize children with their new school and teachers:

- **Visiting Day**

At the beginning of the school year, a day is set aside for children and their parents/guardians to briefly visit their classroom and meet classroom teachers. These days are included in the school calendar, and visiting times are assigned and forwarded to parents a few weeks in advance of the visiting days. **Unfortunately, due to the busy nature of the beginning of the school year and in consideration of teachers, these days cannot be rescheduled.**

SCHOOL DOCUMENTS

All required school documents must be returned together to the school by the date stated in our calendar, tuition agreement, and cover letter. **If these documents are not returned by the assigned day, your child will not be eligible to attend school on his/her first day of school.** Forms are available on BRIGHTWHEEL, our educational childcare APP, and will be sent home in your welcome packet for the upcoming school year. **Parents are responsible for filling out and downloading their own forms, but may request paper copies from the office.**

All forms are due by your child's Visiting Day.

LOST AND FOUND

Clothing and large items that have been found will be placed in a basket just outside of the school office. All items should be clearly labeled and every effort will be made to return labeled items to their owners. Unclaimed items will be donated to charity or disposed of.

ADMISSIONS/NON-DISCRIMINATION

Applications are accepted for children of any faith, race or ethnic origin. In accordance with sound educational practices, we try to ensure that both our school and its individual classes are composed of children with different cultural backgrounds, abilities, personalities and genders. Applications are considered on a first come, first served basis. To the extent possible, priority is given to current children, children whose families are members of St. Thomas' Church, and also those whose families have had a prior affiliation with the school.

Brochures and applications for the next school year are sent out upon request beginning in October. Letters of acceptance by the end of January. If the preschool does not have an available spot for a child, his/her application will automatically be placed on a waiting list for consideration should a space become available. A non-refundable deposit is required at the time of enrollment and will be applied towards tuition.

DRESS REQUIREMENTS

Children should wear comfortable and appropriate clothing, for all kinds of weather (warm, cold, rain, snow, and the mud). At St Thomas' Preschool, we emphasize outdoor play so please no sandals or open-toe shoes. Sneakers or other outdoor appropriate shoes are recommended. We also appreciate an extra pair of rain boots be left in your child's cubby for those "puddle-jumping" days. Please bring a change of clothing, including socks and underwear, to be left in your child's cubby as well. ALL clothing brought to school should have your child's name on the inside tag.

TOILET TRAINING POLICY

When admitted to the Twos and Threes program, children should be working towards being toilet trained. Children can wear diapers, pull-ups, or underwear. Parents are responsible for providing diapers, pull-ups and wipes for your child. Children must be independently using the bathroom upon entering our Pre-Kindergarten program or by their fourth birthday, whichever comes first.

CLASS SIZE (BASED ON STATE REQUIREMENTS)

In order to maintain a program that includes individual attention for each student, we limit the size of each class based on the age of children in our program. All lead teachers are highly qualified college graduates. Listed below are the current student:teacher ratios allowed in the state of MD.

2 year old class: 6 students: 1 teacher

3 year old class: 10 students: 1 teacher

Pre-K class: 10 students: 1 teacher

Kindergarten class: 15 students: 1 teacher

MONTHLY CHAPELS

As a mission of St. Thomas' Church we participate in monthly chapel services. Chapels are brief and relaxed in nature and all families are invited to attend. If you do not want your child to attend chapel you may drop him/her off after chapel.

GIVING THANKS

Before snack each day we say one of the following blessings:

"Food and family
Friends and fun
We are grateful for each one."

"God is great, God is good, let us thank him for our food."

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are recognized in classrooms and celebrated with a simple celebration that includes a special snack from our list of safe treats (list can be obtained from classroom teacher). **Please make arrangements with your child's teacher in advance to maintain the safety for children with food allergies. Balloons and candles are not permitted.**

HOLIDAYS

Holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, Valentine's Day, Easter, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday and President's Day are all typically celebrated and acknowledged in our program. We recognize that some of our children may celebrate holidays that are not included on this list. We welcome the opportunity to celebrate our diverse culture through various experiences. Please talk to your child's classroom teacher if you would like to share a special holiday that is not included in the above list.

