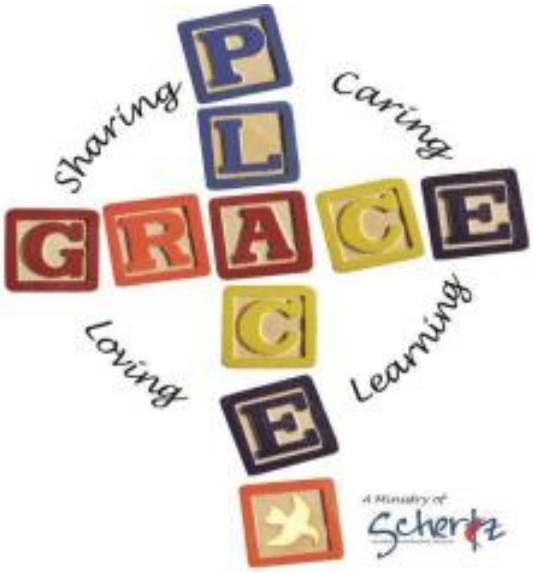
Schertz United Methodist Church
Grace Place Learning Center
Parent Handbook



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Grace Place Learning Center (GPLC) is a ministry of Schertz United Methodist Church (SUMC). The program operates under Texas Administrative Code 745.117(3) and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

(Updated Feb 2026)

We believe that every child is a child of God and a unique individual. The purpose of SUMC GPLC is to provide a Christian environment with a variety of developmentally appropriate opportunities for children to grow physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. We strive to help each child develop a strong sense of self and his/her place in God's world.

Program Vision Statement

The Schertz United Methodist Church-Grace Place Learning Center program provides all children with a safe, loving, and nurturing environment that promotes:

- Godliness,
- Self-worth,
- Creativity,
- Respect,
- Individuality, and
- Enriched learning

Program Goals

- Help children to know they are special and loved by God
- Nurture children in all areas of development in a Christian atmosphere
- Provide a happy, safe, and secure place
- Provide the enrichment and guidance that young children need
- Introduce the community to Schertz United Methodist Church and its various ministries available to families and individuals.

Program Educational Components

Grace Place Learning Center provides a nurturing, safe environment which allows children to grow spiritually, academically, and socially. Through our Christian-based curriculum, children experience age appropriate lessons that include (but aren't limited to):

- Bible Stories/Character Traits/Chapel Time
- Pre-Reading skills
- Vocabulary development
- Early Math concepts
- Gross Motor activities (Indoor and outdoor)

- Fine Motor activities
- Arts and Crafts
- Social development through both structured and free play, sharing and cooperation with others
- Instruction in large and small group settings
- Child-directed centers in the classroom

Program Policies and Procedures

Governing Board

SUMC GPLC is an outreach ministry of SUMC, overseen by the SUMC Leadership Board and the Grace Place Learning Center Board, both of which review policy, functions, and finances annually or as needed. You will be notified by letter or posted notice of any policy changes. Policies and standards are maintained in the office and are available for review at your request. The GPLC Director, GPLC Board, or the Schertz UMC Pastor may be contacted if problems or questions arise.

Staff

Our GPLC staff members are trained in early childhood care and participate in various childcare education classes. The GPLC staff maintains CPR and First Aid certification. Classroom staff/child ratios meet requirements of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Background checks are conducted before GPLC staff members are employed, including substitutes.

Parental Involvement

We believe that GPLC staff and parents are a team in helping each child develop his/her potential. Parents are encouraged to visit the classrooms and participate in activities. You are invited to attend and help with parties during the year. We welcome your comments and suggestions for improving our program.

Holiday Closings

Grace Place is closed on the following days:

- Sept 7 - Labor Day
- Oct 12 - Columbus Day
- Nov 11 - Veteran's Day
- Nov 26-27 - Thanksgiving
- Dec 24-25 - Christmas
- Dec 31 - Close at noon New Year's Eve
- Jan 1 - New Year's Day
- Jan 18 - MLK
- Feb 15 - President's Day
- March 26 - Good Friday
- May 31 - Memorial Day
- July 2nd - Independence Day
- July 29 & 30 - Teacher Prep days

Hours of Operation

• **Grace Place is open Monday through Friday, except designated holidays, 6:30 a.m.- 6:00 p.m.**

• **Drop-off time is 6:30 a.m. -9:30 a.m.** Later drop-off times disrupt classroom schedules such as circle time, learning activities, and chapel. **Drop off after 9:30 a.m. will not be permitted without a doctor's note.**

• We do understand appointments may cause later drop-off times so please provide the office with 24hr notice and/or a doctor's note if your child will arrive later than 9:30 a.m. This ensures proper staffing ratios at all times.

