

UCCC Preschool Handbook

2011/2012

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I Who we are.

A. Mission Statement

Nurturing the gift and the promise of young children is the mission of the University Congregational Children's Center Preschool. We honor the value and dignity of each individual, while educating the whole child through developmentally appropriate practice. We encourage children to become contributing members of their classroom community, strengthening values of cooperation, responsibility and creativity. As a parent-cooperative, the preschool offers an environment where ideas about learning and positive parenting can be shared by all. Reflective of University Congregational Church's statement of "Open and Affirming", we celebrate present-day family diversity and welcome children of all races, abilities and backgrounds. As one of the church's 'outward' faces, we seek to be not only a home for discovery and learning, but also a place of hospitality and love.

B. Our Hopes for 2011/2012

We hope to continue to:

- Support socio-economic diversity by offering need-based scholarships, increasing those scholarships if financially possible.
- Promote clear communication and peaceful conflict resolution by teaching and modeling those skills within the classroom.
- Offer and expand curriculum materials which reflect the diversity of humanity.
- Encourage and support emergent literacy with special emphasis on class-made books specific to individual children or individual classes of children.
- Encourage and support children's growing understanding and use of writing through developmentally appropriate handwriting curriculum (using Handwriting without Tears as a guide). Support parents' understanding of developmentally appropriate handwriting expectations.
- Guide children, as developmentally appropriate, into an understanding of community, especially through hands-on learning and service projects.
- Strengthen the relationship between the church community and the preschool, through encouragement of registration by church members, through presentations at the Women's Fellowship meeting and in joint projects with groups within the church or that support some of the church's efforts in social justice.

Additionally we aspire to:

Promote, as developmentally appropriate, an understanding of the food chain, issues of sustainability and our responsibility to all of creation, through concrete experiences of growing and harvesting our own food, careful use of resources, and recycling.

C. Philosophy

At an early age, the child establishes lifelong patterns, techniques for managing personal relationships, and feelings of self-confidence. The importance of this early learning is the focus of the preschool program of the University Congregational Children's Center, which contributes to the physical, mental, and social development of children. An appreciation for the value and dignity of each individual and the importance of developing a positive self-image are the foundations upon which the program is based.

Professional early childhood educators help children develop basic values of curiosity, resourcefulness, creativity, achievement, cooperation, and responsibility. Provision is made for individual rates of growth through a balanced program that meets the developmental needs of the preschool-age child. A physical environment, scaled to and planned for the child, enhances this development. Opportunities for self-expression through varied media, and for spontaneous and organized play are provided.

The UCCC's program offers the child opportunities to gain independence and to interact with children and adults of different backgrounds. The school is non-sectarian.

Parent (or other adult family member) participation is required. All families take turns "parent-helping" in the classroom. This co-operative aspect affords parents the opportunity to further their insight into child development, and to learn effective ways of fostering this development. The parent-child-teacher co-operative relationship enriches the learning environment for all who are involved and is the cornerstone of the Children's Center program.

D. History

Early childhood education has a long history at University Congregational Church, beginning in the 1950's with the establishment of one of the first kindergartens in Missoula. When public school kindergarten became a reality in 1972, the emphasis shifted from solely five year olds to younger children, and the University Congregational Children's Center *Preschool* began. The curriculum of the preschool, and of the kindergarten before that, while intentionally non-religious, does reflect strong humanitarian and community-building values. It is based on best educational and developmentally appropriate practice.

E. School Operations

The UCCC Preschool is administered by a twelve-member volunteer board of directors, consisting of parents of current and former students, and University Congregational Church members. The board meets monthly, first Tuesday of the month. The preschool is non-profit

and self-sustaining. Parents are welcome to attend any board meetings and to contact board members with concerns.

2011/2012 Board Members are: Kamra Kolendich and Heather Kliber, Co-Chairs; Victoria Parks, Distribution Treasurers; Julene Shea, Income Treasurer; Brooke Whitman, Registrar; Sara Carlson, Maintenance; Charlotte Whitehead*; Sarah Bryan*; Janell Harvey, Secretary; Lisa Wilson, Purchaser, Jaclyn Sundberg, Scholarship and Outreach; Ann Wiltse, Administrator.
*indicates UC Church Member

2011/2012 Teaching Staff is: 3/4 class Monday through Friday, Edie Cloud; 4/5 Tuesday and Thursday, Robin Abeshaus; 4/5 Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Jean Woessner

F. Classes Offered

We offer classes for children age 3 to 4, and children age 4 to 5, either two (T-TH) or three (M-W-F) days a week. There are separate classes for both age groups on M-W-F and on T-TH.