TUITION/TUITION CONTRACT

A digital signature will now be required at the time of online registration for every child. This signature acknowledges that our STPS families know, and fully understand they will be held to our tuition policy. The tuition contract is comprised of the following:

- Enrollment Deposit - A payment of the non-refundable deposit is due at the time of registration. Once paid, the space for your child will be held in their preferred classroom.
- Cancellations & Refunds - Parents understand and agree that class size, space and other factors limit the number of students the school may enroll for any school year. For the school to enroll a new family, there needs to be space available and STPS relies on those current admissions to determine whether there is space for a new student. When a student withdraws, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a suitable replacement without altering the student environment which we carefully instruct to be

engaging. A binding cancellation date of April 15th will be enforced for all registered families, as replacements will have accepted positions at other institutions and will be otherwise bound to the obligations of these institutions. All withdrawal or cancellations for the upcoming School year need to be submitted in writing to the Director of the School before April 15th, or your contract will be considered legally binding. Parents agree and accept the obligation to pay the full tuition for the student for the entire school year, regardless of whether the student is absent, withdrawn, dismissed, or otherwise ceases to attend our School for all or a portion of the School year; regardless of whether such decision is made by STPS or the Parents. The retention of sums paid and the requirement to pay sums outstanding, if any, shall be deemed liquidated damages, it being impractical to figuring actual damages at the time of registration and making the Enrollment Contract.

- Payment Options - Tuition is non-refundable and payable in full, by three installments (July 1, November 1, March 1) or by 10 monthly payments (July 1-April 1). Tuition payments can be made by Brightwheel app or by check made payable to "St. Thomas' Preschool".
- Tuition is non-refundable. Parents are responsible for the full year's tuition even in the event a child is withdrawn from the program.
- Late tuition - A student may not attend school if tuition payments are not up to date. Under special circumstances (and with notice to the Director), a monthly late fee can be accessed.

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CHURCH MEMBER DISCOUNT

St. Thomas' Church "pledging" members will receive a 10% discount on tuition (after initial non-refundable deposit).

FINANCIAL AID

A limited amount of financial assistance may be available to some families through the Lucy Liddell/Louis Hogan Scholarship Fund. Our aid program is strictly need based and requires the submission of our Financial Aid Form for consideration. Applications are reviewed by a designated "financial assistance" committee and require the approval of the School Board. All information is held in strict confidence and we ask that families use the same discretion in the event that aid is offered.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

The qualifications for all St. Thomas' Preschool and Kindergarten teachers meet or exceed those required for state licensure through the MSDE Office of Childcare and as an accredited MSDE Kindergarten Program. Our teachers are experienced, caring and devoted educators many of whom have been with the school for 10 years or more. In addition, staff members are certified in CPR and First Aid and participate in school sponsored professional development activities and conferences throughout the year.

A bachelor's degree is the standard entry requirement to become a lead kindergarten teacher. A major in early childhood education or elementary education is preferred. Preschool Lead Teachers are required to have an education degree OR a bachelor's degree combined with Preschool Certification (Preschool 90 hours) coupled with teaching experience.

DIRECTOR QUALIFICATIONS

The state requires, based on MSDE Office of Childcare Licensing, the director is to have the following credentials:

- 4 Year College Degree
- State Preschool Certification
- State Director Certification
- ADA Training
- Medication Administration Training
- First Aid Training

ACCREDITATION

Our preschool program is approved by The Office of Childcare of the Maryland State Department of Education and our Kindergarten program is approved and accredited by the Maryland State Department of Education.

SCHOOL DAY

St. Thomas' Preschool is open and supervised daily during the stated hours of operation, with the exception of holidays, scheduled vacation times, closings for inclement weather and staff professional development days. Each teacher establishes a specific routine for his or her class based on the ages, abilities and needs of his or her students. In general, your child's day will include indoor free play, snack, circle or rug time, stories, special projects, quiet time and outdoor play. Each day, in every classroom, language development as well as reading and math readiness skills are honed through a variety of activities created by our teachers to address the needs of their particular students. Great emphasis is also placed on the promotion of social and problem solving skills as well as fine and gross motor development.

