



MARATHON LUTHERAN SCHOOL
Early Childhood Center
A GREAT place to GROW

Lic. #C16MO0100

Parent Handbook

Revised July 2017



A ministry of

Martin Luther Chapel

Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
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Our Mission

The mission of Marathon Lutheran School Early Childhood Center is to grow children and families through the knowledge of God's truth and the exploration of God's world.

Our Purpose

Marathon Lutheran School is a ministry of Martin Luther Chapel, Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. We strive to be a safe place that children and their families can grow and learn together while experiencing the love of Jesus, and where staff can grow professionally and personally. We acknowledge the teachings of the LCMS and continually strive to understand the Holy Scriptures and apply it to all areas of our school and church culture.

Open Invitation

We invite you to come to visit and participate in your child's day! Our Tuesday Chapel at 9:45 for ages 1-5 is an especially good time to come see us! Please take time to read information sent home and posted on the bulletin board in the entrance.

Licensing

We are licensed by the State of Florida, License # C16MO0100 We are also a School Readiness Provider through the Early Learning Coalition. As a ministry of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod we are one of 1,200 schools in the LCMS family of Early Childhood Centers and Preschools!

Admission

We admit children of any race, color, sex, and national or ethnic origin. Waiting lists are kept and spots filled on a first come, first serve basis. Parents must provide a two week notice of changes to schedule.

The **Infant Room** will admit children ages 2 months to 12 months. For the **Toddler Room** children must be 12 months of age by September 1st. The **Transition Room** will accept children that are age 2 by September 1st. In the **Preschool Room** children must be age 3 by September 1st, **and be independent in toileting.**

Schedule and Center Closings

Our center is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 AM - 5:30 PM, year round. We are closed on twelve weekdays a year, the major holidays and the week between Christmas and New Years' Day. These days vary by year and a current listing may be obtained by request from the office.

In the case of inclement weather, we will follow the schedule of the Monroe County School District for school closings.

Programs/Classrooms

Infant Room - Class size of 4 with one teacher. Children are age 2 months through 15-18 months. The curriculum in this classroom is tailored to the unique and personal care of each child. Special activities are planned depending on age that includes Jesus time, stories, sensory activities, small and large motor experiences, and outdoor time. Each child is provided with their own crib.

Toddler Room - Class size of 6 with one teacher. Children are 12 -30 months and are beginning to walk, taking one nap, and are beginning to eat table food. The children rest on mats for nap time and are offered a variety of small and large motor experiences. Jesus time, stories, art activities and outdoor play are offered daily.

Transition Room - Class size of 10 with one teacher. Children remain in the Transition Room until they are three **and potty trained.** The curriculum includes Jesus time, stories, art experiences, outdoor play and group activities. Toilet training and independent skills are a large part of the curriculum.

Preschool/VPK Room - Class size of 15 with one teacher and a morning aide. Children in this class must be 3 by September 1 and **fully potty trained.** Children are encouraged to develop communication and listening skills. Activities for the day include

Jesus time, music and literacy activities, art experiences, math and science activities, outdoor play, and group activities. In this room, our goal is to prepare children for the next big step in their academic career: kindergarten!

Curriculum - Our center uses the *Creative Curriculum* (Teaching Strategies, 2015) for all of our classrooms, supplemented with *One in Christ* (Concordia Publishing House). The *One in Christ* Curriculum is the focus of our Jesus Time in each classroom.

Parental Responsibilities

Enrollment - Parents must **complete and return the following**:

- 1) Application Fee
- 2) DCF Child Care Application for Enrollment - must be updated yearly
- 3) State of Florida School Entry Health Form updated yearly
- 4) Immunization Record
- 5) Enrollment Packet

For initial enrollment, we encourage you to come visit our center with your child prior to their first day of school. Please call us to set up a time.

Please call or text when your child is absent for any reason.

