

AMAZING GRACE

Christian Preschool

Parent Handbook

Our Mission:

Amazing Grace Christian Preschool, a ministry of Grace Lutheran Church, provides high-quality, engaging, standards-guided, Biblical teaching to equip children for learning as we care for their families and invite them to know Jesus.

Contact Information

Amazing Grace Christian Preschool

License C01ES0020

Grace Lutheran Church

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By enrolling in Amazing Grace Christian Preschool's programs, the parent or legal guardian (hereafter referred to as parent) agrees to abide by all AGCP school policies and procedures.

Welcome

We are thrilled that you have selected Amazing Grace Christian Preschool (AGCP) for your child's early education experience this year! Our preschool faculty and church ministry teams are ready and excited to serve your family with an exceptional preschool experience. We pray your child's school year is a positive one filled with love, encouragement, friendships, and enrichment. We also pray that this will be a time for your family to grow spiritually closer to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We cheerfully recognize that you as parents and caregivers are the most important teachers in your children's lives. We are excited to encourage and help equip your family in this journey! You are always welcome and part of our family here at Grace!

Program Summary and Philosophy

Our Christian Preschool is child-centered, inviting, and stimulating. The atmosphere is lovingly supportive and accepting. We encourage independence, self-control and skill development, so children can experience feeling of self-worth and love through an identity in Christ. Each day is viewed as an opportunity for ongoing learning and discovery. Activities are designed to promote the progress of children at their own developmental pace in a manner consistent with their unique abilities: physically, cognitively, socially, emotionally, creatively and spiritually. Our Christian school is a unique means of fulfilling God's direction, according to Proverbs 22:6 – "Train up a child in the way he should go." We are blessed to partner with parents in supporting their children's growth and development, as well as foster opportunities to grow spiritually. We are ready to support your family with resources for parenting, child development, early intervention, and the transition to kindergarten.

Educational Methods

AGCP views play as a vessel for learning. Age difference and ability level enhance the richness and depth of the Christian child-centered curriculum that is designed to move each child to their next level of mastery toward school readiness. Our teachers carry out a developmentally appropriate curriculum (through Creative Curriculum) that includes teacher and child directed activities. Interest areas are provided to encourage hands-on learning and include music, reading, science, math, dramatic play, sensory stimulation, building, art, and language.

Some of our preschool student goals include:

- Experience God's creation and understand the world around them
- Get along with others as well as be appropriately independent
- Develop self-control, self-discipline, and self-esteem (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Develop small and large motor skills
- Grow cognitively and spiritually
- Emerging literacy skill growth including reading, writing, listening, and speaking
- Prepared for kindergarten and beyond

Registration

Enrollment is open to any 4 or 5 year old child regardless of race, sex, national origin or creed. Age placement is based on September 1 of the school year; the same date that Escambia Public Schools use for determination of class placements. Acceptance is determined by the number of openings available in each class. When a class reached maximum enrollment, a waiting list will be established. Individuals on the waiting list will be contacted in order of original contact.

Registration begins in late March before the upcoming school year. Families of currently enrolled students will have first enrollment priority. If a family is not using a Florida VPK Certificate for enrollment, the annual non-refundable registration fee is \$75.00 per child and is due at the time of registration. If a child enrolls during the second half of the school year, the registration fee is \$37.50. This fee reserves the child's place in the enrolled class. If a family is not using a Florida VPK Certificate for enrollment, the annual supply fee is \$110.00 for 4-day a week attendance.

AGCP participates in the state of Florida's FREE Voluntary Preschool Program (VPK) for 4-year olds. A child must be registered with the state to participate in this program. The parent(s) may select the preschool the child attends, provided space is available. Acceptance is on a first come, first serve basis with a waiting list available after the class is full.

Florida Child Care Center License

Amazing Grace Christian Preschool is licensed as a child care center by the Florida Department of Children and Families: License C01ES0020

Admissions

All students must have the following documents on file in the school office by the FIRST DAY of school:

- **Enrollment Forms:** This includes emergency medical information, address, phone and contact information, and authorized pick-up persons.
- **Student Health Examination Form (FL School Entry Health Form):** This form is retrieved and completed from your child's doctor. This form needs renewed every two years.
- **Florida Certificate of Immunization (Shot) Form:** This form is retrieved and completed from your child's doctor and is valid until the expiration date which is listed on the form. If your child has a varied immunization schedule, you must provide the Exemption Notice.

