

St. Thomas Early Learning Center

Family Handbook

Revised September 2022



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Our Mission & Values

St. Thomas Early Learning Center, a ministry of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, exists to preserve childhood as a place of discovery, wonder, and play. St. Thomas Early Learning Center honors the pace of early childhood, cares for God's creation, respects the dignity of each person and family, and cultivates a family-centered community.

Episcopal Identity

Adopted from the [National Association of Episcopal Schools](#)' "Principal qualities that distinguish a school as Episcopal"

As embodiments of Christian faith, Episcopal schools are created to be communities that honor, celebrate and worship God as the center of life. They are created as models of God's love and grace. They are created to serve God in Christ in all persons, regardless of origin, background, ability, or religion. They are created to "strive for justice and peace among all people and [to] respect the dignity of every human being."

Episcopal schools seek to integrate religious and spiritual formation into the overall curriculum and life of the school community. They are clear, yet graceful, about how they articulate and express their basic identities, especially in their religious curricula and traditions.

They invite all who attend and work in them – Episcopalians and non-Episcopalians, Christians, and non-Christians, people of no faith tradition – both to seek clarity about their own beliefs and religions and to honor those traditions more fully and faithfully in their own lives.

Episcopal schools exist not merely to educate, but to demonstrate and proclaim the unique worth and beauty of all human beings as creations of a loving, and empowering God.

By weaving these principles into the very fabric of school life, Episcopal schools are built on the foundation of a Christian love that guides and challenges all who attend to build lives of genuine meaning, purpose and service in the world they will inherit.

STELC holds weekly chapel services for students, families, and staff during the school day.

School History

Saint Thomas Early Learning Center opened its doors in 1964. At that time, it comprised one kindergarten class and one teacher. The Rev. William Oxley, Rector of [St. Thomas Church](#), noticed the lack of publicly funded kindergarten and perceived a need for a developmentally appropriate kindergarten. Over the years, pre-kindergarten (4K) and beginners classes (3K) were added, and in 1990, first grade was also added. In 1989, Valerie Woodcock became Head of School (HOS) and the Rev. Ben Aurand became Rector at Saint Thomas and Chaplain to the school, also serving as Chair of the STELC Board.

In the fall of 2001, Laura Calvin became the third Head of School of STELC. The Rev. William Fowler joined the school as school Chaplain and Rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in the fall of 2005. Lisa Hines became Chaplain and Rector in 2008. The Rev. Rhoda Montgomery assumed leadership of the church in 2010. Mary Skow directed the school from 2010 to 2012. During this time the school returned to its early learning roots, ending its first grade program. Beth Lawrence became Head of School in 2012. The Rev. Angela Cortiñas served as Rector of St. Thomas Church from August 2017 to February 2021. The Rev. Korey Wright became rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in January of 2022. The school enrolls approximately 125 children each year.

Festival, held in the Spring, has been a part of school life for as long as most can remember. It is a major fundraiser for the school and outreach to families with young children. Also a major fundraiser, The St. Nick Run began in 2012 and is held annually. Gala, held in the fall, began as a 50th Year Celebration in 2014 and continues as a time for those who love STELC to come together to support the programs of the school.

School Governance

Episcopal schools in general exist at the good pleasure, by and under the ultimate authority of the [Episcopal Diocese of Texas](#) (EDOT) and its Bishop. STELC lies under the general canon and more specifically under the authority of the Rector (who also functions as Chair of the Board of Trustees) and the Vestry of Saint Thomas Church.

The school is governed by a Board of Trustees appointed and charged by the Vestry to develop the overall policies and safeguard the integrity of the school and to provide the Head of School with advice, direction and active support as needed. The Board acts as final arbitrator in the due process proceedings of students and staff.

The Board is composed of nine members. A minimum of 60% of the Board are active members of St. Thomas Episcopal Church. Trustees serve three year terms and can serve two consecutive terms. One member of the Vestry serves as a liaison between the Board and Vestry. The Rector and Head of School (HOS) serve as ex officio board members.

STELC, a Texas non-profit 501(c) (3) Organization, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability.

