



**ParentShare Preschool c/o St. John Lutheran Church
440 East Elmwood Street
PO Box 774 Palmer, AK. 99645
PSP phone: 745-1440**

The handbook includes general information and guidance. Specific decisions will be made daily by the teachers. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the teacher or a board member.

*This handbook has been approved by the ParentShare Preschool
Executive Board of Directors.
8/13/2009*

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I. What is ParentShare Preschool?

A. Philosophy. Our program is designed to provide an enriching preschool environment for the children in our community. We believe that children's play is an expression of intelligence and growth, and that young children learn best through hands-on, concrete experiences. Children's play is an important part of early childhood development and an essential part of our program. Our vision is to help each child develop socially, emotional, physically, and intellectually—through actively exploring imaginative materials/equipment, and interacting with others.

ParentShare Preschool (PSP) supports each child's learning style and developmental readiness with the cooperation of the parents in a loving Christian atmosphere. Children learn to get along with other children and foster security with other adults outside the family. PSP provides a creative environment for strengthening emotional control, developing self-discipline, increasing independence and encouraging self-confidence. It promotes language skills and provides opportunities for self-expression.

Imagine parents, teachers, and children working together for the common benefit of children. No company or administrator owns the effort, but rather is a co-op which relies on parents and teachers. Our parents believe that their participation adds a unique dimension to their child's experience. PSP believes this is true and encourages it. PSP emphasizes Christian values and our routine includes blessing before snack and welcoming/closing songs. St. John's Pastor and/or Director of Christian Education (DCE) will occasionally be involved with PSP through visiting our class and sharing Bible stories.

B. Curriculum. ParentShare uses a creative child centered curriculum, that is thematic and age appropriate. Our program offers activities and materials that stimulates imagination, builds independence, and presents ample opportunities for exploring and discovering their world.

C. History. In 1982, Kathy Dawkins and Wendy Carter, both mothers, began PSP at the Assembly of God Church and then moved to St. John Lutheran in Palmer. Wendy taught one class of 3 and 4 year olds until 1985. Dorothy Abbott then took over teaching until spring of 1992. In fall of 1992, PSP grew to two classes, when Gina Gilmore became the teacher for the 3-year-old "Cubs." The following year, Linda Griese became the teacher for the 4/5-year-old "Bears". After more than 15 years of teaching and giving, both Linda and Gina retired respectively in spring 2008. In fall 2008, new teachers were chosen. Tausha Petrie is the teacher for the 3-year-old Cubs. Jenny Nash teaches the 4/5-year-old Bears.

D. Cubs Program. Many 3-year-old children are experiencing separation from their parents for the first time. Your child will be welcomed into a loving, caring, nurturing environment. Learning goals for the Cubs include: following simple directions, taking turns, sharing, and interacting positively with peers. The children also will be introduced to concepts such as a calendar, weather, seasons, holidays, animals and much more. Praise and encouragement are used to promote a positive self-image. The maximum class size is about 12 with a ratio of 4 children to 1 adult.

E. Bears Program. Kindergarten readiness is the focus. Your child will enjoy arts, crafts, music, and gross motor activities daily. The learning goals for the Bears include: developing fine motor skills such as cutting, coloring, writing, and using various types of manipulatives (hands-on play equipment) and recognizing the alphabet, numbers, and their name. The children will begin to recognize upper and lower case letters, numbers from one to ten, their first and last name, and their addresses and phone numbers. Praise and encouragement are used to reinforce skills. The maximum class size is about 16 with a ratio of about 5 children to 1 adult.

II. Eligibility and Enrollment

To be eligible for PSP, the Cubs program accepts children who are 3 years old by September 1st. and the Bears program accepts children who are 4 years old by September 1st. of the year they are to begin. Enrollment occurs every spring for fall term. Parents may enroll current children who will be returning or their siblings, beginning February 1st. Enrollment opens to the public on March 1st on a first-come-first-served basis. In order for a child to be accepted, parents must ***submit a completed enrollment form and payment of the non-refundable enrollment fee.*** Once the classes are filled, a waiting list will be created. If an opening becomes available during the school year, parents from the wait list will be notified.