Enrollment documents may be delivered to the school office, or emailed to:
preschool@gracepensacola.org

Tuition and Fee Payments

If a family is not using a Florida VPK Certificate for enrollment, tuition payments for the year are divided into equal monthly payments. Monthly tuition is due between the 1st and 5th of each month (including weekends and holidays – please plan accordingly). After the 5th, a late fee of \$10.00 will be charged. An account is considered delinquent when it is thirty days past due and your child's enrollment will be discontinued until payment is made in full. A charge of \$35.00 will be made for returned/insufficient fund checks. Parents may pay tuition by credit/debit card (2.9% processing fee applies), ACH from a bank account (\$0.90 processing fee applies), check, or cash. Electronic payments will be made through Brightwheel. Cash and check payments may be paid directly in the school office. Receipts will be available through Brightwheel. There is a 10% tuition monthly tuition discount for each sibling; this discount applies to monthly tuition only- there are no discounts for the Early Bird and Stay-n-Play sessions.

TUITION RATES for families not using FL VPK Certificates: 4-day week: \$305.00

EXTRA CARE RATES available to all families (beyond the VPK allowance):

*Early Bird Session (early drop off, 8:00-9:00am) is available for additional \$50.00/month

*Stay-n-Play Session (late pick up, 1:00-2:00pm) is available for additional \$50.00/month

*These sessions must be arranged before the month's start; drop-ins are not accepted. Early Bird and Stay-n-Play are not included in the VPK program; parents must register/pay for these services.

Other Expenses

Some examples of additional expenses that may occur throughout the school year include school pictures, and book orders. These are optional will be charged as one-time fees and are paid by all students if parents choose to order (including VPK students).

Hours of Operation

AGCP operates during the school year, August through May.

VPK Sessions: 9:00am – 1:00pm (Monday through Thursday)

Early Bird Sessions: 8:00am-9:00am / Stay-n-Play Sessions: 1:00pm-2:00pm (Monday through Thursday)

AGCP generally follows the Escambia County Public School calendar. Closed days are evidenced in our school calendar which is posted on our website (gracepensacola.org) and in Brightwheel.

When dropping off your child at preschool, please enter the building, sign your child in on the daily sign-in sheet, and ensure the teacher acknowledges your arrival. At pick-up, please enter the building, sign your child out, and check in with the teacher about your child's day. If you are carpooling or have a different person picking your child up at the end of the school day, please inform the teacher or director. A teacher or the director may ask to view photo ID of anyone new picking up your child. We cannot release a child to an unauthorized person and must have parent/guardian permission.

A late fee of \$1.00 per minute is charged if pick-up occurs more than five minutes after the child's session ends. This late charge applies to all students, including VPK students, to be paid by the parent.

Attendance

The parent is to notify the school when the child will be absent, arrive late, or be picked up early from the center. In the case of illness or an unforeseen event the parent is to contact the school office so that the teachers may be informed. While in attendance each child will be expected to participate fully in the designated classroom's planned activities, to ensure appropriate ratio and inclusion is met.

Open Invitation

Parents and legal guardians of enrolled children may visit the center any time during the center's operation and may access their child at any time while the child is in care, while following any mandatory or recommended COVID-19 prevention protocol. Your child's growth and development are important to us, and we realize (as research confirms!) your partnership and school participation will have a positive impact on your child. God has created your child in His image and our desire is to assist you in providing the foundation that allows for and encourages learning in all areas: physically, cognitively, socially, emotionally, creatively, and spiritually. Please take time to read information sent home and posted in the classrooms and in Brightwheel. Newsletters and other calendar notes will be communicated to parents via Brightwheel. Feel free to call or set up a time to meet with the teacher and take advantage of scheduled Parent/Teacher Conferences. Your questions, comments, concerns, and suggestions are welcomed and appreciated.