G. Class Time

All classes meet from 9:00am to 12:00pm. There is a Lunch Bunch option until 1:30pm for an additional fee. This option has limited availability. You must sign up for Lunch Bunch with Edie Cloud, the Lunch Bunch teacher. Additionally, we ask parents of children in the 4/5 year-old classes to let your child's teacher know if s/he will be attending Lunch Bunch that day.

II. Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

A. UCCC Parents/Guardians

1. Parents/guardians are responsible for full tuition regardless of a child's absence due to snow days, vacation, illness, etc.
2. Parents/guardians must notify teacher if child is to be going home with someone other than parent/guardian.
3. Children must be walked to or from the classroom by the person who is bringing them to, or picking them up from, school. Parents will not drop off their children before 8:50 a.m.
4. All families must share equally in parent helping responsibilities per class *per child in school*. Helpers are responsible for bringing a nutritious snack. If a parent cannot help, he/she is responsible for obtaining a responsible adult substitute. Failure to complete this obligation may result in expulsion.

5. Parents/guardians are responsible for participating in one school clean-up every year. Four such clean-ups will be scheduled. Failure to attend will result in the forfeiture of the \$50 clean-up deposit made at the beginning of the school year. The maintenance chair will manage the deposits and parent participation lists.

6. Committees will be formed according to the varying needs within the preschool. (For example, library committee, school spirit committee, painting committee, sewing committee, etc.) Parents/guardians are required to sign up for one of those committees at the beginning of the school year.

B. Communication

Please let your child's teacher know if your child will be absent from school. The school phone is **531-8222**. Teachers will provide you with a calendar of classroom activities. Please also frequently check the parent bulletin board by the bathrooms, and the wall outside each classroom for updates and classroom or school news. From time to time, you may receive updates or news via email. **Please let your child's teacher know if you do not use email.**

The school website is: <http://uccmsla.org/preschool>

C. Snack Time

On your parent helping day, one of your responsibilities will be to provide snack and drink for the class (adults included). The purpose of snack time is not only nutritional, but educational and social, as well. We have found that offering small portions of two snack items gives children the opportunity to make choices about food. Foods that have universal appeal to children are welcomed; offering "new" foods that may not appeal to everyone is acceptable also.

From time to time, snack will be prepared by the children as part of the curriculum. Your child's teacher will coordinate this with you.

Recognizing that we may hold differing understandings of "nutritional", we have the following guidelines concerning snack:

1. The UCCC has adopted a policy of low or no sugar snacks. This includes birthdays and holidays. (If every parent brought cupcakes or cookies for their child's birthday, plus holidays, children would be sharing snack time with sugary treats 25-30% of the time). Your child's teacher and classmates will make your child's birthday special on their celebration day.

2. **No peanuts or peanut-products for snack.** Because snack is a community activity meant to include everyone, and due to the high number of peanut allergies/sensitivities in preschool age children, we have a no-peanut snack policy at UCCC.
3. We recommend the use of fresh foods, or foods with less 'processing', where possible.
4. Drink should be 100% fruit juice, milk or water.
5. Quantity of snack should be modest, so as not to disturb children's lunch.
6. Please keep in mind that within an individual class, there may be food allergies or prohibitions that will prevent some snack possibilities. Your child's teacher will inform you of any such constraints.

The preschool provides washable cups, and paper napkins. We have on hand child-sized pitchers, larger mixing pitchers, serving bowls and plates. We thank you for your help in this aspect of our parent cooperative. Bon appetit!

Some snack suggestions:

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Pretzels | Graham crackers |
| Crackers and cheese | Goldfish crackers |
| Trail mix | Granola bars (low fat – no peanuts) |
| Animal crackers | Yogurt |
| Cut-up fruit | Low-fat muffins or bread |
| Fruit cups | Dried fruit, raisins |
| String cheese | Bagels, cream cheese |
| Vegetables and low-fat dip | |

D. Food Allergy Policy

The following guidelines have been developed with regard to handling food allergies in the classroom:

Non Life Threatening Allergies and/or Food Sensitivities

In the event a child has an allergy or food sensitivity that is not considered life threatening, UCCC will require the family to provide the teacher a list of acceptable snacks for his and/or her child. The teacher will review and distribute the list to all parents. We will ask families bringing communal snack to choose at least one item from the above mentioned list. This process will allow everyone the opportunity to provide at least one snack option that is safe for all children. In order to ensure there is always a safe snack available for the child, we also require the family to provide extra snacks to be stored by the teacher in the classroom.

Life Threatening Food Allergies

Life threatening allergies will be evaluated on a case by case basis. UCCC will make every effort to accommodate these situations but understand that some circumstances are not within our full control. In the event of a life threatening allergy, we will require a meeting between the family, the teacher and a board member prior to the child beginning school to determine whether it is possible and how to accommodate the allergy situation. A snack plan for this situation will be approved following the initial meeting and may need to be revisited in a similar fashion if the child's situation changes. The family of a child with a food allergy will be asked to write or work with their child's teacher to write a letter to other families in their child's class communicating the special snack plan agreed upon.

