WESLEY EARLY LEARNING & FAMILY CENTER

PARENT HANDBOOK

A Child’s Place and a Place for Every Child

“5+Star School!”

WESLEY EARLY LEARNING & FAMILY CENTER

A Ministry of the First United Methodist Church of Orlando

FirstChurchOrlando.org
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People were bringing little children to Jesus in order that he might touch them... Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs...” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them and blessed them.

– Mark 10:13-16 (NRSV)

Mission

The Wesley Center was created as a means of expressing Jesus’ love for children, and in the belief that it is First United Methodist Church of Orlando’s (FUMCO) congregational responsibility to provide, in an environment of love and trust, a place to develop and nurture each individual child’s growth and learning. The center strives to meet the varied needs of today’s families and to provide an atmosphere where children, from all backgrounds, can flourish and grow physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

Notice of Non-Discriminatory Policy as to Students

The Wesley Early Learning & Family Center of the First United Methodist Church of Orlando does not discriminate in its admission and administration of students on the basis of their race, color, creed, religion, gender or national origin.
Welcome to the
Wesley Early Learning & Family Center

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Wesley Early Learning & Family Center (Wesley Center). Our childcare and preschool center is a ministry of the First United Methodist Church of Orlando. We consider your family a part of our family.

It is our goal to help your child (ren) learn and grow physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually. Our team is professionally trained and participates in continuing education throughout each school year. All of our programs benefit from a team-teaching approach which takes advantage of the experience of our many seasoned early educators and professionals. We also believe in helping to build strong families, by offering services that benefit the ENTIRE family.

This handbook is an excellent resource for the most frequently asked questions. Please read it thoroughly and keep it close at hand. This book was thoughtfully written to address the many situations we have faced in the past 30 years of operation. Your adherence to the guidelines will provide consistency and meet expectations of parents, children and staff.

We consider it a privilege to care for your children in the name of our Lord.

Yours in Christ,

Kimberly Gibson, MPH
Executive Director
Wesley Early Learning & Family Center
Finances

Your child’s space at the Wesley Center is reserved by a non-refundable registration fee which is due annually. This fee reserves your child’s spot in the program.

Tuition

Tuition is paid for your child’s enrollment space, not for attendance. Tuition is payable in monthly or weekly payments, depending upon the program. Payments can be made by check, money order, or through the on-line giving portion of First Church’s website (www.firstchurchorlando.org). Checks are to be made payable to First United Methodist Church of Orlando (FUMCO) with your child’s name(s) in the memo section. Checks and money orders are only to be placed in the Tuition Box. Tuition is payable from the day of enrollment to the day of withdrawal; there are no credits for absences. There is a $25 returned check fee. After a second returned check, all payments must be made by money order. No Cash payment accepted for tuition.

Full-Time Students: Tuition is due each Friday for the following week. If tuition payment is not received by the close of business the following Friday, a late fee shall be assessed according to the published fee schedule. The late fee shall continue to be assessed each week a balance is outstanding.

If a payment is two weeks past due, a parent/guardian may be asked to withdraw their child (ren)’s enrollment at the center.

Part-Time Students: Tuition is due on the last Friday of each month for the following month. If tuition payment is not received by the close of business on the following Friday, a late fee shall be assessed according to the published fee schedule. The late fee shall continue to be assessed each week a balance is outstanding.

Wesley administration is willing to work with parents/guardians on payment plans, and encourages you to contact the Wesley Executive Director as soon as you become aware of a problem which may prevent you from paying tuition when it is due. Tuition assistance may be available to families who encounter a temporary financial crisis.

The Wesley Center reserves the right to pursue collection of any unpaid tuition or fees.

Tuition Increases

The Wesley Center reserves the right to increase tuition during the year should the need arise. We also reserve the right to change or modify the school schedule and/or calendar.
**Vacation**

After a child has attended Wesley for one year, a one-week vacation (during school year, from August-August) is allotted for children attending full-time programs only. During the week that your child is away on vacation, no tuition payment will be required. Written notice must be given at least one week in advance. Email can be sent to Kimberly@FirstChurchOrlando.org.

**Withdrawal Policy**

Enrollment in the Wesley Center Program is from August-August. All withdrawals from the center are permanent. Parents must provide written notice of a child’s withdrawal from the Wesley Center at least two weeks in advance. If parents do not notify the Center that their child is withdrawing, a two-week tuition withdrawal fee will be assessed and billed.

**Smoke-Free Facility**

The Wesley Center is a smoke-free facility.

