

WESLEY GROVE PRE-K

Founded by Meredith Connar
September 1977

Parent Handbook

2024-2025 School Year

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Section 1 – Welcome

1.1 HISTORY

“Founded by Meredith Connar” appears under our title on the Handbook cover. The establishment of Wesley Grove Pre-K is the result of the dedication of one person who only and always had the best interest of children in mind --- Meredith Connar.

Meredith (Mari) is married to Dr. Thomas N. Connar, a Baltimore-Washington Conference United Methodist minister. While Mari and Pastor Tom were at Wesley Grove from 1976 to 1980, Mari realized that there was a need in our area for a pre-school, which would serve as an outreach program from the church to the community. The trustees and administrative council of the Church voted to allow her to begin the Maryland State Department of Education licensing process. As evidenced by the multitude of Mari’s letters and applications, it was no easy task!! The Wesley Grove Pre-K opened its doors in September 1977 with 14 children in the 4-year-old class, and 12 children in the 3-year-old class, two teachers, two aides, and the Director, Mari Connar. As the Director, she donated her salary for the purchase of supplies and equipment. The school continues to support the community, with a capacity to accommodate 120 pre-k students.

Mari earned her B.S. Degree in Early Childhood Education from Towson University and her M.A. Degree in Education from Hood College. After leaving Wesley Grove, she was employed by the Frederick County Public Schools for 25 years. She taught kindergarten for four years and spent the remainder of her career teaching gifted children in that county’s Elementary Gifted and Talented Program. As a Magnet Teacher, she taught first and third grades. In addition, as Team Leader at Urbana Elementary School (a magnet school site), Mari served as a mentor teacher and wrote curriculum.

Mari and Pastor Tom have both recently retired and live in Bridgeville, Delaware. Both are very involved in community and church activities while pursuing their love of travel, reading, writing, golf (Mari) and tennis (Tom).

We at Wesley Grove want Mari to know just how much she has done for this church, the community, and most of all, the children.

Thank you, Mari!

1.2 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Wesley Grove Pre-K welcomes you and your child to our Early Childhood Education Program. Our goal is to support the developmental needs of 2-, 3-, and 4-year-old children in a Christian atmosphere. In these early years, your child will begin an educational process which establishes a foundation for learning and a future for success in academics and in faith. Our goal is to instill in each child a true love for learning.

1.3 MISSION

Wesley Grove Pre-K is a community ministry of The Gathering Faith Community, formerly known as Wesley Grove United Methodist Church. Our purpose is to provide a secure, loving Christian environment for ages two through pre-kindergarten age.

Our curriculum helps develop important social and academic skills. Every school day includes both structured and unstructured time under the guidance of qualified teachers and assistants. Each Wesley Grove Pre-k classroom presents age-appropriate materials and activities to stimulate the natural curiosity in each child, encourage positive social interaction and develop a life-long love for learning.

1.4 LICENSING

Wesley Grove Pre-K is fully licensed and regulated by the Maryland State Department of Education's Office of Child Care (OCC) under COMAR 13A 16 ("Licensed Child Care Centers"). Every year a licensing specialist from the County will conduct an unannounced inspection during school hours. An announced inspection will occur every two years.

Section 2 – REGISTRATION AND ENROLLMENT

2.1 Registration

Registration is held each March with church members, returning students and siblings having priority. Registration is complete when the registration forms (listed below) are completed, signed and the registration fee and one month's tuition have been submitted. Registration fees and the initial tuition payment are non-refundable.

The number of classes and the class assignments are determined based on the number of children registered. If there is a waiting list after Open Registration, first consideration is given to church members, returning students, and siblings of current students. Vacancies which occur during the school year will be filled on a wait list basis.

2.2 REGISTRATION CHECKLIST

- A copy of your child's birth certificate
- Registration form (Parent portion completed)
- Signed Handbook Agreement Form
- Photo/Video Release Form
- Information Sheet (both sides completed)
- Emergency Form (both sides completed)
- Health Inventory Form
- Lead Test Form
- Immunization Record
- Registration fee and one month's tuition

2.3 ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

Children in the 3- and 4-year-old classes **MUST BE COMPLETELY POTTY-TRAINED** before they enter Wesley Grove Pre-K. Children in the 2-year-old classes do not have to be potty-trained. However, we appreciate efforts by parents to encourage potty training at home, and we do the same at school.

- Children in the 2-year-old class must be 2 by September 1 of the school year.
- Children in the 3-year-old class must be 3 by September 1 of the school year.
- Children in the 4-year-old class must be 4 by September 1 of the school year.