A. Immunizations. PSP follows Alaska State Law which requires every child to be immunized before attending public school. Please contact your health care provider for specific requirements.

In addition, all students and parent volunteers must have a valid TB test before the first day of school. A parent or child who currently has a TB test on file at PSP is not required to submit a new TB test when returning the following school year. PSP must have a complete copy of each child's immunization record, at the start of the school year. If you choose not to have your child immunized, you must submit a religious exemption or waiver from your doctor.

B. Tuition. Tuition is due the first of each month starting the first week of school. After the tenth day of each month, tuition is considered late and parents are charged a late fee. A black payment box is located on top of the Cubbies to deposit tuition checks. If you prefer to pay cash, please hand deliver the cash to your child's teacher and receive a receipt. *Parents are required to sign a tuition acknowledgement form at the start of the preschool year. Monthly tuition is payable in full regardless of missed attendance.*

C. Early Withdrawal. If a child is withdrawn from PSP after March 1st, the parents are responsible for paying the tuition for the remaining months of the school year (usually April and May).

D. Parent, Teacher, Child Addresses. PSP provides mailing addresses, e-mail addresses and phone numbers to all parents within each class. Sharing contact information makes communication and coordination easier. A phone tree may be set up to share important information during the year. No parent or student information is released to the public.

E. Location. PSP is located in Palmer at St. John Lutheran Church downstairs in the church fellowship hall. The church is located on East Elmwood Street, south of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Central Office parking lot. PSP uses the church's south entrance with the covered handicap access.

III. Parent Involvement—Backbone of the Program

Enrolling a child in PSP requires regular parent(s) participation in school activities. Parent involvement is critical to the success of PSP. Parent involvement includes, but is not limited to, the following: helping the teacher during class, driving for field trips, providing healthy snacks, donating supplies, attending parent meetings, and being a board member. At a minimum, parents or someone the parent designates (i.e. grandparents) must volunteer in the classroom twice a month. *Volunteering in the classroom is a requirement, that's what makes our preschool so unique. Parents are required to sign a volunteer commitment contract at the start of the preschool year.*

A. Volunteer Sign Up. All parents sign up to volunteer in the classroom each month for a minimum of two days. A calendar will be posted for sign ups. One of the days should include bringing a snack. You are always welcome to sign up for additional days. If a scheduling conflict arises, contact other parents to switch. If there is still a problem, contact the Classroom Scheduler. *See description of Classroom Scheduler below.*

B. Other Volunteer Opportunities. PSP will need parents help with specific jobs and coordinating certain activities including the following:

(1) **Classroom Scheduler** ensures that there are two parent helpers for each class day. If a parent is unable to volunteer on their assigned day, they can contact the Scheduler to help arrange for a substitute helper.

(1) **Field Trip Coordinators** assist the teacher in scheduling, organizing.

(2) **Thank You Note Helper** will send thank you notes or letters to thank special guest who visit the classroom, field trip businesses, and to organizations for donate time or money to PSP.

(3) **Teacher Preparation Helpers** take home projects to prepare for the children. Preparation may involve tracing, cutting, sorting, or making play dough. Prep Helpers also may fix, modify, or construct inside play equipment or help prepare food for specific class activities (e.g. making applesauce, dough, cookie medals).

(4) **Technology Gurus** may help with photographing class activities or redesigning and maintaining the school webpage.

(5) **Classroom Set Up Angels** help teachers set up the classroom on Sunday nights or Monday mornings before class begins.

(6) Board/Committee Members. Parents who will have a child attending PSP in the fall, may serve on the board which includes President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary. Parents also may serve on special committees (i.e. updating written materials or fundraising).

C. Parent Meetings. Parent meetings take place at least 2-4 times a year. Parents will be notified about a scheduled parent meeting, and if child care will be available.