• If your child will be absent, please contact the director by phone or email.

• Grace Place closes at 6:00 P.M. If children are not picked up by 6:00 p.m. a $15.00 late fee will be charged to your account. After 6:15 p.m. an additional $1.00 per minute will be charged.

Fees and Charges

Registration

- Registration fees and paperwork are due at the time of registration and are non refundable.

Tuition

- Tuition is due **prior** to services on the first day of your child's enrollment.
- Tuition must be made through Procare.
- Payments are processed through Procare using one of two accepted methods. ACH payments are accepted at no additional cost. Credit card payments are subject to a transaction fee of 3%. This fee may vary depending on the card issuer's policies.
- Tuition will be accepted as one monthly payment due on the 1st of every month, or as two payments due on the 1st and the 15th of the month.
- If tuition is not paid in full by the 20th day of the month, a late payment fee of $50.00 will be assessed for **each enrolled child**.
- If tuition, including all accrued fees, for the previous month are not paid in full by the 5th day of the current month, the child will be temporarily suspended from attendance until the account is brought current.
- **There will be no adjustments of monthly tuition due to holidays, student absence, illness, or for closings due to emergency situations or inclement weather.**

If you choose to withdraw your child for any length of time, without paying tuition (non-pay status), your child will be placed back on our waiting list and will not be guaranteed a spot if they return to Grace Place. You will also have to pay a new registration fee. If you wish to keep your child enrolled, full monthly tuition must be paid to keep your child's spot in the classroom.

<u>Withdraw Procedures</u>

- Grace Place requires a two week notice for withdrawal. Tuition during those two weeks will still be due even if your child does not attend.
- Please notify the Director in writing with the date of withdrawal.

Health and Immunization Policy

Grace Place believes in the importance of immunizations for both our staff and enrolled children. Since the risk of vaccine preventable diseases is increased in group settings, ensuring appropriate immunizations is an essential responsibility in child care. (Minimum Standards 746.613 Technical Assistance)

- Health forms are required to be completed at the time of enrollment showing any allergies, physical handicaps, a statement of general health, and current immunization history. These must be updated and kept current. Immunization records must be current for all children enrolled. If your child is not vaccinated he/she must have a waiver completed before enrollment.
- Hearing and vision screening for possible vision and hearing problems are required by the Special Senses and Communication Disorders Act, Texas Health Safety Code, Chapter 36, for children who are 4-years old.

Security Policy

- Children must be accompanied by an adult to and from class each day. **Parents/Guardians must sign their child in and out daily** as stated in the Texas Minimum Standards for Child Care. **Never leave your children unless s/he is with a Grace Place Learning Center staff member.**
- Adults not readily recognized by GPLC staff will be asked for identification which will be compared with the admission information form on file in the GPLC office.
- Children **WILL** be released **ONLY** to the parent/guardian or designee listed on the admission information form. A picture ID will be required for verification by the GPLC director.
- Designees may be added to the admission information form as the year progresses. Written permission is required on a daily basis for anyone not listed on the admission information form.
- **Children WILL NOT be released to anyone under the age of 18.**

Discipline Management Policy

We encourage the development of self-esteem, self-discipline, and appropriate social behavior with positive discipline management based on the individual

needs and development of each child. Discipline is not a form of punishing a child, but a means to teach self-control and socially appropriate behaviors. We give children the opportunity to develop skills of cooperation and negotiation to solve problems with others. When dangerous or disruptive behavior persists, a brief separation time may be used. If the classroom staff's efforts to redirect behavior are unsuccessful, a conference with the parents may be requested. The classroom staff may also seek the GPLC director's help. Examples of discipline management techniques, including but not limited to:

- Redirection of inappropriate behavior to the appropriate behavior desired using coupling statements. Example: "[Name of child], please stop running. Instead, walk to the table."
- Redirect to another appropriate activity when possible.
- If redirection is unsuccessful, then in-classroom time-out (one-minute times the age of the child) will be used.
- Appropriate behavior will be recognized and praised.
- Recurring incidents of disruptive or inappropriate behavior will result in talking with the GPLC Director outside the classroom.
- Each time a child harms or tries to harm himself/herself or others (hitting, kicking, etc.); the teacher will discuss the incident with the parent and will document the incident in the child's folder. Three such occurrences show consistent inappropriate or disruptive behavior and an "Incident Report" will be completed and given to the GPLC Director, who will review and discuss it with the parent/guardian.

If inappropriate behavior continues, after all avenues have been exhausted the child will be terminated from GPLC.

Biting Policy

Even though biting can be a perfectly normal stage of development during childhood, it is required by the Department of Social Services Child Care Licensing Division that Grace Place Learning Center maintain a safe and healthy environment for all children in care.

Biting occurs for many reasons whether it is teething, lack of language, frustration, attention getting, being overly tired, or simply just trying to get a reaction from someone.

Grace Place Learning Center's policy on biting is as follows:

• If your child bites 2 times on any one day, you will be called to pick up your child after the second bite occurs.

• If skin is broken due to a bite, you will be called immediately to come pick up your child.

• If biting continues and is severe to where it becomes necessary to send the child home frequently or is adding undue stress to the other children, it may become necessary to terminate childcare arrangements.

Discipline Incident Reports

- Harmful behavior (to self, to other children, GPLC staff, and equipment) will be reported to the parent/guardian each time it occurs.
- All incidents will be recorded on an Incident Report Form and given to the GPLC Director for review. The form will then be signed by the GPLC Director and copies will be made for parents to sign.
- After three reports have been documented, the GPLC Director will have a meeting with the parent and the child's teacher to discuss the behavior.
- If a fourth incident occurs, an Incident Report Form will be filled out, signed, and the parent will be required to pick up the child from Grace Place for the day.
- If a fifth incident occurs, the child will be dismissed from Grace Place Learning Center. Tuition will not be refunded.

Clothing

- "Play clothes," or clothes that are practical, comfortable, and suitable for current weather conditions, are recommended. Clothing should be easy to take off and put on. Elastic waists are good! This is especially important for toileting.
- Tennis shoes work best for comfort and most activities. **Please avoid** flip-flops, sandals, and clogs, we have found they contribute to falls.

• Please send an extra set of clothing with each child, including underwear and socks.

• All clothing and personal items (lunch boxes, cups, bottles, diaper bags, pacifiers, etc.) must be labeled with the child's name in permanent ink.

- Misplaced items will be put in the Director's office. Please contact the

GPLC Director if your child has lost an item. Items remaining after 90 days will be donated to a local charity.

Toys

Each classroom is supplied with age-appropriate educational toys and equipment. Therefore, **we do not allow children to bring personal toys to GPLC.**

Promotion of Indoor and Outdoor Physical Activity

- We believe and support the need for physical activity each day. Regular physical activity builds healthy bones and muscles, improves muscular strength and endurance, reduces the risk for developing chronic risk factors, improves self - esteem, and reduces stress and anxiety.
- Physical activity may also have beneficial influences on academic performance. In addition, cognitive skills and motor skills appear to develop through a dynamic interaction.
- **Infants** will be given opportunities for physical activity, including supervised tummy time.
- **Toddlers** will participate in a minimum of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play each day.
- **Preschool children** will participate in a minimum of 90 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play each day.

Grace Place will promote all children's active play each day. Children will have ample opportunity to do moderate to vigorous activities such as running, climbing, dancing, skipping, and jumping to the extent of their abilities.

All children will participate each day in:

- Two occasions of active play outdoors when weather permits.
- Two or more structured or teacher-led activities or games that promote movement over the course of the day.

- Continuous opportunities to develop and practice age appropriate gross motor skills. Physical activity may take place in the classroom or on the playground when weather permits. When participating in physical activity, children's clothing should protect them from the sun exposure and permit easy movement. Footwear should provide support for running and climbing.