Sign In/Out Procedures - All parents must sign their child in and out at the desk at the entrance of the building when dropping off and picking up your child. Upon sign in, please then connect your child with their teacher. We ask you to have your child signed in by 9 AM so that classes may settle into their daily routine at that time without interruptions. **Children in Infant, Toddler, and Transition Rooms will not be allowed entrance after 9:30 AM without special permission from the Director/Assistant Director. Children in Preschool/VPK Room must arrive by 8:30 AM on VPK days as stated in VPK Attendance Policy.**

Our center closes at 5:30 PM. **Parents should plan to arrive for pickup by 5:15 so that children are signed out by 5:30 PM.** If you are delayed due to an emergency, please call the center and inform the staff. A late fee of \$15 will be assessed if your child is not picked up by 5:30. An additional fee of \$15 will be assessed

for every 15 minutes the child is still in attendance. If you have not notified the center we will call you. If you cannot be reached we will contact the persons listed on the child's DCF Application.

Children will not be released to anyone that is not listed on the child's DCF Application. We ask for picture identification if we do not know the person attempting to pick up a child. As a matter of courtesy, please let us know if someone other than the one who normally picks up will pick up your child.

Children can be released to either parent at any time. Please inform us of any custody concerns. You must provide a copy of any court orders prohibiting a parent from picking up a child.

Parking - To aid in smooth traffic flow, please enter the church campus on 121st Street and park at the side of the church to walk your child in. Enter the building through the main school door by the sign-in desk. Exit the church campus on 122nd Street. Malahini Lane and the semi-circle in front of the church should be used only by those with infants and one year olds, or with handicaps or in the case of an emergency. Thank you for your cooperation in this.

Illness - Please keep your children home if he/she is vomiting, has repeated diarrhea, has a fever of 100 degrees F or higher, has an unidentified rash, or is known to have a contagious condition. You must inform us if your child has been in the center with a contagious condition. Children must be excluded from care until they are no longer contagious depending on the particular illness. **Children are required to be fever free without medication for 24 hours before returning to the center.** If your child's doctor prescribes an antibiotic, your child may return after 24 hours of the first dose. Our center policy is that we DO NOT dispense medication to children. You may come in and give them medication as needed. We will inform you by public notice on our door or message board, or a notice home of any contagious conditions in your child's classroom.

Clothing/Personal Belongings - We take care to protect your child's clothing during art activities and play, but also encourage "play clothes" as children may get dirty when playing and learning. Flip flops are not allowed. Children must wear closed toed shoes that they can run in. All children must have a change of clothing (shorts or pants, shirt, socks, underwear) in their cubby in case of accidents. Please label all clothing, especially jackets. **Aside**

from a sleep toy, do not allow your children to bring toys to school.

Infant/Toddler Necessities - Parents must provide diapers, wipes, & a set of bedding for cribs. Bedding items will be sent home weekly for laundering. Teachers will keep you informed of when more supplies are needed. If diapers and/or wipes are not supplied as needed, we will use center supplies and your account will be charged \$1 for each diaper used and \$1/ day for use of center wipes.

Rest Time - All children will have rest time in the afternoon. Each child needs a sheet for nap time mats or cots. Small pillows and/or blankets may also be sent for nap time. All bedding items will be sent home weekly for laundering. Please label all items.

Outdoor Play - All classes will go outside daily, weather permitting. Please put sunscreen on your child in the morning before coming to school. If you would like sunscreen reapplied throughout the day, please send in a labeled bottle with your signed consent.

Food

Lunch and Snacks - All children, with the exception of infants, should bring an insulated lunch box labeled with their first and last name. A re-freezable ice pack should be included as food will not be refrigerated. We do not reheat food at our center. Please use a thermos for food that you wish to be kept warm. Morning snack, lunch and afternoon snacks will be needed with drinks for the day. All food should be easy to eat so the child can feed themselves. Please provide any eating utensils needed. All children should bring a refillable cup for water, **labeled with the child's first and last name**. This will be kept at the center for the week and sent home on weekends for a thorough washing.