D. Clean-Up. Clean up includes both daily, weekly and yearly clean up times.

(1) Weekly. Clean-up procedures are listed in the classroom. These duties include: vacuuming the classroom and snack area, sanitizing tables, cleaning up painting area, and moving play equipment to storage areas.

(2) End of Year Clean-Up. Parents are required to help clean up at the end of the year. This is usually the day after PSP graduation. Parents may choose their work assignments and times based on the schedule.

IV. How do I know how my child is doing?

PSP encourages parents to cultivate and maintain communication about preschool activities with their child. You will have opportunities to experience all aspects of PSP. Open parent-teacher communication is encouraged. Please contact the teacher about any special situation with your child that may affect his/her behavior (ie. family, pet, or friend death, changes in the family, serious illness)

A. Parent Feedback. Suggestions, concerns, and compliments are always welcomed. If you would prefer to communicate in writing, the black box used for tuition payments doubles as a suggestion box.

B. Learning Exceptions. Please notify the teacher about any physical, learning, or behavioral concerns with your child. The PSP board must review whether we have the necessary resources, and if so, how to accommodate the child.

C. Discipline. Our objective is to nurture the children using positive discipline and guidance. Our goal is to help the children develop self-control, a cooperative spirit, and respect for others and their environment. Positive reinforcement is the focus. When a child's behavior is well-mannered, it will be acknowledged and encouraged. In the rare event that a child becomes violent, PSP teachers may physically restrain a child to protect the child or others from injury.

D. God's Golden Guidelines at PSP. It is helpful to the teachers and students if you remind your child at home of some important guidelines that we follow at school.

(1) Kindness ~ Sharing ~ Respect~. Kindness, sharing, and respect to fellow students, teachers, and parents is our number one guideline at PSP. God's Golden Rule of treating others as you would like to be treated is our motto. Respect for the church facility and for our classroom is also encouraged by cleaning up after ourselves.

(2) Safety in the classroom. To keep every child safe our, "no running in the classroom" rule will be enforced. Running is allowed and encourage in the exercise room or outside.

(3) Circle time Guidelines. Each child will be expected to come to circle ready to listen and ready to learn. Children will be asked to be a good listener, keep their hands to themselves, be patient, wait your turn, and raise their hand.

(4) Off-Task Behavior. When a child is off task and disrupting the learning of others, he/she will be asked kindly to cease or modify their behavior and/or the teacher will redirect their focus back on the task.

(5) Time Out. If the action is repeated, the child will sit in time out. A time out is used to allow the child to calm themselves and regain control of their behavior. After time out, the child and the teacher or a helper will discuss privately the disruptive behavior and better behavior choices.

(6) Biting or Hitting. If a child hits or bites another person, they will sit in time out immediately. Parents will be notified. After the time out, the teacher will speak to the child and the child will apologize to the victim.

(7) Removal. The teacher may use her discretion to remove a child temporarily from class. A parent will be called to come and take the child away from class. This would be a result of chronic disruptive behavior of a student who fails to respond to positive redirection. Permanent removal is decided by the PSP Board.

V. Schedules

A. Calendar. Each teacher will provide the parents with a printed or emailed monthly calendar of events and scheduled days off.

B. Arrival/Dismissal. To help children arrive on time, doors are unlocked 10 minutes prior to the beginning of class. Accompany your child into the building, help them remove their outdoor gear, and greet the teacher in the classroom. If you will be late for class dismissal or someone other than a parent will be picking up your child, notify the teacher.

C. Absences. Please notify the teacher if your child will be absent. It helps for planning and we worry.

D. Preschool Closures. PSP will follow the Mat-Su School District calendar which includes days off for professional development, Parent-Teacher conferences, and holidays. PSP will close whenever the school district closes due to weather or other emergencies. You may listen to local radio station 99.7 FM for updates; however, you will also receive a call from someone at PSP. Classes cancelled due to weather will not be made up. Classes may also be affected if the church fellowship hall is needed for a funeral.

