



**Early Learning Center
Parent Handbook 2024-2025
205-222-4132**

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I. Mission Statement

Mission

The Early Learning Center is dedicated to providing a safe, enriching, and educational Christian environment for your child.

We will strive to meet the educational, spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of our children and their families.

It is our desire that every child experience the love of Jesus Christ each day as they are surrounded by the Word of God, songs of praise, excellent curriculum, and Christian leadership in a safe environment.

Start a child off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

We also desire that every child will come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and grow in their relationship with Him.

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14

We require each member of the Education Programs staff to maintain a positive attitude and exhibit good Christian morals. It is our expectation that each staff member sets a good example for the children in speech, attitude, and actions.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. Colossians 3:23

As a staff, it is our belief that there is no more worthy cause than influencing children to become the best that they can be and to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. 3 John 1:4

II. Early Learning Center

A. Introduction to Program

The Early Learning Center (ELC) is a childcare program for children ages eight-weeks through three years of age. Our program is divided into four sections: babies, toddlers, twos, and threes. It is our desire to assist your family during these developmental years.

It is important to us that we do the best job possible for our families. With that in mind, our teachers and caregivers strive to make each room a nurturing and fun environment for our children. Because a child's play is their work, we have incorporated a variety of age-appropriate activities during their day. These activities may include story time, arts and crafts, instruction time, indoor/outdoor play time, and other extracurricular activities.

Our Toddler classes participate in the STAR Program. This is a special program that is designed to prepare students for our two-year preschool program. We use the Abeka curriculum in our two and three-year preschool classes along with other enrichment activities. Your child's class will be determined by their age on or before September 1st.

B. Hours of Operation

Babies – K3 All Day	Monday - Friday	7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
K3 ½ Day Students	Monday - Wednesday	8:10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

C. Arrival Times

Babies need to be dropped off between 7:00a.m. - 8:30a.m. **We ask that children not be dropped off during nap time.** This policy is to prevent any disruptions during nap time. Should your child have a doctor's appointment or any emergency that would interfere with this schedule, please contact the Assistant Director at (205) 222-4132.

For your child's benefit, we ask that during the preschool year, August – May, all two and three-year-old students be here by 8:10 a.m. We do not want your child to miss out on the lessons for the day and it can be a distraction for the class to have children come in after the teacher has begun.

D. Car Line

K3 ½ day students will pick up in a car line. The car line is located at the drive-thru entrance of the ELC. K3 ½ day class dismisses at 11:30 a.m. Parents can drop their child off at the classroom from 8:00 a.m. – 8:10 a.m.

E. Parking

For your convenience parking is available at the preschool entrance of the building. A drive-thru is available for **quick drop off & pick up only**. Please pull to the far end to allow as many people as possible to get in the drive-thru. Please, **do not** block the drive-thru.

F. Holiday Closings

The ELC will observe/close the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- July 4th & July 5th
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the Friday following
- Christmas Eve & Christmas Day

If any of these days fall on a weekend, the Executive Staff of Gardendale First Baptist Church will determine which day of the week we will be closed. Please see the ELC calendar for all holiday closings.

G. Closing due to Inclement Weather

If we have a threat of inclement weather (snow, ice, tornados, etc.), please watch ABC 33/40 for list of closings. Look for Gardendale First Baptist ELC and Day School. The ELC phone, (205) 222-4132, will have day-to-day updates. There are 2 other ways to keep you up to date: Sign up for text messages (text gfbcelc to 844-764-2017) or check our Facebook page.

III. Registration Process

A. School Year is August to August

Children will be registered in the ELC program from August to August. Each child in our All-Day Program will be allowed two vacation weeks with a written notice given to the ELC. Students attending our K3 ½ Day Program are not given the option of vacation weeks.

B. Registration Process

Registration for Gardendale First Baptist ELC requires:

- Completed registration forms.
- Registration, supply and activity fees paid (**all fees are non-refundable**).
- Signed and notarized DHR Exemption Letter (Do not sign this form if you need us to notarize it for you.)
- Signed Acknowledgment of Parent Handbook.
- Updated Record of Immunization (Blue Form).
- Custody Agreement (if applicable).
- Students must be completely potty trained to enter K3.
- Registration form and fees must be turned in at least 24 hours before the child begins any service of the ELC.
- The emergency contact must be someone other than the parents/legal Guardian of the child and must be a local person with a local number.
- The registration form must be signed by the child's parent or legal Guardian and notarized on the signature.
- Any false or inaccurate information on the registration form will forfeit the registration of your child.