CLASS HOURS

Kindergarten – Monday and Friday: 9:00 a.m. –12:00 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Pre-K – Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Extended PreK - above Pre-K hours plus additional time of Tuesday and Thursday 12:00 - 2:30 p.m.

Threes

3 Day Threes: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

5 Day Threes: Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Twos

2 Day Twos: Tuesday and Thursday 9:00 a.m. –12:00 a.m.

3 Day Twos: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

5 Day Twos: Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

ARRIVAL

School begins at 9am. Early Drop Off is available at 8am with prior registration. All children should be accompanied to their designated drop off location each morning. The time prior to school is a valuable preparation period for teachers.

Prompt arrival to school develops good habits for children and also helps their transition into class each morning. Frequent lateness is not only disruptive to the child who is late but the class as a whole.

Children who are late or frequently absent miss important events and sometimes require teachers to take them aside later in the day or on another day to catch them up on what they missed. It is also important that children arrive with the necessary items needed to participate in their day. This includes extra clothing and possibly lunch. This way parents avoid the need to drop off extra clothing, lunches and miscellaneous items throughout the day which can also be disruptive for both staff and children.

DISMISSAL

All children should be picked up from their designated pick-up area at dismissal time. Dismissals take place at 12:00pm, 2:30pm and 4:00pm. Please be prompt. If someone other than a parent will be picking up your child on a regular basis, please notify your child's teacher by email (copying the Director). **Additionally, photo I.D. must be shown by all non-parental drivers, including grandparents,**

particularly at the beginning of the school year when teachers are familiarizing themselves with new names and faces.

Pick-up by someone other than those listed on the Emergency Form requires contact from the parent to the Director by email identifying that person and supplying relevant contact information. We will check photo I.D. the when the child is picked up.

LATE PICK-UP POLICY

Please be prompt in picking up your child from school. STPS will assess the following late fees:

- A $5 late fee - billed to Brightwheel - to children picked up 5 minutes past close (school day and KW)
- Children enrolled in the School Day Program not picked up by 12:10pm will be assessed an additional charge of $1/per minute.
- Children enrolled in Kids Workshop not picked up by 2:40pm will be assessed an additional charge of $1/per minute.
- Children enrolled in Afternoon Explorers need to be picked up promptly by 4:00pm. A late fee of $20 will be charged to Brightwheel if late. Children not picked up by 4:10 will be assessed an additional charge of $1/minute.

Students who have not been picked up within 10 minutes of dismissal will be brought to wait in the front office.

Please note: Teachers and staff often have meetings, other job responsibilities, and scheduled commitments following class and late pick-ups are disruptive to their schedule. Late pick up can also be very upsetting to the child - we appreciate your understanding and compliance with our pick-up policy. St. Thomas' Preschool and St. Thomas' Church are not responsible for the supervision of students before or after designated dismissal time.

KID'S WORKSHOP/AFTERNOON EXPLORERS/EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM

St. Thomas' offers our Kid's Workshop Extended Day program on Monday - Friday with pick up time of 2:30pm and an Afternoon Explorers Extended Day program Monday - Friday with a pick-up time of 4:00pm. A description and schedule is provided to parents, dependent upon class enrollment.

No refunds will be made for missed days or cancellations due to a child's illness or inclement weather.

**In some cases, adding extra hours may prove to be too long of a day for younger children. As a result, an otherwise successful adjustment to the morning program can begin to suffer. When this is the case, we may*

request that your child withdraw from the afternoon program until the morning teacher thinks he/she is ready. Under these circumstances, the unused portion of your Extended Day tuition will be refunded. Please note: The final decision for the child's readiness will be made collaboratively between the School's Director and Lead Morning Teacher for the child.

Drop In: If space is available, children may drop-in. Parents must email the Director to make the request 24 hours in advance, ensuring space and staff are available for the day.