Water Activities

During the summer months, children 18 months and older have water play in water tables, sprinklers and/or small wading pools.

Field Trips

We consider field trips as any time a teacher takes their class outside of Grace Place, such as going on a walk around our building or walking up to the church's sanctuary to attend Chapel on Wednesdays. All teacher child ratios are met during these times.

Food and Snacks

Please inform the Grace Place Director of any food allergies when registering your child to ensure a safe environment for all children. **We are not a peanut-free center**. Please send in a reusable water bottle/sippy cup labeled with your child's name to use everyday. We will keep it filled with water throughout the day. **Juice/drink boxes from home will only be served at lunch.**

- A light snack will be provided during the morning/afternoon breaks for children who are 18 months and older.
- Each child needs to bring a packed meal(s).
- Lunch should be nutritious and should not contain candy or sugary snacks.
- Food will not be shared or traded among children
- Please send foods that do not need to be cooked or warmed
- Please use only unbreakable containers for your child's meal(s)
- Birthday refreshments are welcome at GPLC. Please make arrangements with your child's classroom staff at least one week prior to the date you wish to celebrate. **Please bring only**

commercially prepared items, not homemade.

Breastfeeding

GPLC allows Moms to come at any time and breastfeed their child.

Rest Time

- Children will have time to rest during the day. Please provide, and label, an appropriate napping mat and blanket on which your child may rest. **Please do not bring in stuffed animals, baby dolls etc for your child to sleep with, these items cause distractions at naptime.**
- All children who attend full day sessions are required to rest. According to the Texas Minimum Standards for Child Care, all children present at rest time are required to lie quietly for one hour. After one-hour, quiet activities may be provided to those children who are awake. Rest time may not exceed three hours.

Infant Room Blanket Policy

Blankets or soft bedding such as pillows or stuffed animals are prohibited in cribs or swings for infants 12 months or younger. This policy is found in the Texas Child Care Minimum Standards and is in place to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Parent Conferences

Classroom staff will notify you if a special conference time is needed. If you feel you need to have a conference with the classroom staff or the GPLC Director, please feel free to call the office and set up a conference time.

Confidentiality Policy

We wish to respect each child's confidentiality. Please help to maintain this confidentiality by scheduling a conference. Please do not take the classroom staff's attention from the children. Grace Place Staff is not permitted to discuss any information about another child or their family.

Toilet Training

Our GPLC staff is happy to help you in this process. **Until your child has had predictable success in this area at home and at Grace Place, please dress him/her in disposable training pants** (also, send extra clothing labeled with your child's name). We do not want your child to be embarrassed, nor do we want to compromise the sanitary conditions we must maintain.

Children three years and older must be fully trained in order to be placed in the older three and four-year-old classrooms.

Children who are three years old and older who are not fully trained, will not be accepted into the program.

Illness Policy

- Grace Place strives to keep all children and staff healthy and to keep the environment as clean and sanitary as possible.
- **A visual health check will be conducted daily upon each child's arrival by the child's teacher. These checks are conducted to identify potential concerns about a child's health, such as signs or symptoms of illness or injury.**
- **Please Do Not bring your child if there are any signs of illness. Children who exhibit symptoms of an illness (fever, excessive coughing, continuous runny nose, lethargy, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, unexplained rash, etc.) will not be accepted into the classroom.**
- **If a child becomes ill while at Grace Place, a parent/guardian will be notified to pick up the child within 30 minutes.**
- **When a child is sent home due to an illness listed above, the child will not be accepted back into Grace Place until they are symptom free/fever free for 24 hours after being sent home, without the aid of Tylenol, Ibuprofen, etc.** For example, if a child is sent home at 2:30 pm on Monday they may return Wednesday morning if symptom free/fever free. If a child is sent home on a Thursday at 1:00 pm, they may return the following Monday.
- If a child goes to the doctor, please provide a doctor's note stating your child is cleared to come back to Grace Place.

- Please report any contagious diseases such as: chicken pox, RSV, Fifths Disease, Impetigo, Pinkeye, etc, to the GPLC Director as soon as possible so parents of children who may have been exposed may be notified.
- **Head lice**: Children will be sent home if live lice are found in their hair. They may return after two medicated treatments or if they bring a physician's note saying they have been cleared to return.