**No Cell Phone Zone**

Our campus is a *no cell phone zone*; including the parking lot. This is to ensure the safety of our children and families. (This includes during drop off and pick up in the classrooms.) (only exception is for use to enter the building)

**Educational Philosophy**

Wesley Center uses a child-sensitive approach to early childhood learning and teaching. We believe each child begins to learn from the moment she or he enters God’s world and that each caregiver is a teacher to that child.

The staff members in the infant rooms impart trust and security through their loving touch and attention. The staff members in the toddler rooms provide a safe, exciting environment for curious and increasingly independent one and two-year-old children to explore.

The staff members in the preschool rooms provide a wealth of hands-on learning experiences matched to individual development and interests for our playful, energetic three and four year-olds. Staff members understand children’s ages and
stages and share their understanding with parents. We are committed to working with parents through direct communication and family support.

Staff attention is centered on children during daily routines such as dipering/toileting, naptime and meals, at indoor and outdoor play, during planned learning activities and during arrival and departure times. A song while dipering, sharing A special confidence on the playground, observing a classroom interaction and A warm welcome at the start of the day are a few of the ways the staff focuses on children's needs and interests.

We delight in children's voices and movements. Where safety limits are needed, staff members guide children's behavior through positive directions and modeling. We listen to and respect children's feelings as we teach them constructive ways To work with those feelings. We encourage children's independence and active concern for others, helping children to build friendships and to learn to play and work well together.

We believe children learn best when they are ready to learn, not pushed to learn, and that physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual development are as important as academic development. We believe academic skills and concepts are best learned through playful, adventurous activities which invite and hold children's attention and engage all their senses.

We believe young children develop their imagination and thinking skills through block play, dramatic play, and creative art and science activities. We encourage and celebrate this imaginative process, rather than teacher-controlled products.

We rejoice in each child as a gift from God.

**Drop-Off/Pick-up & Security**

Our center will issue you access to our security system via email. Our system will allow you to download a secured private app that will grant access to approved doors.

Enter and exit through the locked glass double doors at the front of the center only. Do not use the back doors or the playground gates to enter or leave the center.

Please do not let anyone go in the locked doors after you have access. To do so compromises our security system. Should you see a person without access enter the child development center, please notify a staff member immediately.

Each child must be taken to class and signed in by a parent or person you have authorized. A contact phone number must be provided daily. Only those with written permission from the person who registered your child may pick your child up. Wesley Center staff will ask for identification before a child is released when they do not know or recognize the adult picking up your child. Should the need arise to have your child picked up by an adult who is not on our records, we will need advanced written notice.
from you. No child will be released to anyone less than 16 years of age

**Late Pick-up**

A $1 per minute fee will be charged for late pick-up. Consistent late pick-up is cause for withdrawal.

**Schedule & Calendar**

**Hours of Operation:** 7:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Most classes begin working with their curriculum at 9 a.m. When children come in late, they miss an important part of our program. It is disruptive to bring a child in at lunch or nap time, especially if the child has slept late in the morning. Please be considerate of the classroom schedule. Be sure to check lesson plans for special events. Children will not be permitted to eat their breakfast in the classroom, with the exception of the infant classrooms.

**Holidays**

The Wesley Center will be closed in recognition of the following holidays and teacher work days:

- Open House Day (or Designated Day)
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Thursday and Friday
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Presidents' Day (or week of Teacher In-Service Day)
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day

The full-time program will observe only the above listed closings. Check the Wesley Center calendar for dates. A separate VPK calendar is provided to indicate the days of attendance funded by the state.
Severe Weather

When severe weather threatens, Wesley Center staff will notify parents regarding school closing and re-opening. If time permits, we will utilize our lead teachers to contact families, so please make sure we always have up-to-date phone numbers for you. If you are unsure of closure for severe weather, please call the Wesley Center for a recorded message.

Curriculum

Our curriculum is based on a “developmental” approach to learning. The children will learn by doing and by experiencing age-appropriate materials and activities. Structured activities are blended with informal learning experiences and activity centers.

Christian Education

As part of a Christian-based center children will have the opportunity to develop and increase their awareness of God and His love for them through the Wee Learn curriculum. Activities include Bible stories, songs, verses and chapel for preschoolers. Christian holidays are celebrated.

Language/Reading Readiness

It is important to develop auditory and visual discrimination and perception, memory, left-right eye movement, sequencing and attention span. Letter and sound recognition which form the basis for reading are also taught. Children have exposure to words from languages other than English.