SCHOOL AND PLAYGROUND RULES

We ask that a parent or caregiver accompany and supervise any child on school property outside of that child's regular school hours. We understand that families enjoy gathering together after the end of the school day. We ask that our STPS families stay off of the ramp to the Parish Hall Entrance and for safety reasons please do not hang on the wood railings. If you would like to gather after hours, please use the side "meadow" area or castle playground (during available hours).

Children cannot be left unattended in a vehicle on school grounds at any time, for any reason. Indoors, children are expected to walk in the hallways, avoid excessive shouting and respect school property. Likewise, we ask that parents make sure that children clean up after themselves when playing on the playgrounds.

Please note: Parents and families may not use the playground area during school hours. Parents are welcome to use the playground space after 4:00 pm Monday thru Friday. The school and church are not responsible for children on school property outside of designated school hours.

Please note: Pets, including dogs, are not allowed in school or on the playground during school hours without permission.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Vaccination Policy

Vaccination policy – All children entering our program must have immunization requirements set by the State of Maryland. Any child exempt from these regulations due to medical or religious reasons could be denied entry to school in the case of state of emergency or epidemic. Medical and religious exemptions need not be honored at that time. All medical records and immunizations must be up to date and forms received by the school by a child's

first day of school. Children will not be permitted to school without signed Health Forms.

A. General

All students are required to have updated immunization, health and emergency contact forms on file with the school as required by state law. All forms must be submitted prior to the start of each school year. Parents must notify the office in writing (Allergy Form) if their child has allergies of any kind.

Staff members are trained in First Aid and CPR and can easily tend to minor bumps and bruises. If a child has an accident during the school day, a note of the incident will be filed with the office and parents/caregivers notified at the end of the day. In the case of a more serious injury, parents will be notified by phone as soon as possible.

In the case of an emergency, the school will secure immediate medical attention by calling 911. Every effort will be made to contact parents or authorized family members as soon as possible.

B. Medication

If at all possible, medication should be administered at home. In the event your child should require medication (allergy related or otherwise) while at school, the following rules apply:

1. The first dose of prescription medication must be given to the child at home.
2. A MSDE Medication Administration Authorization Form accompanied by the child's photo and signed by the parent/ guardian must be on file in the office. The form must specify the dosage on the medication. **Prescription medication requires a physician's signature.**
3. If your child has an allergy and requires medication/epi-pen and or Benadryl, you can obtain the forms in the school office. Your child **cannot** start school without the necessary documentations accompanied by the medications. STPS requires children with allergies to have 2 epi-pens.
4. One of each medication will be kept in the office and one will be kept in the classroom's red "emergency" backpack.
5. We will also need 2 (facial) photographs of your child so that we can attach it onto his/her medication containers.

If you have any further questions please call the School office 410-363-1874.

- Medication cannot be stored in cubbies or book bags.
- Prescription medication can be administered only to the child whose name is on the label.
- Prescription medications must be in original containers and have the full pharmacy label along with the following:
    - The child's name
    - The date of the prescription
    - The name of the medication
    - The medication dosage
    - The administration schedule
    - The administration route
    - If applicable, special instructions, such as "take with food.
    - The duration of the prescription and
    - An expiration date that states when the medication is no longer useable

C. Illness Policy The purpose of our Illness Policy is both to contain the spread of illness as well as to encourage the full recuperation of the sick child. All classes are outside for an extended period of time daily. A child who is not well enough to play outdoors should be kept home from school that day. In the event that a child becomes noticeably unwell at school, the child will be made comfortable in the office and parents notified to pick their child up as soon as possible.

D. Hand Washing Procedures Children will wash their hands with the supervision of staff upon entering school, after playing outside, before and after eating snack/lunch, after using the restroom, after playing with shared toys/material. All children will be required to wash their hands using CDC recommended hand washing procedures throughout the day using running water and rubbing with soap for at least 20 seconds. Parents will be asked to approve the use of hand sanitizing wipes if/when hand washing is not possible.