Accreditations, Licensing, and Certifications

STELC is privileged to be accredited by **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**, the **Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools (SAES)** and hold certification as a **Nature Explore Classroom** through the **National Arbor Day Foundation**. In addition, STELC is licensed by the **Texas Health and Human Services Commission**. A current inspection report is posted for review in the school office and online at www.dfps.state.tx.us. The local HHSC office is at 3000 E. Villa Maria, Bryan, Texas 77803. The phone number is (979) 731-0119.

By signing the enrollment contract, parents and students in the school community agree to abide by all terms of this handbook. The school reserves the right to supplement or modify the terms of this handbook from time to time at the sole discretion of the Head of School, with or without prior notice to parents and/or students.

Admissions & Tuition

Admissions Policy

STELC, a Texas non-profit 501(c)(3) Organization, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability. STELC considers all applicants equally and fairly. To be enrolled, a child must be toilet trained and be the following age by September 1st of the school year:

- 3K - Age 3 by September 1st
- 4K - Age 4 by September 1st
- Kindergarten - Age 5 by September 1st

An assessment will be conducted prior to enrollment approval for any student wishing to participate in STELC's kindergarten program who has not previously been part of STELC's 4K program. This allows appropriate placement of a student within our program for a successful school year.

More information on the toilet training policy can be found in the Handbook Appendices.

Admissions Procedure

Enrollment paperwork is sent to children on our enrollment list and currently enrolled children in late Fall or early Spring. Once application packets are returned, a tuition contract is issued as space allows. A non-refundable enrollment fee is due at this time to complete the enrollment process. All families with children on our enrollment list will be invited to apply. When more families request placement in a class than we can accommodate, currently enrolled students are given enrollment priority, followed by children with siblings currently enrolled at STELC. Prompt return of the application packet, tuition contract, and enrollment fee is required to reserve your child's place.

Class Size

STELC seeks to limit class size to maximize the experience of our students. We may also limit enrollment based on the best needs of the children in our care. We can enroll:

- 3K - 14 students with a Lead and Assistant Teacher
- 4K - 16 students with a Lead and Assistant Teacher
- Kindergarten - no more than 18 students with a Lead and Assistant Teacher
- Extended Care - student to teacher ratio of 9 to 1

Required Documentation

STELC is licensed as a child care center by the State of Texas. Child care licensing REQUIRES records of children to be maintained by our school. Documentation includes:

- a signed statement from a physician indicating a child is fit to participate in school (**required annually**)
- required immunizations or signed affidavit of exemption
- vision/hearing test results indicating pass/fail (students age 4 and newly enrolled students age 5)
- **complete** application on file
- signed general liability waiver (included in application packet)

In order to be enrolled at STELC, students MUST have this documentation provided prior to the first day of regular classes. When a child is overdue for routine health services evidence must be provided of an appointment for those services before a child's entry into the program and as a condition of remaining enrolled in the program. Families must provide an affidavit to be exempt from immunizations for religious or philosophical reasons. Under immunized children may be excluded from care if a vaccine-preventable disease occurs to which children are susceptible or other pertinent conditions exist. For additional information regarding immunizations, visit the [Texas Department of State Health Services and Human Services](#) website. Families are also asked to submit current health insurance information including the insurance carrier, policy number, and the name of the insured.

Documentation is confidential and kept secure in the school office. Student files are immediately available to administrators, teaching staff, the child's parents or legal guardian, and regulatory authorities, upon request.

Payment of Tuition

Tuition can be remitted to STELC by payment in full in the office (due by the first day of school) OR by utilizing [Brightwheel's](#) online billing. Monthly and twice yearly payments are managed through **Brightwheel only**. There is a service fee when using a credit card. For more information regarding Brightwheel, visit the school website. There is no credit given for vacations, scheduled school holidays, child illness, closings due to emergency situations, inclement weather or acts of God.

Tuition Assistance

STELC offers limited tuition assistance each year. Tuition assistance applications are available during the enrollment period from the STELC office. The finance committee of the STELC Board of Directors oversees the review of the tuition assistance applications.

Withdrawal

Once a tuition contract is signed and returned, families are obligated to fulfill the financial obligations of said contract. If a family wishes to withdraw a child, for any reason, notification must be given to the Head of School in writing with 30 days notice. A family is still responsible for payment for the term of the tuition contract unless a release is granted by STELC.