Daily Reports

AGCP uses a web-based communication tool called Brightwheel for daily communications with parents and all center and church messaging. All children in attendance will receive a daily update about their center activities.

Conferences

Parent/Teacher conferences will be offered twice yearly (fall and spring). Parents will receive a written assessment of their child's development via the STAR assessment program. Parents may request a conference with their child's teacher at any time.

Preschool Faculty

AGCP's faculty are committed to loving and nurturing your children and family in a Christian community. They will pray for your children and foster a caring and enriching classroom environment. Our faculty are qualified for their early childhood educator positions, trained in CPR and first aid, have the required background checks, and have completed the credentialing requirements set by the Department of Children and Families. Should you have any ministry needs, please let us know so that we can care for and encourage your family.

Special Curriculum

AGCP strives to include engaging educational experiences across multiple learning domains. Some examples of our enrichments include:

Chapel: All students and faculty enjoy worshipping together weekly in the Grace sanctuary. This time is led by a rotation of leaders who are excited to share the love and grace of Jesus with your students, as we praise and worship Him together as God's family through singing, scripture, and prayer.

Music: Musical elements are incorporated regularly into classroom activities, and students will have opportunities to share their musical gifts with the Grace community through a variety of events.

IDEA Special Education Law

As a childcare provider, we continually monitor the development of all children in our care through ongoing observation and recording. We want the best outcomes for all children. Child care providers are considered a primary referral source for early intervention under federal IDEA special education law. We will absolutely keep open communication with parents and caregivers about their child and any concerns we have before a referral is made. We can assist the parent with the referral or partner with them in the referral process. Child care providers will never offer a diagnosis for a child. Child Find is a valuable service within the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS). **Child Find** assists parents and schools with screening and resources toward ensuring a child's best successes in development: 1-888-445-9662.

Dress Code

Please note that your child will get "dirty" at school, with our hands-on activities and outdoor play time. We recommend sending your child in play clothes that are comfortable and easy to wash. Please also have extra changes of clothing available for your child, in the case of spills and/or toileting accidents. Shoes are to be worn at all times. We recommend sneakers/tennis shoes as they are most versatile for our active play. Sandals may be worn provided that they have a secure heel and covered toe. Crocs and "flip-flops" are discouraged at the center as they pose a hazard for physical play, especially on the playground. Also avoid jackets/hoodies and sunhats with "strings", as they post a choking hazard on playground equipment. We want our students to be as safe and mobile as possible!

Withdrawal from the Program

If you desire to withdraw your child from AGCP, please note:

- You must notify the office (in writing) of your decision at least two weeks prior to withdrawal. If you do not provide notice, you will still be expected to pay the remaining month's tuition.
- All tuition and fees must be current (including the tuition for the two weeks' notice).
- The parent is requested to provide a forwarding address to the school office.

Termination of Care

The Director will give a verbal and written notice to the parent if AGCP must discontinue care of a child.

Closings

In the interest of your family's safety and the safety of AGCP's faculty and staff, the preschool may be closed due to inclement weather or a facility emergency. AGCP typically follows the Escambia County public school plans for opening or closing during emergency situations. If our facility closes, you will receive communication via email and Brightwheel text. Our parents will be notified as soon as possible so that alternate arrangements may be made (our morning goal is 7:00 am). The parent is encouraged to have a plan for emergency back-up care in the event of a school closing. Parents may pick up their child any time when concerned for safe travel. There is no tuition discount for these closures.

If there is an emergency during the school day and we must evacuate the preschool, faculty and students will relocate to our nearest designated shelter at Grace Community Building, northwest of school site (6601 N 9th St – NW corner). Parents will be notified ASAP via Brightwheel messaging of such emergency situations.

Fire and Safety Drills

AGCP complies with the Department of Children and Families by conducting the required safety drills. Fire Drills are conducted monthly, and evacuation and shelter-in-place drills are conducted regularly.

Required Parental Consent

Children may only participate in research, experimental procedures, or a public relations activity with the express written consent of the parent. Parents also have the opportunity to give AGCP authorization to use the child's work in school related activities, displays, and publications. Your child's information will be kept in full confidentiality; the child's record will not be disclosed to any person other than the child, the child's parent or guardian, the child's legal representative, center staff, and licensing personnel unless the parent or guardian has given written consent for another purpose.

