

St. Thomas Early Learning Center

Handbook Appendices

Revised September 2022



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Chapel Service

by St. Thomas Early Learning Center

Opening Song (Musician):

(to begin the song, we wave our hands in greeting...)

Good morning, Lord! It's a beautiful day! Good morning, Lord! I'm going your way.
Open my eyes, and let me see Someone who needs a friend like me.
I know that I can surely be Loving, caring, always sharing.
Good morning, Lord! It's a beautiful day! Good morning, Lord! I'm going your way.

Story of the Day (Clergy)

The Prayers (Musician/Clergy)

Musician:

Hush, little rooster, with your "cockadoodledoo".
Hush, little kitten, with your "mew, mew, mew".
Hush, puppy dog, with your "bow, wow, wow".
Please don't "moo-moo", Mrs Cow.
Hush, hush, hush...someone's talking to God, right now.
Hush, hush, hush...I am talking to God, right now.

All: Our Father, who art in Heaven
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
Forever and ever. Amen.

Birthday Prayers (Clergy/Musician)

Clergy:

Watch over your child, O Lord, as *his/her* days increase; bless and guide *him/her* wherever *he/she* may be. Strengthen *her/him* when *she/he* stands; comfort *her/him* when discouraged or sorrowful; raise *him/her* up if *he/she* fall; and in *his/her* heart may thy peace which passeth understanding abide all the days of *his/her* life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*

(Musician to the tune of Happy Birthday)

God loves you and me! God loves you and me!
God loves you, God loves me! God loves you and me!

Thank You Prayer (Musician)

(we all stand up together and sing! we sing this through twice, and on the second time, children are encouraged to say what they are thankful for, out loud, during the "this fine day" portion of the first verse.)

Thank you, Lord, for this fine day! Thank you, Lord, for this fine day! Thank you, Lord, for this fine day,
Right where we are!
Oh, hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord,
Right where we are!

Closing Prayer

Bless us, the children, all through the day, Jesus, our Lord.
Bless us, the children, as we go away, Jesus, our Lord.

Closing Sentences (Clergy)

Leader: Let us go out into the world in peace!
Children: Thanks be to God!

Drop Off and Pick Up Guidelines

by St. Thomas Early Learning Center

Drop off and pick up are the busiest times on campus. Please help ensure that our children are safe and traffic flows smoothly.

PARKING LOT

Please **enter** the main parking lot using Aberdeen Place. You may **exit** the parking lot via Newton Road, Aberdeen Place, or you may exit to George Bush Drive via Newton Road between Hillel and Canterbury.

All parking lot edges and curbs are fire lanes and must be kept clear. Cars must not park, even briefly, in the fire lanes.

CELL PHONE USE

Like all school zones, cell phone use is not allowed while driving in our parking lot.

We strongly believe that your children deserve your full attention as you say goodbye in the morning and greet them at the end of their school day. Therefore, we also ask that you not use your cell phone any time you are on campus, in the classrooms or on the playground.

DROP OFF

Please *park* in a parking spot in the direction of traffic flow to avoid the need to back up when leaving. Walk your child to their designated class gate, where they will be welcomed and escorted to their classroom by a STELC staff member. Please do not leave siblings unattended in your vehicle.

After 8:45 a.m. all children must check in at the STELC office. Please park in the gravel lot nearest the STELC office. A designated STELC staff member will walk your child to their classroom. Please do not leave siblings unattended in your vehicle.

We can accommodate a limited number of children during Early Drop Off beginning at 7:45 a.m. at the STELC Office. Please, contact the office if you will need care for your child in order to get to work.