Assessment

STELC conducts general developmental assessments for each student in each class. Methods used are observations, checklists, rating scales, and work sampling. Written assessments and student portfolios will be distributed to parents at the end of the school year. Assessments are kept in a child's file for two years. STELC will not share these documents unless a release signed by the parent or guardian is received in the office.

Communication

Families receive communication from the Head of School and teachers via Brightwheel electronically and in written form. Your child's teacher will keep you informed of general classroom happenings weekly. STELC requests written permission to add grandparents or other caregivers to class communication. A weekly school-wide email newsletter will keep you informed of school-wide events. The school calendar as well as handbooks, policies, and guidelines are available on the school website, www.stthomaselc.org.

Concerns and Conflict Resolution

Teachers are the first level of contact in issues regarding classroom happenings and individual needs. The Head of School should be contacted only after discussion in good faith with the classroom teacher. Generally, conference on these levels are successful if all parties concerned are consistently open, honest, and maintain a high level of good faith in their intentions. Every effort should be made by each party to come to a resolution at this level.

Conferences

Teachers will offer conferences with families twice a year. Written assessments and student portfolios will be distributed at the end of the school year. Teachers are available for additional conversations and informal conferences can be made with teachers at any time.

Children with Special Needs

Communication with parents of students with special needs is very important at STELC. Maintaining up to date treatment and behavioral plans are imperative to ensuring the success and safety of our STELC students. Parents are requested to provide records and treatment plans from the time of original diagnosis through the end of their time at STELC to ensure continuity of care and treatment.

STELC has experience working with local school districts and other child development professionals for testing and assessment at the parent's request. For a list of community resources, please contact the office.

Should a child benefit from extra one-on-one attention during the day at STELC, the teacher, family, and Head of School will develop a plan for the student. If an additional STELC staff member is required to shadow their student, the expense is managed by the family.

Discipline

Discipline will be individualized and consistent for each child; appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control. More information is available in the Discipline and Guidance Policy found in the Handbook Appendices.

A caregiver may use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least the following:

- Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
- Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
- Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
- Using brief supervised separation away from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development.

There must be no harsh, cruel or unusual treatment of any child.

The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment; Punishment associated with food, withholding or threatening to withhold food; naps or toilet training; Pinching, shaking or biting a child; Hitting a child with a hand or instrument; Putting anything in or on a child's mouth; Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting or yelling at a child; Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive or profane language; Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed; and Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age. (Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Chapters 746 and 747, Subchapters L, Discipline and Guidance)

STELC employees receive training regarding the prevention and signs of child abuse. If parents have concerns a child is being abused, it should be reported to the [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services](https://www.dhs.gov/child-abuse) at 1-800-252-5400 .

Drop Off/Pick Up

Drop Off. Drop off and pick up locations are assigned for each class. This will be a time for patience. The playground will not be available before school to help with your student's transition into the classroom. A daily health check for each child will be conducted upon the student's arrival to school. The caregiver will observe the child's general mood and behavior, as well as look for any signs/symptoms of disease, including, but not limited to severe coughing, sneezing, breathing difficulty, skin rashes, spots, swelling, bruising, or elevated body temperature.

Children will then wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer upon arrival at the gate or upon entering classrooms.

Children will be dropped off and picked up at playground gates. Parents will park and walk their children to their assigned gate where they will be greeted and/or escorted to the classroom by one of their teachers. Drop off time is a busy time of day for teachers, please refrain from engaging them in prolonged conversations during this time period unless it is an emergency so their focus can be on their students. If necessary, ask the teacher to contact you in private after the school day.

If your child finds morning drop off difficult, please communicate that need with your child's teacher. Their arrival process might be altered to accommodate their specific needs.

If you are running late and miss your designated drop off or pick up time, text 979-321-3996 to notify the office. After 8:45a.m. come to the school office so that staff can health screen and walk your child to their class. Consistent late arrival for either drop off or pick up is a violation of school policy.