Medication at Grace Place Learning Center

- Each child must have a medical form listing medications that need to be administered.

- Prescription medication in the original, properly labeled container, provided by the parent, along with a written request, will be administered by the GPLC Director with a witness present. A physician's signature will be required on the written request for any long-term medication to be administered at GPLC.
- Nonprescription medication, in the original, properly labeled container, provided by the parent, along with a written request will be administered by the GPLC Director with a witness present.

Accidents/Emergency Care

- All GPLC staff members are certified in CPR and First Aid administration.
- Parents/guardians must provide current emergency contact information in case they cannot be reached. Please make prior arrangements with the emergency contact person so that the person will not be taken by surprise if they have to be called.
- If a child is injured at GPLC, an injury report will be filled out and sent home with the child. A copy of the report will be kept in the child's file.
- Any accidents/emergencies will be reported to the GPLC director immediately. The GPLC Director will contact the parents/guardians.

- If neither the parents/guardians nor emergency contacts can be reached, the GPLC will determine the child's best needs and contact the child's doctor or call 911.
- In case of a medical or other emergency, 911 will be called. Parents/guardians will be notified after 911 is called and children are moved to a safe area/place as may be needed or required.

Safety Policy

The City Health and Fire officials inspect our facility routinely. However, fire or other events may occur at any time. Children will be removed from the area/premises as needed or required. Care will be taken to remove the children from unsafe areas and evacuate the building if required. The quickest and safest route will be taken, and the children will be escorted to a designated area after exiting.

In case of a minor injury or accident, the staff will administer basic first aid. All injuries or illnesses not requiring immediate parental notification will be documented and reported to parents when the child is picked up at the end of the day.

Injury or accident requiring immediate professional care (emergency), the staff will call 911, giving location and nature of emergency. As appropriate, the staff will administer CPR or first aid measures. Parents will be notified immediately. If parents are unavailable, those individuals designated as emergency phone contacts will be notified.

All children must have an emergency medical release form on file in case of such an emergency. If a child ingests or comes in contact with a poisonous substance the staff will contact the Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222.

Under the Texas Penal code, any area within 1000 feet of a child-care center is a gang free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalties. **Grace Place Learning Center is a GANG FREE ZONE**.

Grace Place Learning Center follows all policies outlined in the Texas

Minimum Standards of childcare centers. As a parent, you are able to review the Texas Minimum Standards and our most recent licensing inspection at any time. Please, if you have any concerns, feel free to contact the Director. You can also contact The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services at 210-337-3399 or on the internet at www.dfps.state.tx.us. A copy of our latest inspection report is posted in the front lobby. The statewide Abuse & Neglect phone number is 1-800-252-5400, if you would like to report any suspected abuse.

Grace Place Learning Center staff are **REQUIRED** by Texas State law and licensing requirements to report immediately to the police or child Protective Services (CPS) any instance when there is reason to suspect the occurrence of physical, sexual, or emotional child abuse, child neglect, or exploitation. The staff may not notify parents when police or CPS are called about possible child abuse, neglect, or exploitation except on the recommendation of CPS or the police when they are called. Some examples of abuse and neglect are leaving a child in a vehicle unattended, not securing a child in a seatbelt or booster seat, unexplained marks or bruises on opposite sides of the body, and child hygiene issues.

Bad Weather Policy

If bad or inclement weather is predicted or occurs, GPLC may be closed. SUMC GPLC does not wish to put at risk either our children or staff. GPLC will follow the Schertz Cibolo Universal City Independent School District (SCUCISD) guidelines during inclement weather. Please check your ProCare email, or tune in to local radio / TV stations for schedules and/or closures of SCUCISD schools, offices, or roads. GPLC will close along with SCUCISD schools.

Minimum Standards

Many of the policies in this handbook are requirements of the Texas Department of Protective Services and Regulatory Services Minimum Standards. A copy of the current minimum standards is available in the Director's office, and parents are welcome to view its contents as well as our last inspection report.

Acknowledgement of receipt of Parent Handbook

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Grace Place Learning Center Parent Handbook and have read through its entirety. If I have any questions I will contact the Director.

Child 1_____
Child 2_____
Child 3 _____

Parent printed name_____

Parent Signature_____