

St. Mary of the Assumption
Early Education Program
Parent Handbook
2011--2012

Karen Rombach, Director

WELCOME TO ST. MARY'S EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM!!

This handbook contains information you will need to know as a parent of a child enrolled in St. Mary's Early Education Program. It contains answers to many of your questions. If the information you seek is not answered in this handbook, please feel free to ask us. We'll be more than happy to answer any of your questions.

Please read this handbook carefully and refer to it throughout the year.

Governing Body

St. Mary's Early Education Program is a non-profit outreach of St. Mary of the Assumption Parish. The Advisory Board governs the policies and procedures of the school. The Advisory Board consists of the Pastor or his delegates (2 appointees of the pastor and 1 parent representative). The Director will be an ex-officio member. The Board is accountable to the Pastoral Council and the Finance Council. The Pastor retains the right of veto. Each parent is the head of a committee. Possible committees include communication, social/special events, fund-raisers, and bookkeeping. Board meetings are held once a month. Any parent or staff member is welcome to attend. Agendas for the minutes from the meeting are posted on the staff bulletin board.

RIGHT TO AMEND

St Mary's EEP and/or the director retains the right to amend the handbook for just cause and parents will be promptly notified in writing if changes are made.

PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

St. Mary's Early Education Program (EEP) will provide a first step for a child's Catholic education. The first years of life are of the utmost importance in a child's growth and development. A child's education begins at home and the parents are his/her first teachers. Early childhood education provides the transition from the home to school atmosphere. Family relationships provide a young child with the best model for developing attitudes, values, and appropriate behavior. Therefore, parent education and parental support are vital parts of this program and parental involvement is encouraged.

This program provides a creative learning environment for the young child, which includes both learning experiences and play activities that encourage spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional and physical growth. Not only will we be concerned with the child's ability to perform in the areas of the three R's: *Reading, 'Riting, and 'Rithmetic*, this program will also be concerned with each child's ability to grow and develop in the following areas of the three L's: *Living, Loving and Learning*.

These three areas of development are intertwined within this program with God as the central focus. Each day we celebrate God's gifts in one or more ways through songs, simple prayers, stories, enjoyment of nature, and appreciation for one another. The religious education curriculum that will be incorporated throughout the year will be from Christ Our Life Series published by Loyola University Press, Sharing God's Story published by Brown-Roa, and I Am Special published by Our Sunday Visitor.

The goals of the St. Mary's EEP are:

- To help each child learn to live among his/her family, peers, and other adults in a loving manner.
- To instill in each child a love of learning by enhancing his/her natural sense of curiosity
- To help each child increase his/her independence by learning self help skills.
- To provide an environment that aids each child in developing a positive self-image and acknowledges his/her self-worth.
- To establish an atmosphere of Christian love and concern which promotes the healthy development of each child.
- To help each child realize that he/she is a child of God and will grow, live, and learn in His love.

ADMISSION POLICY

Places in St. Mary's EEP will be filled in the following order of priority:

1. Children who are currently enrolled in the program – (in-house scheduled registration).
2. Siblings of children who are currently enrolled in the program (in-house scheduled registration).
3. New student registration begins after the scheduled registration deadline.
4. Children of families who are active members of St. Mary of the Assumption parish
5. Children from other Catholic parishes
6. Non-Catholic children.

NOTE: The procedure for the admission of children with special needs follows Diocesan guidelines. Children with special needs are accepted if, in the judgement of the Director, the program and facilities are able to effectively meet the needs of the child. The school will request a copy of the child's IEP or IFSP, and all other relevant materials for the child's file at St. Mary's EEP.

TUITION

St. Mary's EEP is a nine-month half-day program beginning in September and finishing at the end of May. Children are enrolled for the entire year. Fees and tuition for the program are shown below. Please note that **tuition is non-reimbursable**. We cannot provide refunds in the event of absent days, missed days, and bad weather days. There will be no refunds for withdrawal from the program except in the case of an out-of-state move or for potty-training issues.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Registration</i>	<i>Supplies</i>	<i>Tuition</i>	<i>Monthly ***</i>
Kindergarten	\$50	\$35	\$2,960	\$296
5-day Pre- K	\$ 50	\$ 35	\$2,960	\$296
3-day Pre-K	\$ 50	\$ 35	\$2,290	\$229
3 yr MWF	\$ 50	\$ 35	\$2,290	\$229
3 yr T, TH	\$ 50	\$ 35	\$1,740	\$174
3 yr M--F	\$50	\$35	\$2,960	\$296
Toddler MWF	\$ 50	\$ 35	\$2,290	\$229
Toddler T, TH	\$ 50	\$ 35	\$1,740	\$174
DUE →→→	With registration	Beginning of school year	Beginning of school year	1 st of the month from July---April