IV. Financial Matters

A. Payment Policy

Weekly payments are due on Friday by 6:00 p.m. for the upcoming week and a late fee of \$25.00 will be assessed on Mondays at 7:00 a.m. Your payments can be made weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly through Tuition Express, please ask for a form to set this up at registration. You can also make payments online. Please contact the financial office at 205-488-8650 for more information.

There are no deductions to the weekly payment for absences due to illness, inclement weather, closings etc.

If your account is delinquent for more than two weeks, the ELC reserves the right to temporarily withdraw your child/children from the program until your account is up to date. If your account has been two-weeks past due more than 4 times in a fiscal year (August to August), we reserve the right to withdraw your child/children from the program.

Credit/Debit card payments that are declined will incur a \$10.00 charge.

The ELC closes at 6:00 p.m. If you will be late, please call the Assistant Director, 205-222-4132. You will be subject to a late pick-up fee of \$1.00 per minute. You will be required to sign a late card at the time of pick up.

B. Withdrawal Policy

If you choose to withdraw your child from the program, a two-week notice must be given. You can turn in a withdrawal card to the Director in writing or via email to lisam@gfbc.org. A financial penalty may result if a two-week notification is not given.

If you withdraw your child at any point during the year (August – August) you are withdrawing from the program and will forfeit any registration and fees paid for the upcoming year. We will not hold a spot for a child that has been withdrawn from any of our programs.

C. Fees

School Year August to August

All fees are non-refundable.

Registration Fee	\$120.00 annually
Supply Fee	\$140.00 annually
Activity Fee (K3 Only)	\$ 70.00 annually

Tuition

All Day Care/Classes

Baby and Toddler Classes	\$168.00 weekly
K2 and K3 Classes	\$158.00 weekly
K3 1/2 Day Classes (3 days a week) M/T/W, 8:10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	\$ 68.00 weekly

Late Pick-Up Fee

The Early Learning Center closes at 6:00p.m. If you see that you will be late, please contact the Assistant Director. You will be subject to a late pick-up fee of \$1.00 per minute. While we understand that things can happen from time-to-time, if you are habitually late, your child could be removed from the program.

D. Vacation Weeks

Each child that attends the entire year (August-August) will receive two vacation weeks.

K3 1/2 Day are not eligible for vacation weeks.

V. Information for Parents

A. Personal Belongings

When deciding what to let your child/children bring to the ELC, please remember the following:

- Items of significant importance to your child or family should **NOT** be brought to the ELC. These items could be misplaced, and we do not wish to upset you or your child.
- Your child should not be allowed to wear anything that could be damaged or cause injury to another child such as watches, bracelets, and other jewelry. The ELC is not liable for lost or broken personal items.
- Items such as toy guns, swords, knives, and any other toys of this nature should **NOT** be brought to the ELC. If the teacher or Assistant Director finds these items, she will hold them with her until the child is picked up at the end of the day.

B. Clothing

Children should wear clothes and shoes that will allow them to participate in all activities in the ELC program. This includes going outside to the playgrounds as well as to the gym. Please send your child with a coat and hat if it is cold. We will not go outside if the temperature is below 50 degrees or above 100 degrees.

All children must have a change of clothes, including underclothes, to be left at the center. When potty training, your child will need more than one set of clothes. These items must be placed in a gallon size Ziploc bag with their name on the bag as well as on their clothes. In case of an accident, please remember to bring another set of extra clothes the next day. Also, remember as the seasons change, please bring appropriate clothes.

Parents of children in diapers and/or pull-ups should provide those items along with wipes to be kept in their child's cubby. For sanitary reasons, the ELC will not use cloth diapers. All diapers and pull-ups must be disposable.

C. Infants and Toddlers

1. Items such as blankets and toys are not permitted in the crib with an infant.
2. Please label all items, diapers, diaper bags, bottles and clothing that come into the center.
3. Please send one more bottle than you think your child will need each day.
4. Bottles need to be made at home and brought to the center each day.
5. If the power were to go out or we have an issue with refrigeration and milk should spoil, you will be notified immediately, and will need to bring additional food for your child.
6. We have a room set up for you should you need to breast feed or pump while at the center.
7. Please fill out a form each day for your teacher to record each feeding and diaper change for that day.
8. Notes will be sent home when your child needs more supplies.