2.4 DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

All children attending Wesley Grove Pre-k will be required by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to go through a developmental screening process. Wesley Grove Pre-k uses the screening tool called Ages and Stages Questionnaire Third Edition (ASQ-3), which is approved by MSDE. Children aged birth through 36 months will be required to have two screenings per year. Children 37 months through kindergarten entry will be required to have one screening per year. The ASQ-3 will be given to parents/guardians before the beginning of the school year to complete with their child. This will be returned to the teacher and results will be shared with the parents.

2.5 HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

A completed Healthy Inventory Form and Immunization Certificate is required **BEFORE** the first day of class. This is a state requirement. The medical examination used to complete the form is to take place no sooner than twelve months prior to school's opening.

Section 3 – SCHOOL SCHEDULE

3.1 CALENDAR

School begins the day after Labor Day in September and ends on the last week prior to Memorial Day, unless otherwise noted. In most cases, Wesley Grove Pre-K follows the same calendar as the Anne Arundel County Public School System. At times we will make exceptions such as teacher workdays, religious holidays, and the last day of school. You will receive a tentative calendar for the Wesley Grove Pre-K school year in September. Every month we will send home a class activity calendar and post it on the Parents' Bulletin Board located in the Fellowship Hall. Please check your child's individual class calendar each month.

3.2 HOURS

All 2-, 3-, and 4-year-old morning classes will be from 9am to 12:00pm. All extended day classes will be from 9am to 2:00pm.

3.3 ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Children will line up in the Fellowship Hall according to their assigned classroom teachers. **Parents will sign-in their children before the teachers and assistants escort them to their classrooms and sign them out when teachers and assistants return them to the parent(s) or designated pick-up person in the Fellowship Hall at the end of class.** Children may also be dismissed from the playground (weather permitting). Doors are unlocked 5 minutes before class begins and locked 15 minutes after class begins.

3.4 SCHOOL CLOSINGS and PROCEDURES FOR INCLEMENT WEATHER

We follow Anne Arundel County for closings and/or delays. If Anne Arundel County schools are closed, we will be closed. If Anne Arundel County schools are delayed one (1) or two (2) hours, then we will NOT have morning classes.

If we are in school and Anne Arundel County has a one (1) or two (2) hour early dismissal, then we will dismiss at 12:00pm.

Tuition is not subject to reduction or refund due to delays or closings. We also do not make up classes due to delays or closings.

Section 4 – FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

4.1 REGISTRATION FEE

The registration fee is **\$100** per year, per child and/or family for administrative purposes and is not refunded for any reason.

4.2 TUITION: Nine (9) monthly payments

Age and Class Days	Class Time	Monthly Tuition
2-Year-Olds		
Tuesday and Thursday	9:00-12:00	\$350.00
3-Year-Olds		
Tuesday and Thursday	9:00-12:00	\$335.00
Monday, Wednesday, Friday	9:00-12:00	\$385.00
Monday, Wednesday, Friday	9:00- 2:00	\$425.00
4-Year-Olds		
Monday, Wednesday, Friday	9:00-12:00	\$400.00
Monday, Wednesday, Friday	9:00- 2:00	\$470.00
Monday through Friday	9:00-12:00	\$510.00
Monday through Friday	9:00- 2:00	\$600.00

Class times are subject to change by approximately 15 minutes. In case of a time change, you will be notified as soon as possible.

Families who are members of The Gathering Faith Community receive a **10% discount** on monthly tuition. Families who choose to pay their tuition in full will receive a **5% discount**.

Parents enrolling two siblings in the same school year receive a **15% discount** on the sibling with the lowest monthly tuition.

The tuition covers some materials, supplies and some snacks.

There are 9 monthly tuition payments. The first one is due at registration, which is applied to the last month of school. The second is due September 1, the third is due October 1, etc. The final payment is due April 1, for a total of nine payments. **Wesley Grove Pre-Kindergarten reserves the right to request withdrawal of any child whose tuition is 30 days in arrears.** If you are in arrears of 30 days or more, you must make arrangements with the treasurer or director to bring your account up to date. Your child will not be able to participate in graduation ceremonies or year-end picnics if you have a balance on your account at the end of the school year.

For your convenience, we accept online credit card payments (including Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover, JCB and Diners card) for both student registration and monthly/annual tuition fees. **All online payments are subject to a surcharge of 2.9% + \$.30 for each transaction.** Through the website, you can receive the appropriate discounts for multiple students, annual payments, and The

Gathering Faith Community membership. We also incorporated the new standard in online payments via the Stripe payment gateway. Rest assured, while we accept your payments directly on our website, your credit card data is kept secure within the Stripe host for your protection. You may also make all payments by check **payable to Wesley Grove Pre-K** or by cash or money orders. Include your child's name in the memo area of the check.