We encourage you to send in healthy food and snacks such as fruit, vegetables, cheese, hummus, crackers and yogurt. Grapes and hotdogs must be cut into quartered pieces as they are choking hazards. **No gum, candy or soda, please.**

Toddlers - Sippy or closable straw cups are encouraged in the Toddler Room rather than bottles. All bottles and sippy cups must be labeled with child's first and last name. **This is a state**

requirement. Please check daily to be sure your child's cups/bottles are labeled. We encourage you to purchase orbit bands from a company like inchbug.com for labeling.

Birthdays - To help celebrate your child's birthday, you may send a special snack to share with the class. Please check with your child's teacher first. Healthy snacks are encouraged such as banana muffins or fruit cups. If you choose to bring a sweet snack, please send small serving sizes such as mini cupcakes or donut holes.

Toilet Training Policy

Our Toddler and Transition Rooms are great places for your child to embrace the art of using the potty! Here are the ways we can work together to encourage this feat:

- 1) Your child should remain in diapers until the teacher feels he/she is ready for training pants.
- 2) After 2 accidents in one day, the child will be put in diapers for the rest of the day.
- 3) Please have your child wear clothes that can be removed quickly and independently.
- 4) Our teachers use a reward system for training. No punishment will be given for accidents.
- 5) Children must be completely potty trained before entering the Preschool Class.

Emergency Procedures

In case of accident, incident, or injury:

- 1) Basic first aid will be applied.
- 2) If the injury is more than a minor injury or if it is a head injury, parents will be notified immediately. If the parents cannot be reached we will call the other contacts listed on the MLS Student Information form.
- 3) If a child needs medical attention due to a life-threatening situation, the child will be transported via ambulance to the

hospital of choice as indicated on the child's enrollment form. Parent will be notified immediately. Staff will accompany child until a parent arrives.

- 4) An Accident/ Incident Report Form will be filled out for major and minor accidents, and kept in student's file.

We practice emergency procedures for hurricane, tornado, and lock downs as well as evacuations as for fire on a monthly basis. In actual incidences, parents will be notified by phone or email as soon as possible.

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

All staff at our center are mandated to report any suspicions of abuse or neglect of a child. Any knowledge or appearance of abuse or neglect will be reported immediately to the Department of Children and Families (1-800-96ABUSE). If a report is made, it will remain confidential.

Health Care Plan

Illness - We will inform you of any changes in your child's health by phone or text. If the child becomes ill while in our care, we will call the parents first. If parents cannot be reached we will leave a message (if possible) and then call the persons listed as contacts on the child's DCF Application, leaving messages if they do not answer. We will repeat this process after 15 minutes until someone can be reached. We do not have facilities to care for a sick child. Please pick up a sick child as soon as possible within one hour. Children will be sent home if, in the opinion of staff, child is too ill to remain in the center or if they show signs of pink eye, repeated diarrhea, vomiting, fever (100 degrees F or above), rash (unless child has a note from a doctor that the rash is not contagious or the rash is a diaper rash), head lice.

We inform parents of any contagious conditions by public notice on our door or message board, or a notice home. Extra care is taken to sanitize the classroom when a contagious condition has been diagnosed.

Staff and Child Hand Washing - Staff will wash hands: prior to the start of the work day and to the care of children, after toileting,

after assisting children in toileting, after hauling garbage, after diapering, after handling bodily fluids, before eating, before serving food or drink, whenever they are soiled. Children will be instructed to wash hands after diapering or toileting, before eating, after blowing their noses, and when soiled. Staff will wash Infants' and Toddlers' hands for them. All staff are trained in and will follow universal precautions when handling bodily fluids.

Our Discipline Policy

A goal at our center is that all children be trained up in the way of the Lord. This is from a verse in the Bible that says, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6 We ensure that in this training-up process age-appropriate, constructive disciplinary practices are used. The purpose of discipline is for the child to learn self-control, and to learn to respect the rights and property of others.