E. Holidays. Classroom activities will reflect holidays such as Halloween/Harvest, Thanksgiving, Christmas/birth of Jesus, Valentine's Day, and Easter/life of Jesus. The teacher may incorporate other special occasions.

F. Birthdays. Parents may celebrate their child's birthday during class by bringing a special snack. No presents may be brought in. During class, the birthday child may wear a special crown and cape. If a child has a summer birthday and the parent would like their child to celebrate with the class, notify the teacher ahead of time to schedule a special day.

VI. Classroom Environment

A. Classroom Set Up/Take Down. Since our classroom is located in the church hall, all the classroom equipment must be moved into the storage rooms every Friday, some winter days during Lent, and for other special occasions. See **Parent Involvement** section for more details.

B. Cubbies. In the classroom entry are "cubby" spaces. The cubbies are used as a post office and storage space. Check your child's cubby after each class. Teachers will put calendars, parent information, and completed projects in the cubbies. Please do not use the cubbies to store valuable items. You may use the cubbies to distribute birthday party invitations only if inviting everyone in the class.

C. Clothing. Comfortable, washable, easy to manage clothing is best. Some activities are messy or the class may go outside for an activity. Dress-clothes may restrict active participation. Shoes must be worn at all times in the classroom. In an emergency, *everyone* may have to go outside. Dress yourself and your child for the season. Mark your child's name on their outdoor gear.

Please provide an extra set of "oops clothes" in a zip lock bag labeled with your child's name, just in case.

If you will be leaving an extra pair of shoes for your child please be sure to put your child's name on the shoes. Please do not leave any shoes of high value in your child's cubby.

D. School/Church Property. Children, parents, teachers, and visitors are expected to treat PSP property and the church with respect. When coming and going from the school, please do not let your child and/or siblings run freely around the church. At PSP we are thankful to St. John Lutheran Church for allowing us to be in such a beautiful church. Please help us in respecting the facility.

E. Lost and Found. Contact the teacher about lost or found items. Those items not claimed after a few weeks will be donated to charity.

F. Visitors or Pets. PSP always welcomes visitors, fathers, mothers, siblings, grandparents, or any other special people. The teacher must approve pets/animals prior to a visit.

VII. Classroom Activities

A. Daily Activities. A general example of our daily schedule and activities are:

- Free play
- Morning Circle Time- calendar, weather, helpers, stories, songs, theme/lesson of the day
- Snack time

- Center Time explore learning centers- blocks, writing center, dramatic play, listening library, house keeping, sensory tables
- Math/manipulatives, arts and crafts, puppet theater, wood working, science and nature
- Small group activities working with parent helpers and teacher on projects and/ or activity
- Exercise Room-physical activities, riding equipment, large motor play, organized games, music, movement
- Outside Activities occasionally weather permitting
- Closing Circle Time- reflection, story, song, show-n-tell, closing activity

B. Snacks. The designated parent volunteer supplies snacks. This includes the snack and drink, and necessary paper plates, paper cups, utensils and/or napkins. The students will be learning to wash their hands before snack and use table manners while eating.

(1) Allergies. Please talk to the teacher about any food allergies. Students with extreme allergies may be asked to bring their own snack.

(2) Suggested Snacks. Veggies, fruit, yogurt, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, cheese and crackers, muffins, popcorn, avoid candy.

(3) Suggested Drinks. Water, milk, juice, hot chocolate. No soda.

C. Special Events.

(1) Get Acquainted Day. Takes place before the first day of school, and will last about an hour.

Similar to an open house this will give the child and parent the opportunity to meet the teacher and explore the classroom together. We hope this will help make a smooth transition into the first day of class.

(2) Field Trips. Field trips occur throughout the year. A small fee may be required. If a child cannot participate, notify the teacher and do not bring your child to school that day. Classroom volunteers and extra parent helpers will be needed to transport children.

(3) Christmas Concert. In December, the children sing in a short evening concert in the church and enjoy snacks and treats afterwards.

(4) Family Dance. Children, parents, and families are invited to a lively dinner and dance usually held in the spring.