Please note that cash/check or money order tuition payments should **not** be sent in your child's book bag or handed to teachers or assistants. You may put your tuition payment (**no cash**) in the tuition box located in the room upstairs next to the front door at the school, or you can mail payments directly to the school. Checks are normally deposited on the 12th or 13th of every month unless the payment was received late. Then, checks are deposited at the end of the month. You may mail payments to:

Wesley Grove Pre-K
Attn: Treasurer
1320 Dorsey Road
Hanover, MD 21076-1453

If necessary, cash tuition payments may be handed to the Director or the Treasurer, but teachers and assistants are **not** authorized to accept payments. Please do not put them in the tuition box.

4.3 LATE FEES AND RETURNED CHECKS

A late fee of \$10 is charged if tuition is not received by the 10th day of the month. The treasurer removes all payments from the tuition box at the end of the day on the 10th of each month. Any check received after that will be considered late. There is a returned check fee of \$25.

4.4 LATE PICK-UPS

After the 2nd late pick-up, a \$25.00 late pick-up fee is charged for the initial 15 minutes. \$1.00 per minute late will be added for each additional minute beyond the initial 15 minutes late.

4.5 TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

The initial tuition payment and registration fee are non-refundable.

If it is necessary to withdraw your child from our program, a two-week notification is required. **If there is no notification of withdrawal, you will be responsible for**

the entire month's tuition. Tuition for unattended months of school (payments 2 through 9) will be refunded if you are transferred or moving, but notification must be given to the Director.

The exception to the above-stated reimbursement policy is in the case of a documented job transfer/military assignment.

Tuition is not refunded for illnesses, temporary absences or school days missed due to inclement weather.

4.6 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Gathering Faith Community Men's Group sponsors a Sweetheart Breakfast every February to raise scholarship funds for the Pre-K. The proceeds of that fundraiser support the Jen Wurtzer Scholarship Fund which benefits families who need tuition assistance. An application requesting tuition assistance should be submitted to the Director at registration.

4.7 PAYMENT FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

When sending money to school with your child for field trips, class pictures, etc., please put the correct amount (cash if requested) into an envelope identified with the child's name. (Checks are not always accepted.) Your child's teacher or assistant checks backpacks daily.

Section 5 – HEALTH AND SAFETY

5.1 ABSENCES AND ILLNESSES

Children with colds, fever, or signs of contagious diseases are expected to remain at home. If they are generally not feeling well, please consider keeping them at home. The health department requires children to be fever free for 24 hours (without medication) before returning to school. PLEASE be considerate of the other children in our program. Also, please advise us if your child is exposed to a contagious disease, in the event other parents need to be informed. If your child is absent, please notify your child's teacher - we are concerned about your child and so are his/her classmates. If during school hours a child develops a temperature, vomits or is complaining of not feeling well, we will notify the parent or designated pick-up person to have the child picked up.

5.2 MEDICATIONS

Because we only have your child for two- and one-half hours to three hours, it is our policy not to distribute medications to children unless there is a life threatening or medically necessary situation (ex: Epi-pens for food/other allergies, inhalers, etc.). Prior written permission from the child's treating physician is required when medication is brought/left at the school. The required medication form may be obtained from the director. Please make sure medication has not expired.

5.3 EMERGENCY FORMS

Each child will have an emergency form on file. These cards are used to contact a parent or guardian in the event of an emergency and allows us to release your child to those contacts listed on the card. Therefore, it is important to keep the information current. Please inform the school immediately of any change in address or telephone number(s).

5.4 SNACKS/LUNCH

A snack and drink of water are served daily. Parents are asked to bring a snack for their child's class at least once a month. A monthly schedule for snacks is posted prior to the beginning of the month. Snack sign-up sheets are posted on the Parent's bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall.

Students in extended day classes are required to bring a lunch including a drink from home. Please do not send in items that need to be reheated or that a child could easily choke on. Lunch time will begin shortly after 12:00.

5.5 ALLERGIES

It is vitally important that the school be informed of any child with a food or other allergy. A list of children with allergies will be posted in the classroom. If any classroom has a child with food allergies the teachers will check the list of ingredients of any food brought into the classroom to determine if it is safe for the child with the allergy. If it is not safe or if there is any doubt, the child will be given an alternative snack provided by either the school or the parents. The family will also receive a copy of the snack calendar each month to help monitor the snacks.

5.6 CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The Gathering Faith Community and the Pre-k are committed to the safety, welfare, and protection of all our children. Our staff undergoes thorough background investigations as a condition of employment. In addition, we are obligated by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services.