PICK UP

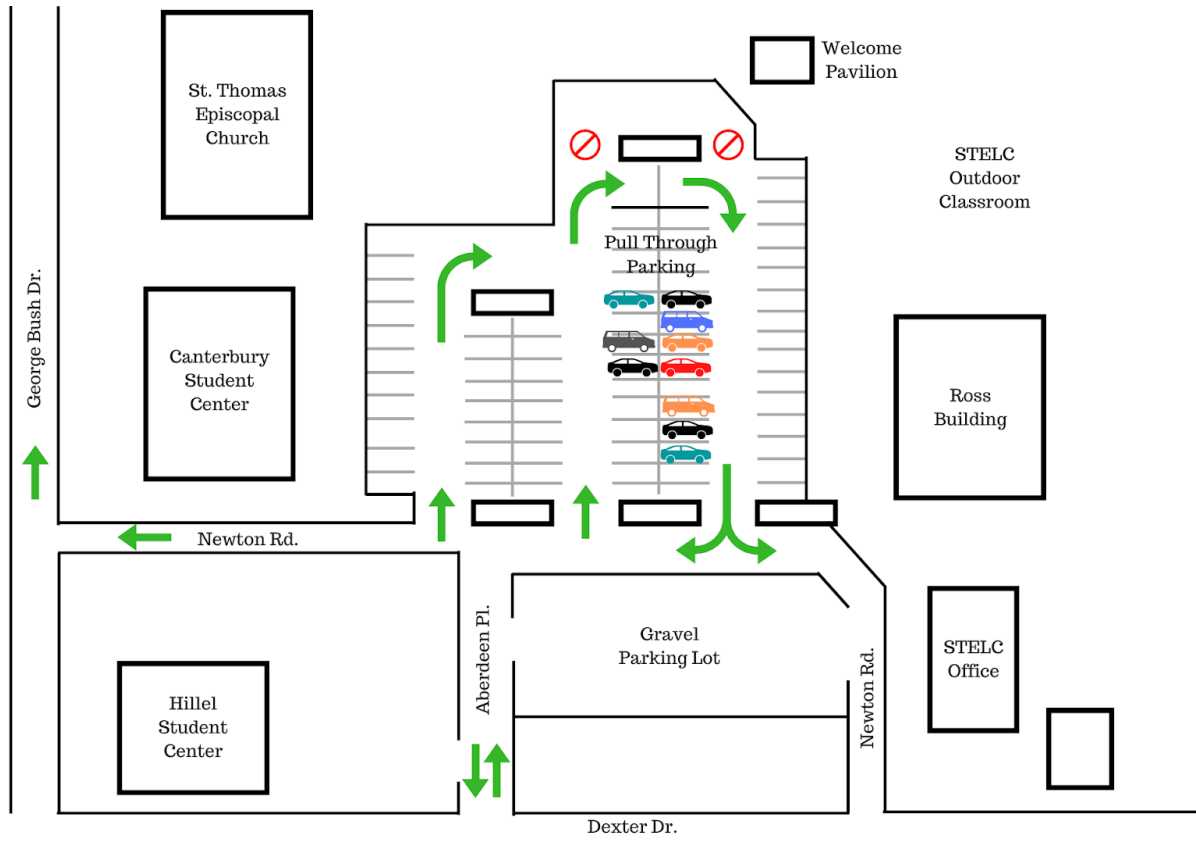
- **3K TTH, 3K MWF, 3K M-F, and 4K TWTH will be picked up at the Oxley Gate.**
- **Kindergarten and Extended Care students will be picked up at the Welcome Pavilion.**
- **4K TH & M-F students will be picked up at The Grove gate.**
- **4K MWF & M-F students will be picked up at The Handprint Meadow gate, between the Ross building and the STELC Office.**

Park in the lot and wait outside the gate until a staff member releases your child to you.

Please confirm with your child's teacher of the pickup gate, as it may change through the school year.

Please be prompt at pick up time. A late fee will be assessed at the third late pick up.

Parking lot traffic flow:



Extended School Closure Protocol

by St. Thomas Early Learning Center

An extended school closing can happen at any time of the year due to a catastrophic event (i.e. severe weather, pandemic, building failure, etc.). STELC may use its own discretion to close the school based on the utmost concern for the children's safety. This decision can be made at the request of the Head of School and/or Rector of St. Thomas Church.

Communication

Notification of school closing will be initiated by a designated school representative using email, phone, Brightwheel, social media, and local media outlets (KBTX, KAGS, KKYS, etc) Notification within 24 hours of an extended school closure event to licensing and accrediting agencies is the responsibility of the Head of School or her designee.

Temporary School Operation

Under current licensing standards, STELC may temporarily relocate for a period of up to 90 days. However, approval is at the discretion of the licensing inspector. To do so, fire, sanitation, and gas pipe pressure test inspections as well as approval by the designated DHHS child care center inspector and accrediting agencies of the temporary location must be obtained before or as soon as possible after the relocation. The staff and administration of the school will make every attempt to secure a safe, temporary location within two weeks of any event which renders school structures unsafe.

If it is determined that the school cannot safely complete the school year and an alternative location cannot be found, any subsequent decisions will be at the discretion of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees with approval by the Vestry of St. Thomas Episcopal Church.

Guidance and Discipline Policy

by St. Thomas Early Learning Center

Professionals who work with young children expect to be met with challenging behavior from time to time. During the first five years of life, children are just beginning to learn how to handle their own intense emotions and conform to the behavioral expectations of society. As parents and teachers know, this is a lengthy process.

At STELC, we define challenging behavior as any behavior that

- Interferes with children’s learning, development and success at play
- Is harmful to the child, other children or adults
- Puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure

It can be direct (e.g. hitting, pushing, biting, kicking) or indirect (e.g. teasing, ignoring rules or instructions, hiding or running away from staff, excluding others, name calling, destroying objects, having temper tantrums).