Please keep your child home and notify the office if they exhibit any ONE of the following symptoms of illness or communicable condition:

- A fever of 100.4 degrees or more
- Sore Throat
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New onset of severe headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Vomiting / Diarrhea
- Heavy nasal discharge

- An unusual skin rash
- Head lice
- Conjunctivitis

*The school will follow the guidelines developed by MSDE and the MD Department of Health.

In general, children should be symptom free for at least 24 hours (without the use of medication) before returning to school or after it has been determined that they are no longer contagious. In addition, we ask that children not attend activities held at the school outside of school hours if exhibiting symptoms of illness.

A child may not be re-admitted to care after an absence of 3 days or more due to illness without a written statement from the parent or physician that the child may return to a regular schedule.

St. Thomas' Preschool follows the recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics with regard to head lice. We do ask parents to begin treatment for lice 24 hours prior to sending children back to school.

The following communicable diseases/conditions must be reported to the school (all personal reports will be kept confidential): measles, meningitis, hepatitis, food poisoning, head lice, adverse reactions to pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine, Lyme disease, chicken pox, tuberculosis (TB), MRSA, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and related infections, mononucleosis, flu, impetigo, and Fifth Disease, RSV, Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease and COVID-19/Coronavirus.

Students who have chickenpox (varicella) are excluded from school until all lesions are scabbed over.

Fire Drills

As required by law, the school will hold regular fire and safety drills, regardless of weather conditions, ONCE per month. All children and adults present at the time of the drill are expected to participate in exiting the building in a timely but orderly fashion and accompanying classes to a designated 'safe spot'.

Handling Injuries

If any injury to the head or any other serious injury occurs to a student, the school will call the parent or guardian or emergency contact. In an emergency, the school will contact 911.

If your child has an injury and is returning to school with a cast, brace, crutches, or any assistive device, the School must be notified in advance. * A doctor's order is required for any accommodations.

Other Emergencies/Lock-Downs

In the case of an emergency, St. Thomas' Preschool has Maryland State Approved Emergency Disaster Plan and emergency Lockdown Procedures. In the instance that children need to be evacuated, STPS has procedures in place to assure safe relocation to St. Thomas's Church (on premises), and the St. Thomas' Episcopal Church basement. This location is within walking distance to the school.

Emergency Plans

Staff members are informed on procedures for emergency situations including injuries, bomb threats, and intruders in the building, fire, and civil defense. Drills for fire, severe weather and other potential threats are conducted during the school day following the recommended best practices of the Maryland State Department of Education. Exit notices are posted in every room. Students and adults leave the building quickly and silently to a pre-designated area.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Policy and Procedures

Maryland law requires that all educators and other school employees, including volunteers, report suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities in order that children may be protected from harm and the family may be helped. Our school policy supports Maryland laws in this regard and requires that all school staff report suspected abuse and neglect to the Department of Social Services, Protective Services Division and/or or the local police department.

STATEMENT ON DISCIPLINE

St. Thomas' Preschool strives to offer a program that fosters the development of the whole child: physical, social, emotional and intellectual. Our approach to discipline primarily utilizes the concepts of modeling, redirection and positive reinforcement. Classroom rules and behavioral expectations are explained clearly for students. Teachers help guide the children in recognizing and limiting undesirable behavior while supporting the development of more positive alternatives.

When necessary, we work with parents to resolve behavioral issues. If it is determined by the school administrators that your child needs consistent one on one attention in order to be successful, then the school may hire an assistant to support your child. Parents of the child will be required to pay for the additional teacher's pay. This decision can be based on a child's inability to follow classroom routines, disruptive behavior, and safety concerns for your child or other children in the classroom. It is our goal to provide each child in our care with a successful school experience. At times, this may require or involve additional conference and consultation with sources outside the school. If it is determined that a particular child's needs cannot be met by the school, the Director and the St. Thomas' Preschool Council reserve the right to terminate an existing school contract and suggest other school placement options.