5.7 EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

We all hope that we will never have to face a serious emergency, especially when caring for children. However, emergencies do happen. To prepare for emergencies and to safeguard our students, an Emergency Preparedness Plan has been formulated. The staff is trained in emergency preparedness, medication administration, as well as CPR and First Aid. In addition, the school is inspected yearly by the Fire Marshall and emergency evacuation drills take place monthly.

5.8 SMOKE FREE

Wesley Grove Pre-k is a smoke-free environment.

5.9 ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT

In October 1986, the U.S. Congress enacted the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA). Under this law, comprehensive regulations were developed to address asbestos problems in public and private elementary and secondary schools.

These regulations require most schools to inspect for friable and non-friable asbestos, develop asbestos management plans that address asbestos hazards in school buildings and implement response actions in a timely manner.

These regulations assign schools many new responsibilities. Our program for fulfilling these responsibilities is outlined in our asbestos management plan. This plan contains information on our inspections, re-inspections, response actions and post-response activities, including periodic surveillance activities that are planned or are in progress.

Section 6 – STAFF

6.1 SELECTION AND MEMBERS

The staff at Wesley Grove Pre-k consists of:

- Director
- Lead Teachers
- Assistant Teachers
- Substitutes

The Director and Preschool committee select the staff of Wesley Grove Pre-k. The Director and classroom staff are evaluated on a yearly basis. Our teachers are degreed professionals. They are chosen for their kind-heartedness and enthusiasm and provide a positive experience for each child. All staff members are required to attend classes throughout the year to stay current on new concepts and techniques in pre-kindergarten education through relevant pre-school literature, academic courses, seminars and workshops. In addition, all teachers and assistants are certified in both Adult and Pediatric CPR/AED and basic First Aid.

Our teachers bring their own individual teaching skills and styles to the classroom environment. Therefore, you may see different activities occurring in each classroom.

Each teacher has an assistant to maintain a ratio above and beyond what is required of our licensing agent. The established adult to child ratio allows substantial opportunity for individual instruction. Assistants are chosen based on prior preschool or elementary school experience and their ability to work with children and staff.

Wesley Grove Pre-K can accommodate 120 children, with classes divided amongst 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds. Maximum class size is dictated by licensing regulations.

6.2 RATIOS

The ratio for the 2-year-old class is 1:6.

The ratio for the 3-year-old class is 1:7.

The ratio for the 4-year-old class is 1:9.

Section 7 – EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

7.1 CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Wesley Grove Pre-K is a self-supporting, non-profit outreach program of The Gathering Faith Community. Sponsored by the Church, the Christian message is incorporated into our daily activities. Students participate in Chapel Time with the Pastor once-a-month; prayers are said at snack time; our classes for 4-year-olds re-enact the Nativity at Christmas; we sing songs which praise God and at times we will ask for your child's participation in church activities. Of course, we do welcome children of all faiths.

The Wesley Grove Pre-K does celebrate holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, St. Valentine's Day, Halloween, and St. Patrick's Day. We incorporate activities related to these holidays into our daily activities.

7.2 CURRICULUM

We use the MSDE approved Little Treasures Curriculum with our four-year-olds. It is designed to prepare them for the academic and social demands of kindergarten. The curriculum for our 2- and 3- year-olds is broad and varied to provide for the expanding needs of young children but is also highly individualized. Our program stresses first-hand, concrete experiences in which the child can formulate and acquire understanding in various content areas. Learning experiences focus on basic concepts -- letters, shapes, colors, numbers, hand coordination, effective

listening, left-to-right progression, and visual discrimination. Specific activities will encourage progress in language development, social-emotional development, and large and fine motor skills.

A child learns through play. Through examination and exploration of their child-centered environment, the young child establishes the foundation for future attitudes, habits, and methods of skill-building. In well-planned group experiences, children at Wesley Grove Pre-Kindergarten will learn to:

- Share
- Take turns.
- Be sensitive to the needs of others.
- Listen and follow directions.

We focus on each child as an individual. With this in mind, we have developed a flexible learning environment, which seeks to strengthen physical, cognitive, and social skills within each child. Through loving and accepting relationships, the young child will develop initiative and imagination, as well as feelings of self-confidence and security.

7.3 DAILY SCHEDULE

Arrival

Large group Table Activity

Circle Time - calendar, weather, Pledge to the flag, story time, etc.

Small group and individual instruction/Centers

Clean Up

Snack Time

Outdoor Play (weather permitting)

Dismissal (Morning Classes)

Large motor activity

Lunch Bunch

Circle Time

Fine motor activity/Learning stations

Clean Up

Outdoor Play (weather permitting)

Dismissal (Extended Classes)

Sometimes indoor classroom activities fill our day, and we are unable to go outdoors for play.