The STELC staff sees working with children’s challenging behavior as an integral aspect of our job. The word *discipline* has, as its root meaning, “instruction” or “training.” This meaning, rather than punishment, is the foundation for our approach to guiding children’s behavior. We accept that young children will sometimes display their emotions or try to achieve their goals in unproductive or immature ways. That is simply a part of being very young. Much of children’s most valuable learning, especially in a group setting, occurs in the course of behavioral problem solving. This approaches we use vary by age group, but have the following elements in common:

Adults model positive behavior. We show that we can accept, control and express feelings in direct and non-aggressive ways; we let children know that we are not afraid of their intense emotions and will not punish, threaten or withdraw from them.

Teachers design the physical environment to minimize conflict. We provide multiples of toys and materials for groups of children, define classroom and outdoor areas clearly to allow for both active and quiet play and strive to maintain an appropriately calm level of stimulation.

Teachers maintain age-appropriate expectations for children’s behavior. We attempt to minimize unreasonable waiting and transition times, and limit the length of large group and teacher-directed activity times according to children’s developmental levels. We give children large blocks of uninterrupted time during which to make their own activity choices.

Teachers establish simple rules, or expectations, for the classroom community. Children participate in this process early in the school year. When issues arise, adults and children can reference the “Be safe, Be kind, Be respectful” guidelines as reminders about what kinds of behavior facilitate life in a group setting.

Adults closely observe and supervise children’s activities and interactions. With our high ratios of adults to children and our emphasis on attentive observation, we can often intervene to guide children before situations escalate.

Adults help children verbalize their feelings, frustrations and concerns. The staff will help children describe problems, generate possible solutions, and think through logical consequences of their actions. The adult role is to be a helper in positive problem solving. We want children to value cooperation and teamwork. We help them to learn peaceful, productive approaches to interacting.

Children whose behavior endangers others will be temporarily supervised away from other children. This is not the same as the practice of using a “time-out” for a child. An adult will help the child move away from a group situation. the child will then process the problem verbally with the staff member and any other concerned parties. An adult will stay close to any child who is emotionally out of control and needs private time to regain composure.

Discipline, i.e., guidance, will always be positive, productive, and immediate when behavior is inappropriate. No child will be humiliated, shamed, frightened, coerced or subjected to physical punishment or verbal or physical abuse by any staff member, student, or volunteer working at STELC. Every member of the STELC professional staff understands and follows our disciplinary approach as well as the standards on guidance and management in our state licensing regulations.

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.

Nick's Meadow Guidelines

by St. Thomas Early Learning Center

The following guidelines ensure the safety of all St. Thomas Church and Early Learning Center children and families and apply to ALL children whenever they are in Nick's Meadow. Children must be supervised by an adult at all times. Access to Nick's Meadow is available during school hours only.

Before allowing children into Nick's Meadow:

- Do a quick check to make sure the area is safe.
- Fill the Rock Tub with about 3 to 4" of water.

While you are monitoring children in Nick's Meadow:

- Please allow only 4 children per adult present.
- Fishing buckets and nets, sketch pads and pencils, chalk and chalk boards can be found in the shed.
- Remind children to walk over the bridge. (Positive language for no jumping across the stream.)
- Flowers are for eyes only.
- Rocks and pebbles can be tossed into the Rock Tub but not the pond. It damages the liner.
- If a child gets wet (and it happens), coordinate a dry change of clothes with their classroom teacher.

As a Meadow Monitor, please remember:

- No cell phone use or texting while responsible for children.
- Do not leave the children in the meadow for any reason. If you need to leave, tell the children it is time to close the meadow.
- If you feel a child is not being safe, you may ask them to leave.
- It is always helpful to skim leaves out of the water or pull weeds while in Nick's Meadow. The children love to help with that as well.
- Please empty the Rock Tub and lock the gate when you leave.

Playground Guidelines

by St. Thomas Early Learning Center

The following guidelines ensure the safety of all St. Thomas Church and Early Learning Center children and families and apply to ALL children whenever they are on the playground be it during school hours, after school hours, or while at church. Children must be supervised by an adult at all times when using the playground.

The playground is available for use outside of STELC classroom play times. If a class is present on the playground, please wait in The Grove or under the Gathering Tree.

Children must be supervised at all times. During school hours, this is the responsibility of STELC staff for children under their care. After school hours, it is the responsibility of caregivers.

Nick's Meadow and the areas behind the Ross, Oxley and Woodcock classroom buildings are open only when STELC personnel are present.

Shoes are to be worn on the playground. Closed toe shoes are best.

Once STELC staff have put away big blocks, sand box toys, bikes, and wagons, they are not to be used even if the storage sheds are unlocked.

Children must sit on their bottoms when using the swings.

Play inside the large wooden fort. Please do not climb on top of it.

Monkey bars are for swinging. Please do not allow children to sit on top of the rungs. Water play is allowed only under the supervision of STELC staff.