Pick Up. If a parent has prearranged to pick up a child during the school day at a time other than a normal release time, (ex. for doctor's appointment), a staff member will bring the child to the appropriate gate entrance to meet the family.

Please do not text individual teachers during the school day regarding drop off, pick up, or change of plans. We need them to be entirely focused on the children in their care and they may miss the message. Instead, use the Brightwheel messaging application, call the school office at 979-696-1728, or text the school cell phone at 979-321-3996.

Children wait with their teachers and classmates until handed off to parents by STELC staff members. Parents should wait until a STELC staff member releases their child before taking them. This ensures proper child headcounts and safety. Pick up time is a busy time of day for teachers, please refrain from engaging them in lengthy conversations during this time period so their focus can be on their students. If necessary, ask the teacher to contact you after all children are safely released to their parents or guardians.

For children in care beyond 2:30, if picking up please text 979-321-3996 when you arrive on campus and a staff member will meet you at a school gate.

Playdates/Carpool/Alternate Pick Up

If your child will be leaving STELC with someone other than who is listed on your authorized pickup list, please notify the school in advance or at morning drop off. If you need to add someone to the authorized pickup list, please notify the office in writing. STELC will ask for picture identification of persons on campus who are unfamiliar to staff.

Late Pick-Up

If you are more than 15 minutes late, efforts will be made to reach you and those on your emergency contact list. Your child will be moved to Extended Care or the school office and supervised until you arrive. Consistent late pickups will result in paying additional fees. Please contact the office if you know you will be late.

Cell Phone Use

State and local law requires there be no cell phone use in school zones when in a vehicle. (CS City ordinance 2016-3797 & Texas House Bill 62). All cell phone use on campus but particularly during pickup and drop off is strongly discouraged. Cell phones take away your ability to be fully present with your child. Please do not talk or text while dropping off or picking up your children.

Please see Drop Off & Pick Up Guidelines as well as Playground Guidelines in the Handbook Appendices for more information.

General Information

Absences

STELC does not have a formal attendance policy. We strongly encourage consistent attendance to foster a child's sense of belonging and bonding with their peers and teachers. Please keep your child's teacher informed of possible absences, late arrivals, or early dismissals. If your child is ill, please notify your child's teacher via Brightwheel or call the school office.

Students are allowed to attend on their contracted days only. Any absences cannot be made up on non-contracted days.

Accidents at School

All classrooms contain first aid kits. Minor scrapes and bruises will be treated at school and parents will be notified at pick up time. Depending on the nature of the accident, an incident report may be filled out, given to the parent and a copy kept in the office. If the injury is minor but the child seems particularly upset, parents will be notified immediately. If an accident requires more attention than the school can provide, parents will be contacted immediately. If necessary, 911 will be contacted. In the event a parent cannot be reached, the school will contact the emergency contacts in the student's file. All children attending STELC are covered by a general accident insurance policy during school hours.

Allergies, Medications, and other Medically Diagnosed Conditions

Each child with a known medical condition that has been diagnosed by a healthcare professional, such as a food allergy, seizure disorder, or diabetes, and those requiring the use of an epinephrine auto injector (Epipen, Auvi-Q), must have a medical emergency plan ([Allergy Plan](#), [Seizure Plan](#), or [Diabetes Plan](#)). The child's health care professional and parent must sign and date the plan. A copy of the plan will be posted in food prep areas and in the child's file. In addition, a list of all children with known conditions will be posted in each classroom building. A medical emergency plan is an individualized plan prepared by the child's health care professional that includes: (1) a list of each food or allergen (such as fire ants) the child is allergic to or medical condition; (2) possible symptoms if exposed to the allergen or food on the list; and (3) the steps to take if the child has an allergic or other reaction.

Staff may administer medicine following guidelines set by HHSC child care licensing. This is only at the request of the parent or guardian and requires written instructions, as well as medication in the original and labeled container. Children are not allowed to administer their own medication while at school.

Sunblock and mosquito spray is available to families at drop off. Parents can apply these prior to school drop off.

Birthdays

Birthdays are celebrated at STELC by birthday blessings in Chapel and providing a simple birthday snack selected by the child from the Birthday Snack Menu.