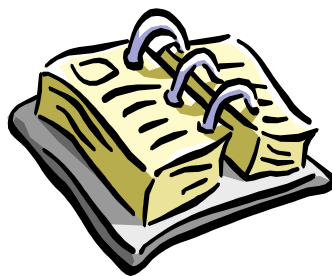
There are three options for paying tuition. Monthly tuition payments will be made through an automatic debit system. If you would like to pay monthly, please complete an auto debit form and include a voided check if the debit amount is to be from a checking account. For those who wish to pay tuition in full, you may do so on July 1, 2011. Tuition can also be paid in two payments---paying half on July 1, 2011, and the balance on November 1, 2011. When opting to pay in full, or with two payments, you will receive a bill several weeks prior to the due date. Please **pay by check** and mail to:

St. Mary of the Assumption Church-EEP
7200 Lancaster Pike
Hockessin, DE 19707
(302) 239-7100 Ext. 34

SCHOOL CALENDAR

St. Mary's EEP follows the Diocesan School schedule. A tentative calendar is included with this booklet. If changes need to be made, we will inform you in writing as soon as possible.

In case of bad weather, parents are advised to watch **NBC (Channel 10)** and check **nbc10.com (website)** for school closings and delays. St. Mary's EEP will also be using the SchoolReach Instant Parent Contact messaging system. Parents will be notified by phone within minutes of an emergency or unplanned event that causes early dismissal, school cancellation or late start.



ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

School begins at 9:00 a.m. We ask that children do not arrive before 8:55 a.m. On arrival, the children should be escorted into the school and brought to their classrooms. Parents must sign their child/ren into school on the attendance sheet. To make this hectic process smoother and safer for everyone, we ask that you please:

- Hold your child's hand in the parking lot.
- Park only in designated parking spaces.
- Do not park at the school entrance curb.
- Use either the upper or lower parking lot.
- Drive cautiously and courteously in the parking lots.

To help with the parking situation, we ask that parents of children attending our Two and Three-Year-Old Programs use the back parking lot (the main entrance to the school). Parents of children attending our Pre-K and Kindergarten classes should use the main church lot and enter through the chapel door entrance, or the courtyard door (located at the bottom of the outside steps).

NO CHILD IS TO BE DROPPED OFF AT THE ENTRANCE!

The school day ends at 12:00 p.m. At dismissal parents should wait outside their child's classroom door. Please wait quietly until the teacher opens the door. Please be on time, as it frightens the children when they are picked up late. A late fee of \$5.00 will be charged for every 10-minute delay unless there is an emergency.

If an emergency occurs, and you will be detained for an extended time, please call the school office at 239-7100, ext 34. There is a phone in one of our classrooms. The number is 239-7100 ex. 38. If you cannot reach anyone at either of these two numbers, and you need to speak to someone instead of leaving a message, try the parish office at 239-7100, ext. 10.

Parents, or an authorized pick-up person, must sign their child/ren out at the end of the day. We will have on file all persons authorized to pick up your child at dismissal. If someone different is to pick up your child, parents must supply written authorization with the person's name and relationship to the child in advance. That person will also be asked to present a photo I.D. There will be no allowance for pick-up-by-phone messages. Please inform any person bringing your child to school or picking him/her up about our arrival/dismissal policies.

TYPICAL SCHEDULE

TIME	ACTIVITY
8:55---9:00	Arrival time
9:00 – 9:15	Free time – table games, puzzles, books, drawing, coloring, etc.
9:15 – 9:30	Circle Time – attendance, calendar, prayers, pledge of allegiance
9:30 – 9:45	Guided lesson
9:45 – 10:30	Arts and crafts/ free time*
10:30 – 10:45	Clean up and snack time
10:45 – 11:15	Learning centers / free time *
11:15 – 11:30	Large Motor Activities –outdoor play, circle games, movement education, rhythms.
11:30 – 12:00	Story, Songs, Specials (music, gym)
12:00	Dismissal

- Times for learning centers and arts and crafts may be reversed.

CLOTHING AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Please send children to school in comfortable, easy to manage clothing.