Our staff will use the following methods:

- 1) Teach children methods of self-control and active calming.
- 2) Give positive directions (explain to the child what they should do).
- 3) Talk to the child, and help the child express any feelings he/she is having.
- 4) Take time to redirect behavior, suggest alternative behaviors, and give choices whenever possible.
- 5) Create a culture of reconciliation (apology and forgiveness) among students and staff
- 6) Remove the child from the source of conflict for an age appropriate time out period.
- 7) Give the child age appropriate logical consequences for continued misbehavior, such as removal from the block area if repeatedly throwing blocks

Discipline will never be associated with food, rest, or toileting. Corporal punishment will not be used by staff at any time. Children will not be subjected to discipline which is frightening or humiliating. Parents will be kept informed of how their child is interacting in the classroom and may be contacted to discuss

specific situations that arise. We invite the ideas and thought of parents regarding their children. Please share them with us!

Biting Policy

Biting is a part of development that many children will go through. It is important to understand that there will be incidents of biting in any childcare setting. Biting often occurs between the ages of thirteen to twenty-four months and possibly into the early 3's for some. Biting can occur for a number of reasons such as being over stimulated, frustrated or just curious. Young children often explore with their mouths. These ages are often preverbal so they are unable to "use their words" to express their feelings and may resort to biting.

The safety of the children at Marathon Lutheran School is our primary concern.

Our staff will follow the following procedures when biting occurs:

- When a child bites the staff will act without emotion, such as yelling, and tell the child in a firm voice "Biting hurts" or "Biting is not okay".
- Attention should then be directed towards the victim to ensure they are okay and first aid given if necessary. The victim will be allowed to return to what they were doing.
- The teacher will assist the biter in learning how to express their feelings in another way. If the biter is teething the teacher will also give the child a teething toy to bite on instead.
- The teacher will notify both the victim and the biter's parents privately. There will be an incident report written and filed that will be signed by the teacher, director and the parents. The name of the biter will not be given.
- When a child bites three times in one day a parent will be called to pick up the child. The child may return the next day. If the biting continues a conference will be scheduled with the director and/or pastor, the parents and the teacher to attempt to devise a plan as a team to work through the problem.
- If the child is still unable to adapt to the classroom environment and continues to hurt other children, the board will be notified

and the decision will be theirs as to the removal of the child from the facility until the biting stage has passed.

Communication with Parents/Guardians

We desire to work in partnership with you and communicate openly. You may speak with us directly, contact us by phone, or email us. We ask that you try to speak to us privately, not in front of the children. Our staff welcomes your comments and does their best to work with each child's abilities.

Written documentation is kept daily for all Infants, Toddlers and Transition Room children including diapering, eating, sleeping activity.

Should a child have difficulty in any area of development or in adjusting or in the area of discipline, we will speak to you openly and honestly about the situation. We ask for your ideas and insights into what methods may work best with your child. We may suggest an assessment to better understand your child's needs. Recommendations to outside sources (the Early Learning Coalition, pediatrician, or the local school district) may be suggested. The goal is that a positive plan can be developed between school and home in order to work through any difficulties. The Director or Pastor may be invited to be a part of the conversation in some circumstances.

Should differences of opinion occur between classroom staff and parents, we encourage those in conflict to first speak to each other. If the difference is not resolved, the Director or Pastor should be alerted of the situation and may meet with all parties to help open communication and resolve differences in accordance with Matthew 18. If the issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of both parties, the School Board will be called on to assist. The decision of the School Board is final.

Expulsion Policy

At Marathon Lutheran School, we are committed to providing a safe, nurturing environment conducive for learning and growth in all of our children. We strive to ensure that all of our children are set up for success regardless of their need or developmental level.

Our staff will make proactive actions to prevent the expulsion or dismissal of children from the program including:

- Redirecting the child from negative behavior
- Conferencing with parents
- Conducting the ASQ Developmental Screening
- Soliciting advice from our classroom mentors

However, Marathon Lutheran School reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of a child for reasons, not limited to, but including the following:

- Non-payment or excessive late payment of fee/tuition
- Failure to adhere to policies and procedures as outlined in our Parent Handbook
- Child has needs which we cannot adequately meet with our current staffing patterns
- Child's behavior threatens the health and safety of himself/herself, the other children, or program staff
- Parent/guardian exhibits behavior which is detrimental to the health and well-being of the children and staff in a classroom or negatively interferes with the normal functioning of the classroom and/or program. This includes but is not limited to: vulgarity, intimidation, harassment, or violation of child care licensing regulations.