Please do NOT bring goody bags, gifts, balloons, etc. They will not be distributed. Please do not ask STELC staff to distribute party invitations. Class rosters are provided with contact information. Summer birthdays may be celebrated on the half birthday or in the spring.

Challenging Behaviors

Teachers will address challenging behaviors using positive support strategies. When behaviors such as biting or causing injury to a classmate persist past one incident, the parent might be required to pick up the child from school immediately. With an additional incident, parents and teachers will conference to establish solutions which could include professional intervention.

When a pattern of behavior persists that endangers self, others or property, or significantly disrupts the program, we will work with a child's family to find solutions, up to and including referral for outside services or exclusion from the STELC program. Exclusion will always be a last resort, after all other possible interventions have been exhausted and there is agreement that a different setting is in the best interest of the child. In that circumstance, the program will work

with the family in accessing services and, as able, securing an alternative placement. Our actions will comply with federal and state civil rights laws.

Please see the Guidance and Discipline Policy in the Handbook Appendices.

Chapel

Students attend a simple chapel service once a week in the church sanctuary. The liturgy is available at www.stthomasehc.org, in the school office, and the Handbook Appendices. Parents are encouraged to attend and do not have to check in with the school office.

Class Parties

Classroom parties, organized by parents, are held during the year to celebrate holidays and other special occasions. Simple guidelines are available from your child's teacher. Keep in mind, that simple is often better for young children during busy holiday times. Siblings should stay at home so your full attention can be given to the children in the classroom.

Classroom Pets

Many of the classrooms have pets for the children to enjoy. The animals are kept in cages and cared for by the teachers and students, giving the children the opportunity to observe the animals and learn the responsibility of having a pet. If your child has any pet allergies, please let your teacher know and appropriate action will be taken.

Communicable Diseases and Environmental Hazards

St. Thomas Early Learning Center will notify parents if children have been exposed to a communicable disease or environmental hazard following the guidelines provided by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and the Brazos County Health Department.

Custody, Separation, and/or Divorce Issues

St. Thomas Early Learning Center recognizes that families can be thrown into crisis as a result of separation or divorce. Teachers and staff will respond with compassion and discretion, and work to maintain a safe, loving, and consistent environment for your child at school. Each case is unique, so the specifics of each family's situation should be discussed with the classroom teacher and the Head of School. STELC may require divorced and/or separated parents to file unaltered certified copies of the current court order or decree relating to the custody/conservatorship of the child.

Distracting Objects/What to Leave at Home

Bringing toys and unessential items to school is not allowed. Many classes incorporate sharing times into their day. Please follow your teacher's guidelines regarding acceptable sharing items. No toy guns, knives, or other war toys are allowed at school. Weapons, drugs, and alcohol are not allowed. Electronic devices of any kind are not allowed.

Donations

St. Thomas Early Learning Center solicits and accepts gifts that are consistent with its mission. Donations will generally be accepted from individuals, partnerships, corporations, foundations, government agencies, or other entities, without limitations. In the course of its regular fundraising activities, STELC will accept donations of money, real property, personal property, stock, and in-kind services. Certain types of gifts must be reviewed prior to acceptance due to the special liabilities they may pose for STELC. Examples of gifts which will be subject to review include gifts of real property, gifts of personal property, and gifts of securities.

Dress Code

Children are very active and often very messy! Their exploration and play will not be curtailed to keep clothing from getting dirty. Please send your child to school in clothes that will allow them to freely participate in all school activities without the worry of ruining an item. Smocks are offered but not all washable paint is actually washable, and sometimes non-washable art supplies are used. Water and sand are common fixtures on the playground. All students should always have a spare change of clothes including socks and underwear in their classroom cubbies. Please remember to send a

new set with the change of the season. Tennis shoes or other closed toe shoes (no slick soles) make the best footwear. Strap on sandals are okay but flip flops need to stay at home.

Drugs and Alcohol on Campus

Drugs and alcohol are not allowed on campus during school hours. STELC is a smoke-free campus.

