



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN ELEMENTARY

PARENT HANDBOOK

2022-2023



APPROVED:
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN ELEMENTARY
1340 Murchison Drive
El Paso, TX 79902

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Parents, Teachers, and Students,

I'm tremendously excited to welcome you all into this brand-new community of learning and growth. The book of Psalms teaches that those who love learning are "like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper." That's my hope and prayer for each of us this year as we learn and grow together--may all of our roots grow deep and may all of our branches reach high!

I would love to meet you and get to know you better, so feel free to stop by our offices and say hello, and if I can be of any assistance throughout the school year, please let me know. Also, if you don't already have a church home, we enthusiastically invite you to worship with us on Sunday mornings at 9:00am (traditional service) or 11:00am (modern/contemporary service). There are many wonderful, creative, and enriching groups and opportunities within our First Presbyterian family, and I hope you take some time to learn about all of them, as you help this newest one to grow and thrive!

Peace and Blessings,

Rev. Neal Locke
Pastor
First Presbyterian Church

ABOUT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN ELEMENTARY

Over 40 years ago, [First Presbyterian Preschool](#) came into existence when church leaders listened to the heartfelt requests of parents in our community to provide a high quality, loving, and nurturing education for young children. Through a similar process in summer of 2020 (and conversations spanning the two previous decades) the governing boards of The First Presbyterian Church of El Paso made the decision to open First Presbyterian Elementary School for students in grades 1 through 6. Several families of previous Preschool students were seeking an educational opportunity to expand upon the Reggio Emilia approach to learning and child development that the Preschool offered for their elementary-aged children. A Board of Directors was appointed comprised of these parents and church members to begin an Elementary School with doors set to open to students in September 2020. Through determination, collaboration, and infinite volunteer hours, the school's classrooms, playground, staff team, and curriculum took shape, all amidst a pandemic. The inaugural roster included 31 students. The school is proposed to expand in coming years.

Philosophy: First Presbyterian Elementary School seeks to cultivate a progressive, collaborative learning environment that reveals and empowers the worth, dignity, and limitless potential of all children, fostering life-long learners. As a Reggio Emilia inspired school, we honor and facilitate each child's divinely bestowed desire to discover, inquire, and explore the world around them, stewarding emergent generations of confident creators. Together, parents, teachers and students develop and nurture individualized opportunities for physical, social, spiritual, and intellectual development. Sponsored by a Christian church, we share with our children the stories of our religious heritage, and welcome and engage with the rich diversity of faith traditions in our community.

Governing Body: The First Presbyterian Elementary School operates under the authority of the Governing Boards of First Presbyterian Church of El Paso, Texas. Direction is provided by a Board of Directors:

Nicole Kuiper, Board Chair
Catherine Zwintscher, Treasurer
Nicole Cobb, Secretary
Alissa Booth
Amanda Bustamante
Jessica Cochran
Colleen Guillaume

Neal Locke
Eric Smith
Samuel Stone
Angie Tures
Jaya Vaswani
Joseph Villescascas
Alison Zepeda

Administration:

Malyssa Villescascas, Head of School - Mrs. Villescascas has over ten years of previous experience in the administrative, executive business management, and marketing fields. She served on the First Presbyterian Preschool Board of Directors for four years, was the 2019-2020 President of that board, and gained valuable experience working closely with the preschool's Director and Administrative Assistant.

Neal Locke, Head of Pedagogy - In addition to being the pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Neal is a certified teacher in the State of Texas, has two decades of experience teaching in both public and private schools, and holds a Master's Degree in Education from Princeton Seminary. He is currently working on his PhD dissertation through the University of Aberdeen.

Cece Neal, Advisor - Mrs. Neal has a B.A. in Preschool and Elementary Education from the University of Florida. She has worked in the early childhood field since 1979 and is the founding Director of First Presbyterian Preschool. Mrs. Neal is a member of The North American Reggio Emilia Alliance and on the Paso Del Norte Association for the Education of Young Children. She is also a member of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children and NAEYC and a member of the Southern Early Childhood Association.