The classrooms of Wesley Grove Pre-K invite exploration by the child. The rooms are colorful and have rugs for physical and emotional warmth. We have a multitude

of educational materials and equipment for use by the children. Each room has various centers: blocks, books, housekeeping, music, science and discovery, crafts, etc.

Children also benefit from time spent outdoors, free from structural confines. We have an enclosed playground in a lovely tree-shaded area, offering opportunities for climbing, jumping, running, swinging, sand play, etc.

7.4 FIELD TRIPS AND SPECIAL PROGRAMS

At Wesley Grove Pre-k we believe that it is important that children have concrete experiences to enhance classroom learning. Therefore, we will periodically go on field trips and ask others to come into our school to share their knowledge. Parents/guardians are required to transport and accompany their child (ren) on all field trips. At times, siblings are welcome to attend. You will be notified whether they are allowed to come.

Parents with special talents, skills, hobbies, etc. are encouraged to share them with us at any time. In addition, we ask parents to share their careers and family culture with us throughout the school year.

7.5 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

We encourage parents to actively participate in the life of Wesley Grove Pre-K and The Gathering Faith Community. Parents are welcome to visit their child's class. We ask that you give them at least 2 weeks to a month before volunteering in the classroom. It gives them a chance to adapt to their new environment without a parent/guardian. If you would like to spend time in the classroom, please contact your child's teacher in advance to make arrangements for a mutually convenient day. Sometimes classroom activities require additional help, and we welcome volunteers. Sign-up sheets for parties are posted on the Parents' Bulletin Board in the Fellowship Hall.

Please notify your child's teacher of any changes in family routine, such as death, separation, divorce, hospitalization of family member, parent on extended business trip, possible move, or other situations which might impact your child. This information is extremely helpful to your child's teacher. Sensitive information will, of course, be held in strictest confidence.

7.6 TEACHER-PARENT-CHILD ORIENTATION

Teachers will contact their student's family prior to the beginning of the school year to schedule a mandatory teacher-parent-child conference and orientation toward the end of August. You and your child will have the opportunity to meet your child's teacher and assistant at that time.

7.7 PARENT-SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

We strive to develop good communication between home and school. New ideas and constructive criticism are welcomed and valued. The Director is always available in person, by email or by phone to discuss any issues or concerns you may have about our school.

We have a Parent bulletin board located in the large Fellowship Hall next to the activity and snack calendars. It contains any relevant information about the school and church as well as outside opportunities for families to participate.

We schedule Parent-Teacher conferences in November. You may request a parent-teacher conference at any time during the school year to discuss your child's progress. This would be based on a time agreed upon by you and your child's teacher.

7.8 DISCIPLINE

At Wesley Grove Pre-k, we believe that good discipline is crucial to a good learning atmosphere. We do insist on certain standards of behavior for all children: sharing, following directions from teachers, class cooperation and respect for self, others, and property. Children are encouraged to use their words to work on conflict resolution. They are told what to do rather than what not to do. We attempt to distract from negative behavior and direct children to positive behavior. Physical discipline methods are NEVER used. When a child is uncooperative, they are asked to sit with the teacher for an appropriate amount of time, based on the age of the child. If the child's inappropriate behavior continues, parents are informed and asked to address the situation. If the behavior remains consistently inappropriate or disruptive, the parents may be asked to remove their child from the program.

Section 8 – ATTIRE

8.1 CLOTHING/FOOTWEAR/OUTERWEAR

Parents should dress their children in comfortable, washable clothing. Shoes should be rubber-soled, to facilitate jumping, climbing, running, etc. during playtime. Crocs, sandals, and flip flops are not permitted. These types of shoes can often get caught in play equipment.

Please have your child bring outside wear, (including hats, gloves/mittens during cold weather) that is appropriate to the weather. We will go outside when weather permits.

8.2 CHANGE OF CLOTHES

Accidents happen so we ask that you bring a change of clothes (pants, shirt, socks and underwear) for your child in a gallon size Ziploc bag labeled with their name. Children in the 2-year-old classes **must** have two diapers or pull-up changes, sanitary wipes and a change of clothing inside their backpack every day.

A backpack is required for all children - crafts, letters, or other important items are sent home daily. **Please check your child's backpack and remove all items daily.**

Section 9- UMC MEMBERSHIP

While you do not have to be a member of The Gathering Faith Community to attend Wesley Grove Pre-K, membership does have its advantages. Members have priority at registration and also receive a 10% discount on all tuition. Please join us on Sundays for worship and fellowship.