Emergency Preparedness

Because of its proximity to Texas A&M University, STELC receives Code Maroon alerts. In the event of an emergency on the TAMU campus or nearby we will receive notification. Depending on the type of emergency, students will either remain locked in their classrooms with their teacher and assistant or will be escorted to gather as a large group to the Gathering Tree or the Parish Hall at St. Thomas Episcopal Church. In the event of a tornado or weather event or lock down for a volatile person on campus, students will gather depending on their classroom location.

In the case of an emergency in which the entire school/church campus must be evacuated, parents will be notified and will have 1 hour to pick up their children from the St. Thomas Campus.

After 1 hour children will be brought (weather permitting) to Brison Park (400 Dexter). If weather does NOT permit, students will walk with their teachers to the TAMU Hillel Center at 800 George Bush Drive (979)703-1856. Teachers will bring with them an attendance roster, emergency contact information, and medical information for all students. Teachers will complete face to name checks upon arrival and departure and in 15 minute intervals until all parents arrive. Teachers and staff will communicate with Child Care Licensing and local authorities upon arrival at the TAMU Hillel Center

Field Trips

Students may take walking field trips throughout the year. Siblings are not allowed on field trips. Classroom Teachers will also follow current field trip and transportation procedures as outlined in TX HHSC Minimum Standards for Child Care.

Fire Drills

As required by state law, school buildings are inspected annually by the Fire Marshal. Monthly fire drills are conducted and evacuation routes are posted in all classrooms.

Health Check

A daily health check for each child will be conducted upon the student's arrival into the classroom. The caregiver will observe the child's general mood and behavior, as well as look for any signs/symptoms of disease, including, but not limited to severe coughing, sneezing, breathing difficulty, skin rashes, spots, swelling, bruising, or elevated body temperature.

Homework and Makeup work

Expectations for student work outside of school hours is minimal and will be made clear to students and parents during the early days of school and orientation. Please coordinate with your child's teacher the makeup of any work due to absences.

Illnesses

In general, students must be symptom-free and fever-free (without the use of fever-reducer) for twenty-four hours before returning to school after an illness. A physician's certification of health may be required prior to readmitting a child who has been absent due to a contagious disease, extended illness, or injury. In addition, children with undiagnosed rashes, excessive mucus, fluid secretion from the skin, mouth, eyes, or ears, and unusually red or itchy eyes should be kept at home. If parents have any questions regarding bringing their child to school, please ask them to consult with their physician. If a child's health results in a greater need for care than the teachers may provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children, we ask families to please keep their child at home. Please keep the office informed when children are absent or ill. Specific and separate policy may be implemented as needed.

If a child becomes ill at school, he or she will be taken to a comfortable location in the school office and a parent notified to pick them up. Illness is defined as:

- A temperature of 100.4 degrees or more
- Two or more episodes of diarrhea or vomiting
- Any undiagnosed rash, open sores, blisters or spots
- Colored discharge from nose, eyes, or ears
- Extreme sleepiness, lethargy, or unusual behavior

Lost and found

Lost and found items are placed in a box in the STELC office. Items of significant value are kept in the office. Periodically, unclaimed items will be donated to charity.

Lunch

Children enrolled in Extended Care and full-day Kindergarteners bring their own lunches from home each day. Please send nutritious lunches that will meet your child's daily food needs. Children must eat only what they have brought from home and may not share their food with others. Please label all lunch boxes and containers with your child's name. Please note that due to health safety concerns, STELC staff are unable to heat any food in the microwave. Under some circumstances, we may exclude some common allergen foods from campus.

Playground & Meadow

During school hours of 8:15-5:15, the playground & meadow are reserved for the use of the children attending school. If one of our classes is using the playground, please remain outside the fence. Children using the playground must be supervised by a parent. St. Thomas Church and Early Learning Center are not responsible for injuries that occur outside of school hours and staff supervision. When entering and exiting the school playground, please make sure the gates are closed at all times.

Please see Playground Guidelines and Nick's Meadow Guidelines in the Handbook Appendices for more information.

Rest

Children in Extended Day and Full Day Kindergarten have the opportunity to rest in the afternoon. Children in care until 2:30 PM rest for 15 minutes. Children in care until 5:15 rest for 45 minutes or until waking. Children will not sleep more than 3 hours.