Teaching Staff:

Raul Chavez, Desiree DeAngelo, Alejandra Ortiz, Diana Stone, Natalie Valenzuela, Mariana Villalobos

Teachers must obtain 24 clock hours of training each year in addition to First Aid and CPR.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Admissions: The school is open to all children first through sixth grade, regardless of race, nationality, or creed, who may benefit from our type of program. To maintain the quality of our program, however, we reserve the right to decline to admit any child, in our sole discretion. We additionally reserve the right to withdraw any child from our program, in our sole discretion. While we endeavor to be a school that is inclusive and meets the needs of all students, we also acknowledge our own limitations as a small private school in regards to specialized services. Consequently, select parents may be invited for a discussion and student visit to assess if we can meet the needs of their child. We encourage parents not to share with children that they are applying for admission, but to instead simply say that they will be playing at our school.

All necessary admission paperwork, incident and accident reports, progress reports or other program documents will be filed in the school office. These files are kept confidential and, unless otherwise requested, available only to administrative and teaching staff or regulatory authorities.

Classroom Placement: Children are assigned to a class according to their individual needs, temperament, and age in consultation with parents and teachers. On occasion, a child may be transferred to other groups to better meet their needs.

Entrance Interviews: Entrance Interviews are an opportunity for you and your child(ren) to meet and conference with their teacher in a comfortable setting before school starts. Teachers will contact the parents of their students the week prior to Entrance Interviews and arrange a time for you to come and visit. New families will be invited to a New Parent Orientation held before the start of the school year.

Pick-up/Transportation: Pick up and transportation is the responsibility of the authorized parent or guardian. If an unexpected situation arises and you are unable to pick up your child at the designated time, please notify the school immediately, so that we can reassure your child. Children will remain with teachers for the first 10 minutes after the designated pick-up time. After that time, the children will be taken to the school office, where they will stay until the parent/guardian arrives. Parents of children who remain in the care of the school will be charged a fee of \$1.00 for every minute that the child remains in the care of the school. If we suspect the person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, we will not release the child and request police assistance. An individual unknown to teachers will be checked against the child's authorized pick-up list and asked to show a photo ID. It is important that you keep the office up to date on the individuals authorized to pick up your child.

Attendance: Consistency is key to establishing habits, healthy developmental progress, and a child's overall sense of safety and stability so we record and encourage regular attendance. However, we also embrace each student's unique circumstances and extra-curricular experiences, such as family travel, as valuable life experiences. If a student has plans to miss an excess of two consecutive school days, we require that their teacher be notified. Teachers will assign homework when an extended absence is expected. Should a pattern of absences begin to affect a student's progress and experience at school, teachers will address those concerns with the student's parents.

Clothing: As students spend a lot of time outdoors, it is important to choose appropriate clothing designed for the weather of each day. Because of messy art activities and active outdoor play, provide clothing that is washable and sturdy. Jackets and sweaters should be labeled with your child's name. Send children in closed-toe rubber-soled shoes. Optionally, you may leave a complete extra set of clothing in your child's cubby.

Cubby System: Our cubby systems are for the students and classroom use only. These cubbies are at the student's level. We ask you to refrain from keeping any medication and other items that are harmful to children in your child's bag or cubby. Also, please do not distribute anything into another student's cubby, any distributions to other students must go through the teacher or office. As a reminder, we will not distribute candy or sweets.

Lunch/Snacks: Lunch time is a period of pleasant interchange of information between children, and between children and adults, in which they can enjoy each other's company and show consideration for one another. Our classes will break for lunch and recess from 11:45-12:30pm. You will need to either provide a packed lunch for your child or subscribe to our hot lunch catering service through Holistic Meals. If your child's lunch requires refrigeration, please provide an ice pack or other cooling device in his/her lunch. A microwave is available to heat meals as needed.

If you are unable to pack your child's lunch or would like to alleviate the stress of preparing a daily lunch, we offer a school lunch program through local caterer Holistic Meals. Holistic Meals believes in holistic nutrition and prides themselves on bringing traditional and everyday dishes to the healthier side without sacrificing flavor or budget. Your children will be getting balanced nutrition with whole, clean ingredients and various meals to satisfy all eaters made fresh and served hot every day. Subscription details will be sent prior to the start of the school year and menus released on a monthly basis.