Our discipline procedures will consist of the following strategies:

1. Teach children to use their problem solving skills and strategies to resolve conflict:

- Defuse anger first through active listening
- Acknowledge and support the child's feelings
- Collect information about what happened
- State the problem clearly and objectively
- Help children to generate multiple solutions to the problem
- Have children look at possible consequences of the solutions and evaluate them
- Involve children in deciding on a solution and planning for its implementation
- Arrange discussions among children to solve problems

2. Whenever possible, we use redirection to resolve conflicts and behavioral issues. Redirection may include:

- Taking the child out of the area when conflict or frustration is occurring
- Provide the child with "renewal" time when they need time and space or calming rather than "time out" punishment.
- During the "renewal time" a child may be given a choice to work on an individual activity. When the teacher feels that the child has had time to "settle" or understands the implications of his/her behavior, the teacher will encourage the child to participate in a group activity.
- When all attempts fail to redirect a child in the classroom setting, teachers may: take a child for a quiet walk up the hallway; a child may be taken to the school office and parents will be informed of the office visit at pick up time.

SCHOOL FOOD POLICIES

Due to the prevalence of food allergies, St. Thomas' Preschool makes every reasonable effort to maintain a peanut and tree nut free facility. All food

brought into the school must be carefully monitored for these allergens. Snacks are provided by the school and consist of pre-approved brands of crackers, pretzels and cheese (the approved snack list will be sent home during Visitation Day before the start of school). If you wish to provide a special snack for your child's class, please consult with his or her teacher to get recommendations for 'safe foods'. While fruit is always a welcome addition to snack, please be sure it is brought to school uncut to avoid any cross contamination.

LUNCH AT SCHOOL

Please make sure that when bringing lunch from home for our extended day program that it contains no peanuts, peanut oils or other tree nuts. In order to keep our environment safe for all students, we ask that you support our enforcement of the following policies:

-Parents must be vigilant in reading the labels of any food product brought into school for extended day or any other occasion. Extended Day Teachers will make every effort to ensure that all lunches are nut-free, but parents must take primary responsibility for packing lunches that are safe for all students. Peanuts, peanut oil and tree nut ingredients in any form are strictly forbidden. Despite these efforts the school cannot guarantee the possible exposure to at risk foods.

-Children will be asked to eat their own lunch only. NO FOOD IS TO BE SHARED.

-Children will be asked to wash their hands before eating to prevent accidental contamination of food with allergens and prevent the spread of germs.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

St. Thomas' Preschool follows the closing policies for Baltimore County Public Schools. If county schools are closed, STPS is closed. If county schools open 1 or 2 hours late, STPS will open at 10:00 a.m. If Baltimore County Public Schools close early due to inclement weather, we will close at noon. If Baltimore County Public Schools cancel afternoon activities, school will close at 2:30pm. You can also check the Baltimore County Schools website at bcps.org. *A Brightwheel message alert will be sent out to parents.*

In the event that Baltimore County Schools have a scheduled closing on a day when we are open, teachers will Brightwheel regarding the opening or closing of St. Thomas' Preschool and Kindergarten.

STPS, along with most private schools allow for the possibility of **4** inclement weather days in the school calendar.

Preschool - Any days missed for inclement weather closures over the 4 allowed, will be made-up. For example: If STPS closes for 6 days due to weather closures, 2 days will be added on during the last week of May.

Kindergarten - Required 170 days of instruction. The calendar for Kindergarten allows for 174 days. If we do not use ALL 4 days for snow, then the last day of Kindergarten could be earlier.

COMMUNICATION

St. Thomas' Preschool encourages open communication with parents and families through a variety of channels. Conferences regarding the progress of your child are held once per year in November for kindergarteners and preschoolers. Additional meetings can be arranged with either your child's teacher or the Director on an as needed basis. Additionally, a monthly school e-newsletter will be distributed via email. Classroom teachers send regular class updates to help keep families informed on classroom activities and future plans. Please allow 24 hours for teachers to respond either to emails or Brightwheel messages. Also, please appreciate a teacher's personal time during weekends and vacations.

Teachers will communicate via email and Brightwheel. Students are automatically enrolled at the time of registration and parents are sent an email to create an account/login.