- Clothing should be appropriate for active indoor and outdoor play.
- Play clothes are the most practical for school. Smocks are usually worn for art, but accidents do occur and children should not feel inhibited by dress clothes.
- Children should wear sturdy, rubber-soled shoes to avoid slips and falls inside and out. No open-toed shoes, party shoes or slip-ons.
- All clothing and personal belongings should be clearly marked with your child's name.
- It is a good idea to keep a change of clothing in your child's book bag or cubby in case an accident does occur.
- Toddlers should also have a couple of diapers or training pants.

Please *check your child's book bag daily*. Important notices and communications will be sent home in the book bag. Also, it is a great way to find out what your child did in school that day.

Toys from home should not be brought into school unless a teacher requests.

Toy weapons are strictly prohibited.

Occasionally, the children will have show-n-tell days, but there will be guidelines.

Please help your child to follow the guidelines.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

We subscribe to a “positive discipline” philosophy. Children are respected and treated as individuals. Positive behavior is reinforced; negative behavior is redirected whenever possible. The teacher is a role model at school. He or she must keep calm and handle discipline situations firmly but gently. Limits are set so children will not hurt themselves, others, or property. We will be consistent in enforcing the classroom limits. Whenever possible, a child will be redirected to another activity before he/she loses self-control. The time-out chair is available for children who lose self-control and need time to regain it. Children will be encouraged to make the choice of returning to the group when they are ready (in control). The goal of this procedure is to encourage children to practice positive self-control. No physical punishment is allowed at school.

The classroom rules are:

- Keep hands and feet to yourself.
- Share with others.
- Be good listeners.
- Put things away neatly.
- Be kind and thoughtful.

Should a serious behavior problem occur, it will be handled within the classroom by the teacher and assistant once a united approach is decided upon. The teachers will conference with the parents in person or by phone. Follow up discussions will take place. If the behavior persists, then the director will become involved either through observation or a three-way conference.

For the concern of all of the children, continuing serious behavior problems can result in a child’s dismissal from the EEP. A child may be removed from the program if:

- The child poses a threat to self, staff, or other children in the program.
- The child behaves in a manner that is difficult to manage in a large group.
- The child or parent(s) uses abusive language or threaten other children or staff.
- The child or family continues to act against the policies explained in this parent handbook.
- The director’s professional judgment is that the child can no longer function effectively in the program and/or the program is being adversely affected by the child’s presence. The child’s behavior must be determined to be consistent and purposeful.

SNACKS

St. Mary's Early Education Program will provide a nutritious snack and drink each class day for your child. Our two-year-old students will also receive a second snack towards the end of the school day. The school dietician posts a weekly snack menu on the parent information board.

******St. Mary's EEP is a nut-free school. No food containing nuts, or processed in a plant that also processes nuts, is allowed in school. Food labels must be read carefully every time a snack is served to ensure that nuts are not served at school. The staff member who buys the school snacks carefully reads food labels to make sure that nuts are not brought into the school.**

If your child has a food allergy please notify the director, the school nurse and the classroom teacher. Your child's teacher will discuss keeping a box of "safe" food snacks stored in the classroom for your child.

The classroom teacher who has a student with food allergies will read the food labels every day. It is the ultimate responsibility of the parent to also check the food labels each day and give the "ok" that the snack is a safe food for their child. We will not serve a child with any kind of a food allergy (wheat, egg, milk etc.) a snack from our kitchen without their parent's permission. The child will then receive a snack from the "safe snack" food box.

The school will provide a suggested nut-free snack list at the beginning of the school year. Food labels can change frequently so it is still mandatory that food labels be checked every day a snack is being served to a child with food allergies.

Children may bring a special treat for birthday celebrations if arranged in advance with the teacher. If parents choose to bake a snack for their child's birthday celebration, please bring in the ingredient list and/or the food label from any store-bought mixes used.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips may be planned for some of the classes. Parents will be informed about the details of the trip and will be asked to assist in chaperoning and helping with the transportation of the children. **Parents who drive and chaperone field trips are required by Diocesan policy to fill out a “Background Screening Form” which includes a section on motor vehicle information.** Permission slips will be sent home prior to the field trip. No child will be allowed to go on the field trip without a signed permission slip.

We will need parent volunteers for field trips. The policy for drivers is as follows:

- ✓ The vehicle is covered with at least \$100,00/\$300,000 public liability and \$50,000 property damage or \$300,000 single limit liability.
- ✓ The driver has a current driver's license and there are no offences against the driving record.
- ✓ The vehicle has the appropriate number of seatbelts for passengers. Any child less than 60lbs or under 6 years old must be in a car seat.
- ✓ No children will be sitting in the front seat of the car.
- ✓ All doors will be locked and windows closed or lowered to a safe level.
- ✓ Smoking, eating, or speaking on a cellular phone is prohibited while the children are in the car.
- ✓ The driver has not ingested anything that would prohibit them from driving safely.
- ✓ Adhere to all driving laws.