D. Birthdays

Please feel free to bring something special for your child's class on his/her birthday. We encourage you to keep it simple with cupcakes and chips or similar refreshments. Contact your child's teacher in advance to let them know of your plans. Because they can be a choking hazard, **we ask that you DO NOT bring latex balloons to the ELC.**

E. Illness Policy

Exposure to a new group of children may cause more illness during the first few weeks until immunity is developed. Keep in mind you may need an alternative plan for childcare in case of long illness. The ELC takes every precaution to safeguard your child against illness.

Due to the Coronavirus outbreak, the Health Department and CDC have required changes to childcare center health policies.

If your child has a temperature of 100.4 degrees or more or has other Coronavirus symptoms, a parent will be called to take the child home. Your child *CANNOT* return to the Early Learning Center until he/she has been seen by a healthcare provider, tested for the Coronavirus, or is out for ten days.

The Director will evaluate the child on an individual basis and will send a child home for the following reasons:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea (loose bowel movements with or without a fever)
- Eye infections
- Throat infections such as Strep
- Chicken Pox
- Rashes with fever
- Ringworm
- Head lice (Lice and eggs must be completely clear, and the child must be seen by the Assistant Director before returning to the program.)
- Ear infections
- Thick nasal discharge
- Hand/Foot and Mouth
- And any other contagious illness

Your child should not return to the Early Learning Center until twenty-four (24) hours after they are symptom free, they are well enough to participate in the daily activities and are no longer contagious. **If your child is out of school for two or more days due to illness, the office may require a return to school form from your doctor upon their return.**

In the event of an emergency, the parent and/or emergency contact person will be notified. If we cannot reach the parent and/or the emergency contact, 911 will be called. If it is necessary for your child to be transported and the parent and/or emergency contact cannot be reached, a member of the ELC staff will ride with your child.

When contacted by the ELC regarding your child's illness, please make every effort to pick up your child within an hour of the call. It is also suggested that you have an alternate plan for someone to pick up your child if you are unable to come immediately.

The ELC reserves the right to withdraw any child from the program if this Illness Policy is not followed. We also reserve the right to request a doctor's excuse after a child has been diagnosed with an infectious illness.

F. Medications

If your child is to be given medication while in the ELC:

- The child's parent/legal guardian must complete a medicine authorization form before medication can be given.
- We cannot give any medication at the ELC without written directions from your child's doctor.
- **This form must be used for all prescription and non-prescription medication.**
- All medication and forms should be given to the Assistant Director.
- All medicine must be in its original container.
- Asthma inhalers and EpiPens are subject to the same procedure.

G. Discipline Policies and Procedures

We expect the children at the ELC to be well-behaved. Children will be expected to follow the staff's instructions at all times and observe all rules. The ELC asks for parents to encourage this by supporting our rules when children are at home.

Children will not be subjected to discipline that is severe, humiliating, or frightening. Discipline will not be associated with food or rest time. Spanking or any other form of physical punishment will not be allowed on the premises of Gardendale First Baptist Church.

When having difficulty with a child's behavior, the teacher will: 1) talk with the child, 2) place the child in time out, one minute per year of age ex: two min. for a 2 yr. old. 3) take the child to the Assistant Director. At that time, she will determine if a parent needs to be contacted.

If we have a child with continuous disruptive behavior (biting, hitting, spitting, kicking, scratching, etc.), we will meet with parents to form a plan of correction. If the behavior continues, we will suspend the child for 2 days; If the disobedient behavior continues, we will remove the child from the ELC Program. Suspension and removal will be at the discretion of the Administrative Director of the GFBC Education Programs.

You will NOT receive a refund for your child's tuition if they are suspended or expelled.

Important things to remember when dealing with discipline:

- Discipline issues will *ONLY* be discussed with the parent or legal guardian of the child.
- In the event you wish to speak to a teacher regarding your child, you *MUST* have an Assistant Director present.
- If at any time, a parent disrupts or disturbs the day-to-day operation by arguing, yelling, using inappropriate language, or exhibiting aggressive behavior, he/she will be asked to leave the premises immediately, as this can be frightening for many children.
- Parents who choose not to comply with the above stated procedures will be asked to withdraw their child from the Program.