LOCK-DOWNS/EVACUATION PROCEDURES

In the case of an emergency, St. Thomas' Preschool has Maryland State Approved Emergency Disaster Plan and emergency Lockdown Procedures. In the instance that children need to be evacuated, the school has procedures in place to assure safe relocation to St. Thomas' Church (on premises), and the St. Thomas' Church residence of the Rector (Reverend Tom) at 212 St. Thomas Lane Owings Mills. Both of these locations are within walking distance to the school.

PARENT INFORMATION

Parent e-mail addresses and phone numbers are collected by the school for in-house communication purposes only and should not be distributed to anyone outside the St. Thomas' Preschool community. Likewise, the use of this information for personal marketing or political purposes is strictly forbidden.

VISITATION AND VOLUNTEERING

Parents are encouraged to visit and participate in their child's school experience. Sharing traditions, skills and hobbies or simply reading a favorite book to the class are all ways of enhancing the group experience. There are also numerous opportunities to help with painting and repairs, volunteering on

the Parent's Association or collecting needed materials for a specific project. We welcome and appreciate your help! Please call the office or speak with your child's teacher about the ways in which you'd like to be included in our school community.

While at the school, it is important to respect the confidentiality of other children and families. Any questions or concerns regarding something observed in the classroom should be brought to the attention of the teacher or school Director.

In order to ensure a safe environment for all students and employees, all school doors will remain locked during the school day. A visitor will be admitted after identifying himself or herself, stating the business at hand, and signing in at the reception desk. At that time, the visitor will be accompanied to their designated location.

MEDIA POLICY

STPS uses photographs, videos, and images of students and employees for a range of different school – related purposes, including celebrating achievement, promoting and publicizing the school, and for educational purposes. This may include using photographs, videos, and images of students and employees of the school on the school's website, newsletters, promotional brochures, and other places for official school business. The school will not identify a student's photo by name on the website. The school may, however, use identifying information (first name only) in publications that are intended for the school community such as classroom and hallway bulletins.

The school will obtain permission from parents/guardians prior to using a student's photograph or image for school related purposes in a general release form. Please contact the School Director for any further questions.

Parents and employees of St. Thomas' Preschool are expected to consider and respect the privacy of other students, families, teachers and staff of the school in all their on-line activity, including the use of images and photographs without permission. Employees must refrain from using images or photos of students without prior authorization in any publications, online communications, posts or content, unless doing so on behalf of the school for official related school purposes.

PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA

While we recognize the importance of sharing information, we also recognize the importance of protecting the children's privacy when posting pictures and/ or using children's names in these communications. Therefore, we ask families to consider these same concerns when sharing on social media. Something that you may consider harmless to share on social media may unintentionally offend

or even hurt another family or child. These messages can easily go beyond the intended reader and have the potential to lead to unintended consequences for all involved. Thank you for your careful considerations in these matters.

POLICIES REGARDING CERTAIN LEGAL MATTERS

Student Records

Student records are maintained in the school office. Access to records is governed by the records policy.

Change in Name or Family Status

If there is a change in the family status/or the change of a child's name, it is important that the school be informed promptly of the change. In case of the change of custody, a copy of the portion of the court order that describes the custody arrangement must be on file with the school.

Non-Custodial Parent

Emergency form information for each child is to be kept current. Children will only be released to the person(s) designated on the emergency form, unless otherwise instructed by the custodial parent/guardian.

St. Thomas' Preschool allows both parents physical access during school hours only if a special event (open to parents/family) is taking place. St. Thomas' Preschool will follow all "physical custody" court orders in releasing a child to a parent and all "legal custody" court orders when providing information to parents. Once a legal court/consent order has been finalized, we appreciate for the safety of the child to have a copy on file at St. Thomas'.

MISCELLANEOUS

Smoke and Drug-Free School Zone

STPS complies with the Drug Free School Zone and the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988. There is no smoking or vaping allowed on our campus at any time.

Restricted Areas

When school is in session, students may not be outside the school building unless they are involved in a class or recess and are accompanied by a faculty member. For the safety of students, no child is permitted to return to the classroom after school hours unless accompanied by a staff member.