Grievance Procedure

When a concern arises, the following steps, according to Matthew 18, are to be taken:

1. Person to person. (Example: parents to faculty member)
2. Person to person with mediator. (Example: parent to faculty member with Administrator)
3. Person to Board of Directors. (This is the final step after repeated attempts at resolution and have been unsuccessful)

Staff and parents are to abide by the above guidelines so that gossip does not cause harm. In Christian love, confidentiality assures a safe and accepting environment for all parties built on Biblical ethics.

Insurance Coverage

The parent is responsible for complete health insurance coverage of the child. AGCP and Grace Lutheran Church carry the appropriate liability insurance.

First Aid and Emergencies

AGCP faculty are trained in Pediatric CPR and First Aid. In the case of accident or injury, a staff member will administer first aid. An injury report will be completed, placed in the child's file, and the parent or guardian will be notified. If immediate attention is needed the following procedure will be followed:

1. The parent or guardian will be contacted
2. Others listed on the Emergency Information Sheet will be contacted if the parent or guardian cannot be reached
3. 911 will be called and the child transported to an emergency facility as deemed necessary. A staff member will accompany the child if an adult listed above is not available. (Any expenses incurred are the responsibility of the parent)

In the event of a serious accident or injury, steps #1-3 will be waived and 911 will be contacted. The parent will be notified as soon as possible. AGCP and Grace Lutheran Church will not assume any financial, medical, or legal responsibility for decisions resulting from the inability to locate a parent or secondary authority for decisions regarding the child's welfare.

Accidental Ingestion

In the event of accidental ingestion, Poison Control or 911 will be contacted. Qualified personnel will aid the child as instructed by the authorities at Poison Control or local emergency medical service.

Administration of Medicine

Parents are to administer medicine at home. If absolutely necessary, medication may be administered at school with a doctor's written order and a signed permission slip by the parent as required. AGCP will not administer medication without the appropriate forms. All medicine must be sent in the **original container with the child's first and last name on it and prescription directions**. Siblings (including multiples) may not share medication, sunscreens, or lotions/creams.

Illness

The staff will immediately notify the parent or a specified individual (if the parent cannot be reached) when a child needs to go home due to the following symptoms: fever (axillary temperature of 100° Fahrenheit or over), diarrhea, vomiting, severe coughing, difficult or rapid breathing, unidentified rash, yellowish skin or eyes, pink eye, discharge from the eyes, lice, or lethargy. The child must be picked up within one hour after notification. The child will be isolated as appropriate to rest with a faculty member while waiting for pick-up.

The child must be symptom free for **24 hours (without fever reducing medication)** in order to return to preschool.

Children suffering from an earache or toothache may not attend if they are unable to comfortably participate in the program's regular activities or require exclusive one-on-one care.

Children suffering from a sore throat, moderate cough, runny nose, other cold symptoms (without fever), mild stomachache, headache, or leg pain may attend if they are able to comfortably participate in the program's regular activities, do not require one-on-one care, and other communicable illnesses have been ruled out.

The staff will contact the parent for further information and determination of treatment when the child is free of fever but the following symptoms have been identified: sore throat, infected skin patches,

unusually dark/tea-colored urine, headache and stiff neck, unusual behavior, loss of appetite, unexplained lethargy, difficulty breathing, or severe itching of body or scalp.

The parent must notify the school office within 24 hours of the diagnosis of a contagious illness. The staff will inform the parent of each exposed child if notified that a positive diagnosis has been made for any contagious illness. AGCP will notify the appropriate department of any case of a reportable disease, including COVID-19.

Abuse or Neglect

AGCP faculty are mandated reporters and shall report any suspected physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect of a child as required by state law.

Discipline (Behavior Guidance)

The faculty of AGCP communicate defined boundaries and as the child matures, more responsibility is expected in following classroom rules. Our goal is positive behavior guidance, to ensure a joyful environment and successful school experience grounded in developmentally appropriate practice, while reassuring children of Jesus' unconditional love for them. The methods of positive behavior guidance include 1) Prevention, 2) Redirection, and as a last resort for the benefit and safety of the child, 3) Separation and Snuggle.