We encourage our students to listen and respond to their bodies when they need fuel and/or water. Although we do not have a designated snack time in our schedule, healthy, nourishing snacks may be sent to school for your child to eat at a time of their choosing. Appropriate snacks require no prep, are nutrient-dense and easy to grab and eat on-the-go. If snacks are packed, please label and/or involve your child in designating snack versus meal food to prevent empty lunch boxes come lunch time.

You will be notified of any food allergies within the classroom and asked to be aware of and, in some cases, refrain from bringing certain items.

A densely nutritious meal will help your child remain alert, energetic, and regulate their emotions/behavior throughout the school day. Children need whole foods that consist of good nutrients and are rich in protein, minerals, and vitamins rather than the empty calories found in sugar, fat, and highly processed foods. Some ingredients to avoid include high fructose corn syrup, artificial sweetener or colors, and hydrogenated fats. Please send water with your child daily; no other drinks are permitted during school hours.

HEALTHY FOODS FOR GROWING CHILDREN

GRAINS - provide complex carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and fiber for good health. Look for 2-5 grams fiber per serving. Whole grains can be found in breads, crackers, bagels, tortillas, bread sticks, English muffins, cereals, pasta, brown rice, corn meal and bran.

VEGETABLES - provide vitamin A, vitamin C folate, potassium, and fiber. Fresh seasonal vegetables include cherry tomatoes, celery, cucumber circles, colorful pepper strips, baby carrots, sugar snap peas, broccoli, and cauliflower.

FRUITS - provide nutrients such as vitamin C, folate, potassium, and fiber. Fresh seasonal fruits include cantaloupe, watermelon, grapes, apples, oranges, bananas, plums, clementine, blueberries, strawberries, peaches, applesauce with natural sugar, low sugar fruit cups.

DAIRY- provides calcium, potassium, vitamin D, protein, and other nutrients. Healthy bones and teeth! Organic or natural if possible-all kinds of hard cheese, cream cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese, low fat or fat free.

PROTEINS - provide vitamin B (niacin, thiamin, riboflavin and B6), vitamin E, iron and magnesium. Tuna packed in water or olive oil, legumes, natural peanut or almond butter, nitrate, and hormone free meats.

Communication: Teachers communicate with parents by sending home periodic letters, e-messages and through notices posted on their bulletin boards. The school encourages close communication and cooperation between parents, teachers, and the Head of School. Conferences may be initiated by the parents or by the school as need arises. All teachers will hold parent conferences twice during the school year.

If a significant change occurs in your home, please consider informing your child's teacher as soon as possible. All information will remain confidential. Changes that may affect your child's behavior, security, and wellbeing include: one or both parents being away from home; new person in the home; illness of either parent or sibling; any hospitalization; accident or death in the family; new caretaker, moving; contemplated separation or divorce; or death of a pet. The classroom teacher will keep you informed of any significant changes in the school environment which may affect your child.

In the rare case in which conflict arises, please schedule a time to visit and resolve the issue with your child's teacher and/or the Head of School. If further action is needed, contact the Board of Directors. Please refrain from calling/texting your child's teacher on their personal phone during school hours.

All messages during school hours that need immediate attention should go through the school office.

Snow Day Procedure: If the El Paso Public Schools have canceled classes due to inclement weather, the school will be closed as well. However, as a safety measure for our teachers, the school may close even if the public schools are open. The school will notify you by e-mail and text if there is to be no school on a day when the public schools have decided to be open. Please do not risk your child's safety by venturing out when the roads are hazardous.

Classroom Visits: Classroom visits are encouraged and welcomed. Come and spend some relaxed time with your child so you can share what goes on during a school day. However, because unscheduled visits can be disruptive to the teacher and students, we reserve the right to place restrictions on visits. We strongly encourage parents to contact the teacher prior to any classroom visits. Considering the current COVID- 19 pandemic, parents will not be allowed to enter the building unless specific arrangements and exception has been given by the Head of School.

Pets: Pets are ordinarily not allowed on the school campus without prior permission.

FINANCIAL POLICY

Annual Fees & Last Month's Tuition: A registration fee and supply fee make up the annual fees due at time of registration, payment of which initially secures your child's placement.

The last month's tuition is due by May 31st, 2022 to secure enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year. This deposit will be applied to May 2023 or the student's last month of attendance if the required advance thirty-day notice (see below) is given of premature withdrawal.