UCCC reserves the right to reevaluate each situation or change in situation as necessary. Meetings to reevaluate a situation will be between the family, the teacher, and a board member.

E. When To Keep Your Child Home

CHILDREN WITH THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS MUST BE KEPT HOME FROM PRESCHOOL

1. Fever of 100 ° F orally or greater. Children should be without fever for 24 hours before they return to the group. (Exception: Children with immunization-related fevers need not be excluded if they are able to participate in the daily routines.)
2. You should exclude children with vomiting or diarrhea until these symptoms subside for 24 hours.
3. The following bacterial infections warrant exclusion. You should treat the child with antibiotics for 24 hours before returning the child to preschool.
 - a. Strep throat
 - b. Impetigo
 - c. Bacterial conjunctivitis/pink eye (red eyes with colored pus-like drainage)
 - d. Other skin infections including draining sores
4. Generalized rashes (over multiple parts of the body) mean you should keep your child home. You should take the child in for a medical examination. Children with chicken pox should stay home until their sores dry up (usually 5-7 days). Children with other rashes can return to preschool at the health care provider's discretion (unless one of the above conditions is present).
5. Children with Head Lice should stay home until their condition is treated and they are Lice and Nit free.
6. Children with Scabies should stay home until their condition is treated.

THE PRESENCE OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS MAY WARRANT CHILD REMAINING HOME:

1. A child who is ill with any symptoms and is unable to participate in the usual school activities.
2. Thick, green or yellow nasal discharge persisting longer than three days if accompanied by any of the following symptoms: fever, persistent cough, eye drainage, or ear pain. You should have your health care provider evaluate your child and follow his/her advice about your child's return to preschool.

F. Late Pick-Up Policy

Picking up children promptly at the end of school (or the extended Lunch Bunch program) is important in maintaining a safe and secure environment at UCCC Pre-school, and we appreciate families' compliance with our pick-up deadlines. Children whose parents/caregivers are late will remain with the classroom teacher until the parent/caregiver arrives (i.e. the child will not attend Lunch Bunch by default). Late pick-ups charges will be assessed as follows for the Pre-school:

* After 12:10, \$1/per minute

* After 12:20, \$5/per minute

Late pick-ups charges will be assessed as follows for the extended Lunch Bunch program:

* After 1:35, \$1/per minute

* After 1:45, \$5/per minute

The first late pick-up fee will be waived, unless the care-giver arrives more than 20 minutes late. Fines assessed for late pick-up after Pre-school hours will appear on the following month's tuition invoice. Fines assessed for late pick-up after Lunch Bunch hours will be assessed by the Lunch Bunch teacher. In the event of an emergency, a phone call to your child's teacher will reassure your child and may alleviate imposition of a fee.

G. Weather/School Closing Procedure

UCCC follows the weather-related school closing decisions of the Missoula County Public Schools. If Missoula County Public Schools are closed due to inclement weather, UCCC will also be closed. If Missoula County Public Schools open two hours late, UCCC will open at 10:30 (school would run from 10:30 to 12:00.) Please note that tuition is not reimbursed or prorated

in the event of a weather-related closure. Lunch Bunch will be in session at the discretion of the Lunch Bunch teacher on days when school opens late.

H. Field Trips

Field trips greatly augment our classroom learning, and provide a critical link to our surrounding community. We ask you to sign a blanket permission for all school trips throughout the year. You will be notified by your child's teacher prior to any field trip.

Field trip transportation is either through public transportation, walking or private vehicles. Parents are expected to share in the responsibilities for driving and supervising on field trips.

When being driven on field trips, all children must be secured in seat belts, car or booster seats appropriate to their age/weight.

I. Clothing

We use painting smocks for easel and other potentially 'messy' work, but we encourage children to wear comfortable clothing that *can* get messy, and shoes that are safe for active play.

Please label everything that comes off, including coats, boots, shoes, hats, mittens, lunchboxes and backpacks. If you love it, label it!

We maintain a "lost and found" box that is located just inside the children's bathroom.

If your child is prone to accidents, do send a set of underwear and socks in a small ziplock bag.

Otherwise, we have clean, spare clothes at school. Should your child need to use these extra clothes from the school, please send them back, laundered, the next school day.

In the winter months, we ask children to bring easily slipped-on shoes or slippers to wear inside the classroom. These shoes/slippers may stay at school during boot season, in the slipper basket for each classroom.

J. Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent - teacher conferences are held in the fall and spring of each school year. This is a time to share insights and develop goals for your child. Your child's teacher will schedule these conferences with you.

K. Siblings in School when parent-helping

School time at UCCC is your child's special time with you, and your attentive time with them and to the rest of the class members. Please help foster this by making arrangements for child care for your younger children on your parent helping days. Nursing babies are welcome as long as they do not become too disruptive.

III. STUDENT BEHAVIOR

UCCC must be a safe environment for all children. Children are expected to behave in a manner that maintains everyone's physical and emotional safety. In addition, children are expected to show respect for UCCC's physical property.

In cases of inappropriate behavior that affect other children's (or adults') safety or significantly disrupt classroom routine, the following steps will be taken.

1. The teacher will document the first disruption(s), and inform the child's family and board co-chairs of the disruption(s). The teacher and the child's family may develop a written plan at this point.
2. If the disruptive behavior continues, the teacher will meet with the family to either amend or develop a plan. Another teacher and at least one board member will be present at this meeting. Following the meeting the plan will be put in writing.
3. If behavior does not improve within two weeks of the plan's implementation, parents will be asked to either remain on school premises during class time so that they can remove their child from the classroom at the first sign of a disruption, or to withdraw their child from the school.
4. In the event of withdrawal, section VIII finance policies will be in effect.

IV. REGISTRATION

A. Registration

Registration for the upcoming academic year begins in late winter (usually February 1). Priority is given to students currently enrolled, provided their accounts are in good standing, children of staff, and church members. Siblings of current students and children of alumni are also given priority; see "Grandfather Policy" below. UCCC requires children to be current in their immunizations, unless medically exempt; to be 3 or 4 years-old by September 10th for the respective class they are entering, and to be potty trained.

B. Grandfather Policy

Families of current and formerly enrolled students may place their younger children on a list for future enrollment in one of the UCCC 3-4's classes. UCCC alumni may also receive grandfathered status for their children. If a child has grandfather status and does not attend UCCC as a 3-4, that grandfather status gives them some priority as a 4-5.

In the event that there are not enough spots in any given class to accommodate the children on the grandfather list, a random lottery will be used to select children for the desired class.

It is the responsibility of the family to place their children on the grandfather list. Families should contact the UCCC registrar the January prior to their child's entering the 3-4's class for enrollment information.

C. Children with Special Needs

UCCC welcomes the admission of children with special needs. Each application will be reviewed on an individual basis to determine whether or not UCCC's staffing and facilities are sufficient to serve this child. A committee will be formed for this purpose. Committee members will include at least one teacher and at least two board members. The child's parents will meet with the committee to provide detailed information about the child. Any other representatives deemed necessary by the family or the school may also be present at this information-gathering meeting.

If the committee determines that additional staffing would be needed in order to serve the child appropriately, the financial responsibility for this staffing would be the family's. Financial aid requests would be considered as the budget allows.

Applications for admission from children with special needs will have to be reviewed on a case by case basis. If the child's name is drawn in the registration lottery, space should be saved on the registrar's class list for the student until the committee has had time to meet and make a decision.

In the event that a child is identified as having special needs after enrollment, the above policy will be put into place as soon as possible.

D. Scholarship Policy

The deadline for receipt of scholarship applications changes annually depending upon the date school begins. Preschool families are notified of the availability of scholarships on registration forms. Application procedures are included in the parent orientation packet. Awards are determined by the scholarship chair in conjunction with the board co-chairs. This funding is strictly confidential. Recipients will be notified before the first tuition due date and scholarship awards are applied each month for all school months.

E. UCCC Tuition Fee Policy

1. Fees are as follows: T/TH classes are \$90.00 per month M/W/F classes are \$135.00 per month and are due on the 5th of each month.

2. A \$25 late charge may be assessed for any tuition not received by the 10th of the month.
3. There is a \$50.00 registration fee.
4. There is a \$25.00 non-refundable maintenance fee per year.
5. There is a \$50.00 Clean-up fee refundable upon completion of Parent Clean-up.
6. Students enrolled after school starts are responsible for the first and last months' tuition plus a \$50 registration fee and all other applicable fees. Students beginning during the first half of the month will be responsible for the whole month's tuition. Students beginning during the last half of the month will pay only half that month's tuition.
7. Students withdrawing from UCCC during the year will forfeit the last month's tuition if their slot cannot be filled within two weeks. If another child enrolls as a replacement, tuition for the month of May will be refunded. Students dropping out mid-month will still be responsible for that month's tuition.

V. Thank You

On behalf of the Board and Staff of UCCC Preschool, we would like to thank your family for choosing our school and contributing your presence to the long history of this learning community. We look forward to a fun-filled, great year with you and your child! Please know that there is a complete policy handbook available to read upon your request.