We urge parents to:

- Communicate regularly with staff to ensure consistency in guidance between home and school, and alert staff of changes at home that may affect the child.
- Partner with us and allow us time to work with all children, including those needing higher levels of support.
- Work with us, if necessary, in partnering with social and emotional experts to help give the child the best foundation for life and success.

In each of the above situations the Marathon Lutheran School Board will make the final decision on whether the child remains enrolled. **Parents must notify the center if they decide to**

withdraw from the program and give at least a two week written notice prior to withdrawal.

Payment Procedures and Tuition Fees

The initial application fee is \$50 per child due at time of enrollment. Parents must register each child each year by August 1. Yearly registration fees are \$30 per child and \$50 per family.

Weekly Tuition:

Infant	\$155/week
Toddler	\$150/week
Transition	\$140/week
Preschool	\$135/week

- **Due** on Monday of each week throughout the year. Tuition is to be paid regardless of his/her attendance. This enables you to secure a place in our program and to insure that our center will meet its budget. No tuition will be due the week school is closed during the Christmas holiday.
- Families may take one additional week of vacation during the year after their student has been enrolled for 6 months. This does not apply to families that are enrolled with the Early Learning Coalition.
- Method: check or cash. We do not take credit cards. Please make checks payable to **Marathon Lutheran School**. Child's name and date should be written on check. Cash payments should be counted by a staff member, then placed in an envelope with child's name, amount, date, and staff signature confirming amount. You will be charged a \$15 fee for all returned checks.
- All payments should be dropped in the payment box in the hall across from the Transition Room.
- Siblings receive a \$5.00/week discount while all children affected are regularly attending.*
- **If tuition is not paid by 5:30 on Monday, the account will be considered past due and a late fee of \$5.00 per week will be charged until all past due tuition and fees are fully paid.**

- If an account is delinquent for two weeks without payment, the child will not be allowed to continue in the program until the parent contacts the Director and past due amounts are paid in their entirety.
 - Parents choosing to pay one month in advance will receive a \$5 per week discount.* This discount is only valid if payment for the month is received by the second school day of the month. This is for private pay families only.
- * Only one \$5/week discount will be applied for each student.

Aftercare Program

Aftercare runs every school day from dismissal to 5:30 PM. This includes early dismissal days. We also have programming on most holidays/vacation days (see our Holiday Schedule). Students will exit the Stanley Switlik bus at the bus stop on Route 1, where a staff member will meet and accompany them into the building.

Aftercare Payment - \$65 (payable to Marathon Lutheran School) is due by Monday of each week. If payment is made in advance for the month (four weeks or five weeks), price is reduced to \$60 each week. Weekly payment is considered late if not turned in by 5:30 on Monday. Late payment will result in a \$5.00 fee. Monthly payment is due by the second school day of each month. To reserve your spot, full payment must be made for each week that school is in session, even if children are absent due to activities or sickness.

Tuition scholarships are now available for our aftercare programs as a result of a grant from the United Way of the Florida Keys. Please inquire at the office to receive an application.

Aftercare Schedule:

- 3:45-4:30 Settle in time/Snack and Homework (Children should bring snacks and drink for Aftercare, **including a refillable water bottle labeled with their first and last name. This is state licensing requirement!**)
- 4:30-4:45 Bible Story/Activities/Games
- 4:45-5:30 Outside Play

Phone/Electronics Policy - Students will not be allowed to use cell phones or other electronic devices without permission from the teacher. Both will be confiscated until parent pick up if they are used without permission. Students should plan on using phones only for brief check-in calls to parents.

Church at Martin Luther Chapel

You and your family are invited to worship with us at Martin Luther Chapel as well as attend Fellowship Time and Sunday morning Bible classes. Please ask about current worship times as the time changes seasonally.

Contact Us

You may reach us by calling 305-735-4762 or emailing MarathonLutheran@gmail.com. On days that we are open you can reach us from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM. We make every effort to answer the phones promptly and check voice mails frequently.