(5) Moms and Muffins. Children celebrate their moms with a special breakfast around Mother's Day.

(6) Bike-A-Thon. In May during class, children and parents participate in a fun, active, and simple PSP fundraiser.

(7) Curtis Menard Memorial Run. Curtis Menard, former PSP parent, died in 2002 while serving as an energetic and dedicated board president. PSP celebrates his contributions to PSP and the community by having a fun run for all PSP children during the May graduation celebration.

(8) Graduation Celebration. An evening event for the whole family to celebrate the PSP graduates.

D. Community Resources. At PSP we have found that our community is rich in resource. A resource survey will be handed out at the beginning of the school year. If you or a family member has a special talent, hobby, occupation, field trip idea or other special interest to share with your child's classes please let us know when filling out the survey.

VIII. Health. See section on *Classroom Environment and Activities* for additional information.

A. First Aid. First aid kits for minor injuries are accessible in the classroom and for field trips.

B. During School. When a student is injured or becomes ill the teacher will contact the parent immediately. Please ensure that your contact information is accurate. If parents or emergency contacts cannot be reached, the teacher will decide the appropriate action.

C. Sick at Home. A child or volunteer parent may not attend the preschool when they have had any of the following within the past 24 hours: diarrhea, vomiting, severe cold, and/or fever. Give yourself or your child a 24-hour well period before returning. If the child has been exposed to or shows symptoms of a communicable disease (e.g. pink eye, strep throat, chicken pox), check with your health care provider before returning to preschool.

D. Car Safety. Each parent is responsible for providing a car seat for their child which meets federal and state requirements. If a car seat is not provided for field trips, the child will not participate. Parents who transport PSP children during preschool hours are responsible for having a valid driver's license and vehicle insurance required by the State of Alaska.

E. Emergencies. Teachers will conduct fire, and earthquake drills throughout the year so that the children are familiar with emergency procedures.

IX. Teaching

A. About the Teachers.

(1) Tausha Petrie grew up in a small town in South Dakota. She is the oldest of four children. She moved from South Dakota to Alaska in 1998. Tausha is married to Lance who is a middle school teacher and coach. They have two children, Alyson and Jackson. In addition to teaching the Cubs class two days a week, Tausha enjoys being a wife and mom. She also volunteers in her daughter's school, helps with Girl Scouts and is a cheerleader for all of her husband's and children's activities. Tausha has been a past PSP parent and board member. Tausha's hobbies include reading, gardening in her green house, watching movies, cooking, entertaining family and friends, playing cards and traveling.

(2) Jenny Nash grew up in Long Island, New York. She earned her BS degree in Elementary Education and met her husband, Robbie, at college in Tennessee.

Robbie's army career moved them to Alaska in 1993, where they decided to stay and raise a family. They have four children: Savannah, Kody, Dawson, and Jack. Jenny loves being a Mom and working with children. Very early in life, she became devoted to children from being an oldest sister to babysitting to teaching kindergarten. She has been actively involved in the community for many years including serving on several boards, founding the Palmer MOMS Club, coaching soccer, and leading Girl Scouts. She enjoys her job as the Bears Teacher immensely. Besides teaching, she works part-time for Mat-Su Services caring for disabled children and adults. Her hobbies include hiking, camping, yoga, cross-country skiing, planning and organizing, and reading.

B. Substitute Teachers. The teacher will find a substitute (usually a PSP parent or PSP teacher), if she is be absent. A substitute teacher will be arranged with as much advance notice as possible. If a teacher or one of her children becomes sick the day of class, the scheduled parent helpers may be asked to fill in. A substitute packet with a complete lesson plan is available, if needed.

X. Classroom Supplies

A. Donations/Wish List. Businesses or parents may donate money or items to PSP and a receipt is provided upon request. Teachers will post their wish list for needed items.

B. Fundraising. Annually, PSP holds one school fundraiser. The fundraiser helps pay for unexpected expenses and may allow for the purchase of some classroom supplies. See *Monthly or Special Activities* section.