Math Readiness

Curriculum includes counting, recognizing numbers and their meaning, sequencing, classifying and patterning.

Physical Development
Music, movement and playground time provide opportunities for development of gross motor skills. Fine-motor skills are developed through age appropriate activities such as painting, playing with clay, stringing beads and cutting with scissors.

**Social and Emotional Development**

By interacting with teachers and peers, children learn concepts of sharing, cooperation, independence, respect and positive work habits.

**Illness**

The Wesley Center is a well-child center. If your child is not well enough to participate in class activities, please keep your child at home for the day. Please observe the following the following health standards. Please have your child remain at home if he or she exhibits the following:

1. Head lice: a child can return the following day as long as the following has been followed (per DCF): a product box, box top, empty bottle, or signed statement by a custodial parent or legal guardian that treatment has occurred;
2. Severe coughing, causing a child to become red or blue in the face or to make a whooping sound;
3. Difficult or rapid breathing;
4. Stiff neck;
5. Diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose stool within a 24 hour period) or Vomiting;
6. A fever (100 degrees axillary, 101 degrees orally, 102 degrees ear);
7. Pink Eye;
8. Exposed, open skin lesions;
9. Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool;
10. Yellowish skin or eyes; or
11. Any other unusual sign or symptom of illness.
Children exhibiting these signs or symptoms will be asked to remain at home or picked up from the center if the child is in attendance. Children should be picked up within one hour of being notified. Children need to remain home for 24 hours without symptoms before returning to school, i.e., the child needs to remain out of the center for the remainder of the day he or she is sent home and the following day. In the case of a (suspected) contagious disease, rash, or continuing symptoms, medical authorization (doctor’s note) is required before returning stating that the child is no longer contagious, is symptom free, and is able to return to the center. Children will not be given Tylenol or Motrin at the Wesley Center to keep a fever down. The Wesley Executive Director has the final authority on when a child may return to the center.

Health & Safety

Florida State law requires that all parents receive a copy of the brochure, “Know Your Child’s Day Care Center.” The brochure was provided to you in the initial registration packet.

On the first day of a child’s attendance at the Wesley Center, the following documents must be provided to the Wesley Center:

- Completed enrollment form
- Emergency Medical Release
- Required consents and acknowledgements

Within 30 days of a child’s enrollment at the Wesley Center, the following documents must be provided:

- Immunization form (Blue DCF form #680)
- Health Form (Yellow DCF form #13040)

Accidents

Should a child be involved in an accident, an accident report will be completed. Accident/Incident reports must be signed on the day of occurrence by parent or authorized pick up person. Parents may request a copy from the Wesley office. In the case of a simple injury (scrape or abrasion) the staff will follow hygienic first-aid procedures. For more serious injuries, a parent will be contacted. Members of our staff receive CPR and First Aid certification training annually.
Things From Home

What to Bring*

1. Change of clothes for unexpected accident
2. Nutritional lunch.
3. Small blanket for nap time and/or snuggle toy. We provide mats and cots.
4. For infants: diapers, bottles and food, bibs, pacifier, change of clothes

*All items brought from home should be label

What Not to Bring

1. Toys from home except on show-and-tell days. Toy guns or weapons of any kind.
   
2. Open-toed shoes, sandals or flip-flops. (Water shoes are allowed on water days.)
   
3. Shoes must be tied, with no wheels, lights or squeakers.

A medical release form must be completed and signed by the parent for epi-pens, nebulizers, diaper creams, eczema topical creams, teething gels or other emergency medications.

Field Trips

Three and four-year-old children may participate in off-campus field trips. You will be given a list of scheduled trips and asked to sign a permission form. The children may walk to their destination, use the city LYMMO bus for destinations in the downtown area, or ride a church bus for trips that involve distance. A limited number of chaperones are needed for each trip. For safety and identification purposes, the children will be provided a Wesley t-shirt to wear on the days that field trips are planned.

Children in the two-year-old and younger children may participate in walking/stroller field trips. A signed form will be required to indicate your permission for these field trips.
Parking

Parking is limited in front of the building. Traffic can be heavy during certain times of the day. Please make sure to park in a designated parking spot, only and a Wesley Parking Pass is on display.

Class Ratios

The Wesley Center accepts children from six weeks through 4 years old. We offer ratios that are lower than Department of Children and Families' requirements.