Please make sure gates are closed and latched at all times.

Please be present and on the playground with your children. Please don't remain at the picnic tables in The Grove (outside the fence) if your child is on the playground. It's a large space.

Refrain from cell phone use so that your attention remains on your children. When you leave, please make sure all trash is in the trashcan and gates are latched.

STELC and St. Thomas Episcopal Church are not responsible for injuries that may occur outside of school hours and staff supervision.

Records Retention Policy

by St. Thomas Early Learning Center

Admissions Records

Any records obtained during the admissions process for a child who does not matriculate to the school will be retained for one year, after which all such records will be destroyed. Records of students who do enroll at St. Thomas Early Learning Center will become part of the permanent student file in the office.

Enrolled Student Records

When a student leaves St. Thomas Early Learning Center, the cumulative academic records will be retained in an inactive file. Evaluations and records of academic performance are forwarded only upon written request of a parent/guardian. After two years, former student records are destroyed.

Financial Records

Financial records of accounts payable and receivable, as well as bank and investment statements, along with official audits or financial reviews, will be retained for ten years, at which time such records shall be destroyed.

Legal Records

Legal records or documents employees shall be a part of the permanent employment file. Legal records involving the school as a names party in legal proceedings shall be preserved for at least ten years after the disposition of said proceedings.

Permanent Repository

Should St. Thomas Early Learning Center ever cease to exist, St. Thomas Early Learning Center, under the direction of the Dean, Wardens, and Vestry, shall serve as the repository for any records which need to be retained for a specified time or in perpetuity.

Toilet Training Policy

by St. Thomas Early Learning Center

Children enrolled at STELC are expected to be able to use the toilet confidently and independently. Children must be wearing underwear. Children have full access and can go to the bathroom whenever they need to. In addition, there are regular toilet reminders at most transition times.

Why do children have to be toilet trained before they begin STELC?

- There are strict standards for changing and disposing of wet and soiled diapers/pull ups and our classrooms are not equipped for this.
- When an adult is busy changing a child's soiled clothing, it removes one adult from the direct supervision and interaction with the rest of the class, taking away learning time from all students.

A toilet trained child is a child who can do the following:

- Recognize and be able to tell a teacher in words that they need to use the toilet before they must go
- Hold their toilet need until they can get to the bathroom from a classroom or the playground or while waiting for other children to finish using the toilet
- Get on and off the toilet independently
- Pull down/up their clothes to use the toilet and independently put them back on
- Wipe themselves after using the toilet
- Flush the toilet
- Wash and dry their hands
- Wake up during nap time should they need to use the bathroom
- Be accident-free in regular underwear (not training pants, disposable diapers, or pull-ups) for a two-week daytime period.

Please be aware that a child's toilet use in a classroom setting may not be the same as it is at home. There are a lot of distractions with friends, toys, and fun activities such that a less confident toilet trained child may struggle to maintain dryness and cleanliness. We encourage families to foster the skills needed to toilet at home and in public. **Have your child practice dressing and undressing by themselves, getting on and off the toilet, and teach them how to wipe and wash hands.**

We do understand that even toilet trained children will occasionally have accidents. Accidents, by definition, are unusual incidents and should happen infrequently. If this happens, teachers will help a child change into dry clothes, mostly encouraging them to change independently. Depending on the type of accident or if a child has more than one accident in a day, a parent might be called to pick up the child. Children have accidents for a variety of reasons, but if they are independent, it's manageable.

We are aware that even a child who is fully toilet trained might have a setback when in a new environment and generally allow 2 to 3 weeks from the first full day of school for your child to learn to toilet in the classroom environment. If accidents occur during this time frame, the teacher and parent will dialogue to determine next steps. A child will not be considered toilet trained in our program if the child consistently has toileting accidents beyond this time frame.

After this 2-to-3-week time frame, the following policies are in place for those children who have accidents:

- If it can be determined when regular accidents occur (ex. just after snack or lunch), then we will ask the child to be picked up just prior to that time.
- If urine accidents are isolated to rest time and a child otherwise independent, then we will ask the child to rest in pull ups. This is the one exception to wearing underwear.
- If accidents occur frequently (daily for TTh children; 3 or more per week for MWF: TWTh or M-F children for a 2-week period) parents will be notified with the understanding that the child will have to stay at home at least one week or until they are completely toilet trained.
- If multiple accidents occur in one day, parents will be notified on that day, and if multiple accidents persist beyond day three, the child will have to stay home at least one week or until they are completely toilet trained.

This policy is not in place to shame a child or inconvenience a child's primary caregivers. Rather, there are strict and timely protocols for cleaning after accidents. Our classrooms are not set up for this. In addition, responding to accidents takes a teacher away from spending time monitoring and interacting with all students. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.