SAFETY POLICY

No child shall ever be left alone or unsupervised. Children will be greeted by the teacher or assistant upon arrival and turned over to the parent or designated adult at the end of school.

For emergency calls, call 239-7100 ext. 34(EEP's office,) **38** (classroom), or **10**(parish office).

Fire drills and tornado drills will be practiced monthly.

To ensure a safe and healthy environment for the children,

- Broken toys will be removed and equipment repaired immediately.
- All equipment and materials will be free of sharp edges, splinters, and nails.
- Children should not bring in toys from home unless specific instructions are sent home.
- At no time will toy weapons be allowed in school.
- Cleaning supplies are kept out of reach of the children.

EMERGENCY PLAN

Every attempt will be made to provide a safe and healthy environment at preschool. However, accidents do occur and children may become ill quickly. In case of emergency and/or need of medical attention or hospitalization, we will follow the procedure stated on the emergency form. That is:

1. The school will call home and/or the parent's cell phone. If there is no answer, *then*
2. The school will call the father's, mother's, or guardian's place of employment. If there is no answer, *then*
3. The school will call the other telephone number(s) listed and the physician.
4. If none of the above answer, the school will call an ambulance if necessary, to transport the child to a local medical facility.
5. Based upon the medical judgment of the attending physician, the child may be admitted to a local facility.
6. The school will continue to call parents, guardians, and the physician until reached.

HEALTH POLICY

A school nurse and/or someone with first aid/CPR certification will be on the premises during school hours. The school nurse will help with health and emergency situations and health education classes for the children.

A physical exam and up-to-date immunizations are required for all children. A medical information sheet on each child is kept on file. It is the parents' responsibility to notify the Director, nurse, and teacher of any special health needs or any changes in health during the school year. Delaware state law requires all students to have documentation of up-to-date immunizations before entering a school setting. Delaware state law allows for children to enter school without immunizations in the following two circumstances. Children who are not immunized because of religious beliefs must have a notarized statement on file in the school office. Children who are not immunized because of medical concerns must have a signed document from a physician itemizing each required immunization and listing the medical reason for withholding that immunization in the school office.

If a child should need medication during the school day, the parent should provide a copy of the prescription, doctor's consent form and protocol, a parental consent form, and the medication to the school nurse.

All visits to the nurse are documented in the St. Mary's EEP Nurse/Health Log.

Any child should be kept home who is not feeling well or has any of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Earache
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Rash
- Unclear nasal discharge
- Croupy cough
- Stomach ache
- Parasitic infection or any communicable disease (chicken pox, mumps, etc)

If your child has had a blood test or throat culture taken, please wait until you have received a negative result or your child has been on the appropriate medication 24 hours.

During the school day, the parents will be called if a child

- Has an elevated temperature
- Pink eye
- Skin rash
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Evidence of lice, or any other condition that may be passed on to the other children.

The child will be isolated in the school office under the supervision of the school nurse, teacher or teaching assistant, or the director, until the parent arrives. Children may return to school after the symptoms are gone or with a note from the doctor depending on the illness.

Please inform us if your child becomes ill with a contagious illness by calling 239-7100 ext 34 or via e-mail to EEP@stmaryoftheassumption.com. Notes will be sent home with the other children to inform parents that their child may have had contact with someone with a communicable disease. For your information a list of the most common communicable diseases is included with this handbook.

To minimize the spread of germs, we ask that parents have their child/ren wash their hands before entering the classroom each morning. We also strongly advise that children wash their hands upon leaving the classroom every day.

CONFERENCES

Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled in February. A staff member will notify you of your conference. Children do not attend conferences. Conferences may be scheduled at any other time upon parental or teacher request.

Please do not hesitate to call and schedule an appointment with your child's teacher if a problem arises. We want to detect and solve small problems before they become large ones.

Please do not try to solve problems at arrival/dismissal times. Teachers are unable to give the situation their full attention at this time. If a problem remains unsolved, please contact the teacher first, then the director, the pastor, the Advisory Board, and finally the Parish council.

Also, please notify the teacher of any new situations that may affect the child's behavior and emotional needs (ex. new baby, death, illness, separation).