- Infants 1 to 4
- Toddlers 1 to 6
- Twos 1 to 11
- Threes 1 to 15
- Fours, VPK only 1 to 10
- Fours, non-VPK 1 to 15

Extra staff are available to provide substitutes or assist in classes to enhance teacher-child ratios.

Discipline

We believe in positive reinforcement and the use of redirection. Under no circumstance will a child ever be physically disciplined. We also do not withhold food for discipline purposes. We use Conscious Discipline as a technique to teach self-regulation. We create an environment where children we meet the children’s’ needs to promote healthy social interactions. If a situation cannot be handled in the classroom, the child will be taken to the administration office. If need be, a parent will be called and asked to pick up the child. If the child repeats a behavior that is unacceptable at the center, or endangers those around him/her, the parent will be contacted for a conference. If the child continues to repeat the unacceptable behavior, the child’s enrollment may be suspended or withdrawn from the center.
Parental Engagement & Involvement

The Wesley Center encourages you to be an active part of your child’s school experience. You will be invited to attend parties, chaperone field trips or come talk or read to the class. We want to form a partnership with you during these precious years, and in the interest of this collaboration, we encourage you to express to your child's teacher any concerns you may have about your child’s care or education. If for any reason you continue to have concerns, please seek the assistance of the Wesley Center Executive Director or the Executive Pastor at FUMCO. These matters will be addressed promptly and professionally. We will work together to reach a resolution that is in the best interest of your child, you and the Wesley Center.

Our parents and staff members have formed a Parent Educator Association, which we call PEA Pod. The mission of the PEA Pod is to enhance and support the teachers and staff at the Wesley Center as we work together to educate and nurture our children during their preschool years. Annual membership dues are included in each child’s registration fee. Please contact the Wesley Center administration for more information.

Classroom Placement

Children are assigned to each classroom, by the Executive Director and Program Team, based on Birthdates and development level. Generally, children will be promoted to the next classroom based on their age as of September 1st. Requests for specific teachers (by name) will NOT be accepted. Parents can make a recommendation for placement based on their child’s needs, development, and learning style. We are confident that each classroom is equipped with the proper materials, lessons, and staff to meet each child’s needs.

Birthday Celebrations

Parents are invited to celebrate their child’s birthday at the center. All food brought into the center MUST be store bought, with an ingredient label listed, according to state regulations. No homemade foods are allowed to be served to the children (for allergy and regulatory purposes). Goody bags must be age appropriate. Parents may bring in non-latex balloons only. Birthday party invitations must be given to all children if inviting children from Wesley.
Classroom Communication

Parents are not allowed to distribute information in the classroom cubbies. If a parent needs to give out information, invitations, etc., it must be given to a Teacher and or Administration to distribute. If distributing information, invitations, etc., in the classrooms, all children must receive it.

Nemours “Taking Steps to Healthy Success” Program

The Wesley Center has taken the initiative to promote healthy eating and physical activity through the Nemours “Taking Steps to Healthy Success Program.” We ask for your support in providing good nutrition and healthy habits for your child.

Healthy Eating

*For packed meals from home, we ask that you provide:
- Fruits and vegetables
- Whole grain crackers, breads, pasta, etc.
- Protein such as lean meat, skinless poultry, fish, cooked beans or peas, eggs, yogurt or cheese.

Please refrain from sending:

- Pre-fried and highly processed meats
- High-fat snacks
- Sugary drinks

For celebrations and holiday parties, we ask that you provide healthy foods. Mini cupcakes are allowed. A list of recommended age-appropriate foods can be provided. Providing good nutrition for your child is a partnership among the Wesley Center and all parents within the classroom.

Physical Activity

The Wesley Center believes in encouraging healthy living practices. Children will receive a minimum of 150 minutes of physical activity per week. Physical activity will be encouraged in the classroom and outside on the playground as indicated on each child’s lesson plan.
Worship Opportunities
8:30 & 11:00 am: Traditional Worship Services
9:30 am & 5:30 pm: Modern Worship Services
9:30 am: Children’s Sunday school
9:30 and 11:00 am: Sunday school for adults

Many ministries, small groups and classes are available throughout the week. Please call the church office to learn about these opportunities.

Lead Pastor Rev. Dr. Vance Rains
Executive Pastor Rev. Emily Sterling
Executive Director of Wesley Kimberly Gibson
Program Director of Wesley Theresa Manno
Program Assistant of Wesley Cindy Farrell
Finance Associate of Wesley Debbie Heath
Curriculum & Early Intervention Specialist of Wesley Erika Scheiber

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