Our approach to this guidance includes the *Peacemaking Skills for Little Children*. This philosophy teaches love, compassion, trust, fairness, cooperation, and reverence for God's world. This includes the "I-Care Rules" to show our love and care for others just as Jesus models:

1. We listen to each other.
2. Hands are for helping (not hurting).
3. Caring language (please, thank you, etc.)
4. We care about each other's feelings.
5. We are responsible for what we say and do.

Each child will be provided a positive model of acceptable behavior and will be taught how to use acceptable alternatives to the problem behavior in order to reduce conflict. Prevention includes methods of distraction, conflict resolution, positive reinforcement, modeling, and a consistently engaging environment. Children may be redirected toward a constructive activity to ensure the safety of other children and staff persons. Faculty will model and guide children toward positive solutions and desirable behavior.

"Separation" refers to the removal of a child though remaining within sight and sound of the staff from an area or activity until appropriate behavior is displayed, so the child may calm down and the group's safety is ensured. Separations are a last resort and will be logged as an assessment tool to consider how to best support the child. Faculty will individually support the child during such a separation and support the child's re-entry into the classroom activities. Children will receive snuggles/hugs (appropriate caring touch) – if the child would like this nurturing response at this time.

Faculty will never subject children to corporal punishment or emotional abuse. Discipline and behavior guidance will never be associated with food, light, appropriate cool/warmth, clothing, medical care, rest, or active play (including playground time). Faculty will never use physical restraint items. Parents and guardians are not permitted to administer corporal punishment while on the school campus.

Faculty will be asked to record any persistent challenging behaviors and the faculty's response to them. If necessary, a plan will be developed, in consultation with the child's parent, other staff persons and professionals, for addressing the documented behavior toward more fully supporting the child's growth and developmental needs.

Animals and Pets

Animals and pets are not permitted at AGCP without prior approval by the staff, confirmed safety and hygiene practices regarding the type of animal/pet, and written notification to all families enrolled.

Sharing Toys

Please avoid sending toys from home that could be potentially perceived as violent or dangerous (such as guns, knives, swords, etc.). We want to ensure all toys are age appropriate and respectful of various families' perspectives.

Holidays and Birthdays

As a Christian school, we will incorporate various holidays into our curriculum and events, including the following:

- *Halloween:* We will focus on the age appropriate and positive aspects of this season – such as pumpkins, fall harvest, and fall beauty. We will avoid inclusion of ideas that can be frightening for young children – so we will not include scary elements like ghosts, witches, devils, or evil-themes.
- *Thanksgiving:* This is our time to give thanks and praise to God for all His blessings. We will focus on family, gratitude, and sharing.
- *Advent:* This is four weeks in the church year, leading up to Christmas, where we focus on waiting for baby Jesus to be born! We will learn the history of the first Christmas and prepare for our Happy Birthday Jesus party and concert!
- *Valentine's Day:* We focus on friendship, love, and kindness. Each classroom may host a valentine exchange to share God's love with our classmates!
- *Lent and Easter:* Lent is a special time of observing Jesus' grace and mercy for us, leading to the wonderful celebration of Jesus' resurrection at Easter! We realize that Jesus died for us, because He loves us that much – and He is now alive and with each of us in a personal way.
- *Birthdays:* We are excited to celebrate your child as a wonderful creation of God! Your child will be given special attention on his or her birthday, and we will celebrate summer birthdays on your child's "half birthday" if you would like! We do not need anything special brought in for your child's birthday. Invitations to private parties will only be distributed at school if ALL children in the class are invited.

Meals and Allergies

Children will bring their own lunches and am snacks. Please strive to include the USDA required components of a protein, grain, fruit, vegetable, and dairy. **Please mark your child's lunch container and water bottle with your child's first and last name**, include any necessary utensils, and include an ice pack in the container if there is anything perishable. *We cannot heat lunches nor refrigerate lunches.* Drinking water will be served with meals and available throughout the school day. Children with allergies will need to submit information about the child's care needs as provided by their child's doctor.