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent involvement is important to the success of our program. All parents are invited to participate in the EEP as much as their schedule will permit. We will

need volunteers to help with: classroom parties, field trips, preparing classroom materials, fund-raisers, beautification committee for school grounds, Bible stories, and special events. Please consider sharing your special gifts and talents by volunteering – our school and our children would benefit from your efforts.

Also, parents may be interested in telling a class about a particular career, hobby, experience with another culture, teaching a foreign language, leading a special music session or demonstrating a simple craft. Please notify a teacher about your interest so we can plan a time within our curriculum.

Parent volunteers will be able to work with the children in the presence of an EEP staff member. No volunteer will ever be left alone with a child, other than their own, unless they have undergone a background screening. Volunteers must also sign a Volunteer Covenant every year. Background screening forms and Covenants are available in the school office. St. Mary's EEP will pay for the background screening for our preschool volunteers.

Parents are welcome in the preschool at any time. If you wish to observe a class, it is requested that you notify the classroom teacher ahead of time.

POTTY-TRAINING POLICY

Students in the Two-Year-Old Classes do not need to be potty-trained to be enrolled in the program. The parents should provide diapers, and the school will have wipes and other diaper-changing supplies in stock. **Students in the Three-Year-Old and Pre-K Programs MUST be potty-trained to be a student in St. Mary's EEP.**

LEGAL CUSTODY

Please notify the teachers of any changes in marital status or family situations during the school year. These situations have an affect on the child and may offer an explanation to a change in the child's behavior. All divorced parents must furnish the school with a notarized copy of the custody section of the divorce decree.

St Mary's EEP abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, a school will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the academic records and to other school-related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the school with an official copy of the court order. (SHAUGHNESSY, 1989, p. 61)

Only parents, and those people they have designated, will be allowed to discuss the child with the preschool staff.

Transitions

There is an Open House the week before school begins for all the students enrolled in St. Mary's Early Education Program. Parents attend with their St. Mary's student to meet the teachers, the other children and their parents, and learn about the program. The Open House helps the children transition to school at the beginning of each year.

Two-Year-Old Students transition to school in the following way—school ends at 11:00 the first week, at 11:30 the second week of school, and finally finish at 12:00 along with the rest of the students the third week of school.

Transitioning to Kindergarten begins in May of the Pre-K year. St. Mary's has a Kindergarten Day in May where St. Mary's graduates come back to talk about kindergarten to our current students. A bus from the Red Clay school district visits our school to help orient children to riding the school bus and learn about bus safety.

Grievances

St. Mary's EEP staff will seek to form a partnership with parents in order to provide a quality education for the students. If a parent, or a teacher, has an issue, problem, or concern, then he/she should make an appointment for a conference after school hours with the other party involved. If problems/concerns cannot be resolved in this manner then the director should be contacted. The situation will then be documented in writing and signed by the person initiating the complaint/inquiry. A three-way conference may be called and a course of action decided upon in order to resolve the situation. Any follow-up conversations and/or actions will continue to be documented.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Every staff member at St. Mary's EEP is required to be fingerprinted with the local law enforcement in order to be "cleared" to work with children. St. Mary's EEP teachers are educated about the signs of child abuse and neglect. Any person in the state of Delaware who works with children is required by law to report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect to the Division of Child Protective Services.

QUICK REFERENCE SHEET

Director: Karen Rombach

Phone Numbers:

School office: 239-7100, ext 34

Classroom # 3: 239-7100, ext 38

In case of emergency: 239-7100, ext 10
(Parish office)

Hours of Operation: 9 am – 12:00 p.m.

Arrival: 8:55 a.m.

Dismissal: 12:00 p.m.

Tuition

Monthly: via automatic debit system, July -April

Payment in full on 7/1/11 by check

Two payments, 7/1/11 & 11/1/11 by check

Snacks:

St. Mary's Early Education Program will provide a nutritious snack and drink each class day for your child.

In Case of Inclement weather:

Announcements on NBC Channel 10 and nbc10.com. St. Mary's EEP will use the SchoolReach messaging system to contact parents via phone in the case of school cancellation, delay or early dismissal.

Conferences:

Scheduled in February (or by request).

If you have questions or concerns:

Call the school at 239-7100, ext 34 and leave a message for the staff member with whom you would like to speak. We will return your call.

NOTES:

Please let us know if:

- Your child will be absent
- Any changes occur at home that may affect the child's behavior or mood
- Your child's health or needs change during the school year.
- Your child develops a contagious illness.