It is our hope that we can help you with any concerns you may have. Please feel free to set up a meeting with us and we will be glad to speak with you at an agreed-upon time.

Important Note:

Parents or legal guardians are required to disclose any physical, emotional, or behavioral limitations, needs or concerns about their child in writing prior to registration. The Administrative Director reserves the right to deny your registration if it is determined that our program is not suited or staffed to meet your child's needs. Furthermore, the ELC reserves the right to withdraw any child from the Program at any time if behavioral and/or emotional problems with a child disrupt the day-to-day operations, if another person's safety is jeopardized, or if the Administrative Director determines the child makes it unreasonably difficult to meet the needs of the other children in the Program.

H. Emergency Action Plan with Map

In the event of an emergency, the Education Programs will follow the plans outlined in this section. Should we need to evacuate the school or shelter in place:

- 1. Evacuation routes/exits:** Each hall has an exit at each end, teachers will line the class up or put them in a crib, count the children, and walk the children out using the closest, unimpeded exit. Count the children again as soon as you have safely evacuated the building.
- 2. Notification:** Once all children are safely evacuated 911 will be called. Parents will be notified in the event of an evacuation by text message system. Further information will be posted on the school Facebook/web page.
- 3. Emergency Kits/Information:** Emergency kits will be taken by the Director or Assistant Director during an evacuation. Emergency kits are in each office and at the main exits. Kits contain each child's emergency contact information and security numbers.
- 4. Evacuation Sites:** The Early Learning Center (ELC) has a predetermined evacuation site that is posted on the wall inside each classroom. Parents will be notified by text when we are secure, and it is safe to pick children up.

- 5. Shelter-in-Place:** Each classroom has an emergency plan/map posted on the wall as you enter the room. Children will be taken to an interior room or hallway. The first aid kits are stored in the ELC Assistant Director's office, in the Day School workroom and behind the Control Desk in the gym. Battery-powered flashlights and radio along with emergency contact information are kept with emergency supplies in the ELC office and Day School workroom. Parents will be notified by text as soon as the immediate threat has passed.

- 6. Reuniting parents and children:** Children will only be released to contacts listed on the child's form with proper identification and/or the child's security number. Parent/guardian contact numbers are in the emergency kit, in the Day School, ELC binder and in our computer records program.

- 7. Fire Plan:** As soon as the alarm sounds, line your class up or put them in a crib, count your children, look for smoke in the hall, exit the building through the closest, non-impeded door. Walk your class to the pre-determined meeting place. Make sure you have all your children. Report to the Director with your class count and to receive further instructions.

- 8. Tornado Plan:** As soon as you are given the notice, we are under a tornado watch/warning, line your class up or put them in a crib, count your children and walk them to the Day School Theater. Have the children sit against the wall. The Director will give the all-clear when it is safe to return to the classrooms.

- 9. Earthquake Plan:** In the event of an earthquake, put the children together in the hallway, away from glass and windows.

I. Security Policies and Procedure

We take safety and the wellbeing of your children very seriously. This may be inconvenient at times. We thank you for cooperating with our regulations. We must strive to enforce them 100% of the time, *even when we know you*. The security system must always apply to everyone, or it

can quickly become faulty and compromise the safety of your children and our staff.

An Assistant Director will be at the ELC door to accept your child from 7:00a.m. - 8:30a.m. They will also be in the lobby for afternoon pickup between the hours of 4:00p.m. – 6:00p.m. If you need to drop off or pick up between 8:30a.m. and 4:00p.m, you will need to contact the office and the Assistant Director will help you. Please remember to always have your child's security number with you when picking up. The Assistant Director's number is (205) 222-4132.

After your child is registered, you will be given a card with their security number. You will need to know this number to be able to pick up your child. You may give this number to anyone you wish with the understanding that if they produce this number your child will be released to them.

If you forget your child's security number or need to change it, you **MUST** come to the Day School office. You will need to have identification for us to release the number to you. These security numbers will be kept confidential and will not be given out over the phone.

For added security, we have included a space on the registration form so that you may list any person(s) **NOT ALLOWED** to pick up your child. We will need legal documentation for cases in which a legal guardian or *biological parent* is not allowed to pick up their child. All of this is for the safety of your child. We will not release a child without proper identification. If you have any questions regarding this procedure, please feel free to give us a call.

We look forward to a wonderful year and greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with you, your child, and your family.