School Calendar

STELC generally follows the College Station Independent School District calendar. The school calendar will be distributed to families prior to the beginning of the school year and is posted on the school webpage. STELC operates from late August to late May. The school day is 8:15 to 11:15 AM or 8:30 to 11:30 AM for 3K and 4K. Full Day 3K and 4K is from 8:15 to 2:15 or 8:30 to 2:30. Half Day Kindergarten is from 8:15 to 11:45. Full Day K is from 8:15 to 2:15. Care can be extended to 5:15 daily. The school office is closed the entire month of July.

Severe Weather/School Closings

In the case of severe weather, please check Brightwheel and/or social media and stay tuned to local media outlets for announcements of school closures or delays. If College Station ISD is closed or delayed, STELC will also be closed or delayed. If CSISD delays classes until 10 a.m. or later, students who typically attend Extended Day on that day may report at 11:30. If severe weather occurs during the school day, every precaution will be made to keep the students safe. Shelter in place and severe weather drills are conducted quarterly throughout the year. Children are not allowed outside when lightning is present in the area. STELC may use its own discretion to close the school based on the utmost concern for the children's safety. Lead teachers are expected to have a list of their student's contacts at their residence in case there is a need to make emergency contact.

Snacks

Water will be made available at all times and served with snacks and lunches. We ask each child to bring a labeled, reusable water bottle to school each day. 100% juice, sometimes served during special events, is limited to no more than four ounces per child per day. Care must be taken when foods which might cause choking are served. (HHSC, NAEYC)

General snack guidelines will be posted in the classrooms. Specific snack menus for each classroom are updated weekly and posted on the snack calendar available on the school website. Snacks are served at regular established times. At least one staff member will sit and eat with the children during snack or lunch, engage the children in conversation, and model appropriate meal time etiquette. (HHSC)

Student Records

Student records are kept in a controlled file cabinet in the school office to safeguard each child's privacy. When a student leaves STELC, these records are retained in an inactive file. Evaluations and records of academic performance are forwarded only upon written request of a parent. After two years, former student records are destroyed. Records of extraordinary circumstances might be retained longer.

See the Handbook Appendices for more information on the Records Retention Policy.

Suspension & Expulsion

Unfortunately, there may be reasons we have to ask a child to be removed from our program, either on a short-term or permanent basis including exhibiting persistent challenging behaviors, not being fully toilet trained, or parental behavior that puts the school environment at risk. We will do everything possible to work with a family in order to prevent suspension or expulsion from being enforced.

More information can be found in the Handbook Appendices regarding Guidance and Discipline, Toilet Training, etc.

Technology Use Policy

Technology is occasionally used in the classroom to meet educational objectives under the direction of staff.

Visitors

Parents may visit the school at any time. However, visitors must check in with the office upon arrival at the school, provide an ID, and wear a visitor tag while on campus. Upon departure, check out through the office, return your visitor tag, and collect your ID. Parents are always welcome at Chapel and may go directly to the church without checking in at the office. Gates to the school campus are locked during school hours. Visitors to STELC may be asked to refrain from taking photos or videoing students while on campus and must adhere to the school's guidelines and policies. Staff are expected to respectfully question any unfamiliar person on campus.

Volunteers/Parental Involvement

Volunteering in the classroom is left to the discretion of the teacher. Parents who volunteer in the classroom more than occasionally are required to meet church, state licensing, and accreditation requirements. This includes a complete background check and additional training.

Water Play

During warm weather, students are permitted to play with water, buckets, funnels, etc in our sandbox. Splash/wading pools and sprinklers may be used. Parents can choose to permit or not permit their child to participate in these staff supervised activities. Water play on the playground is during school hours only.

Weapons and Gangs on campus

Texas House Bill 2086 ensures that the school is protected with and has a 1000 foot gang-free zone around the school. By enforcing tougher penalties, a gang-free zone deters criminal activities in areas where children gather. Weapons of any kind are not allowed on campus.

Extra copies of this handbook and copies of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission Minimum Standard Rules for Child Care Providers are available in the school office, in Brightwheel, or on the school website. Please contact the Head of School if you have questions about our policies and procedures. A notice of any changes made to this handbook during the school year will be sent home with your child.