If withdrawal prior to the start of the school year is needed, a written request must be submitted to the Office no later than June 25th, 2022 for a supply fee and last month's tuition refund. A portion of the annual fee is considered a registration fee and is non-refundable (\$250). Annual fees processed past the June 25th withdrawal notice deadline are not eligible for partial refund.

Tuition Payments: Tuition payments are due on or before the first day of the month. A late payment fee of \$15.00 per child will be charged after the 10th of the month. Children will not be able to attend school if a payment is delinquent by more than 30 days. Parents can opt to pay the full year's tuition in advance. If you have a problem paying the monthly tuition charge by the date requested, please discuss your situation with the Head of School.

Invoices will be sent via email and electronic payment of monthly tuition is preferred. Payments may be made by cash, check, ACH, or credit card (with notice). If you are paying with cash, be sure to get a receipt prior to leaving the office and please have the exact amount as the school does not have change. Checks can be mailed or given directly to the Elementary office. A 1% fee will be assessed on all ACH transactions. A 3% fee will be assessed on all credit card payments.

All returned checks or electronic payments will be assessed a \$25.00 fee.

Families will be informed of any special collections which are sanctioned by the school, but optional, through written communication from the Head of School. Families who elect to participate in these events should pay monies to the school office. Elementary school families should never feel obligated to participate in purchasing group lunches, teacher gifts, or similar collections. The choice to participate in these collections is at the individual discretion of each family.

Annual fees, last month tuition and the current year tuition **MUST** be paid in full by the last day of school to ensure your child's spot in the Elementary program for the following fall. If your account is not current, your child's spot will be vacated and filled with the next name on the waiting list.

Payment in Case of Withdrawal from Program: If a child is to be withdrawn from the school, a thirty-day written notice to the Elementary office is required. If such notice is not given, one full month's tuition beyond the withdrawal date will be billed. A full month's tuition is due on the first day of each month (August-May), therefore notice must be given thirty days prior to the first day of the next month of attendance. Please note that premature withdrawals will not be prorated. The only exception will be made for active-duty military families who are relocated due to a change in military orders.

Financial Assistance: The School Board desires that all students be able to attend the Elementary school, regardless of their ability to pay the tuition fees. At this time, we plan to build a scholarship fund for future applicants with financial need. If you are in need of assistance, please contact the Pastor of First Presbyterian Church. All inquiries will be kept confidential.

Financial Needs of the School: ***First Presbyterian Elementary School is a nonprofit school which operates at the pleasure of the Governing Boards of First Presbyterian Church of El Paso. The Church graciously donates the space and utility requirements for the school. All salaries, security, maintenance, classroom supplies, and equipment are provided by the school tuition and annual fees. The fees collected do not cover the cost of a growing and improving school. We are in constant need of funds to expand our library, purchase new learning materials, obtain new outdoor equipment, and to initiate new programs needed to keep the school up to date. No gift is too small, and all donations are tax deductible to the giver.

Ways to Donate May Include:

- **OSBORNE TRUST SCHOLARSHIP FUND** – Provides financial assistance for family hardships and for children who otherwise would not be able to attend.
- **TEACHER TRAINING FUND** - Provides for quality elementary level education through workshops and seminars for our staff.
- **BIRTHDAY BOOK CLUB** - All students and friends can donate a book to the Preschool in honor of their birthday.
- **SPECIAL WISH LIST** - Special needs and requirements of the educational curriculum that are not met by our budget include playground maintenance and updated equipment, audio-visual equipment, software and computer equipment needed for the curriculum program, and various manipulatives for the classroom learning centers.
- **VOLUNTEERING** - The school is always in need of volunteers! You may choose to help in the classroom, the office, the playground, at special functions, or become a board member.
- **IN-KIND DONATIONS:** We are always in need of donations consisting of paper goods, snacks, art supplies, plants, etc.

SCHOOL EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Early Birds Program: Early Birds is a service provided for parents who need to drop children off before school begins. Students will begin their day on our outdoor playground or in an indoor classroom. The fee will remain constant regardless of how many days in a month your child attends. The earliest you may drop your child off is 7:30 a.m.

Core Education Program: School is in session Mon-Fri from 8:30 am to 2:45 pm for Sprouts students and 8:30 am to 3:00 pm for Seedlings and Saplings. Teachers are not available to receive students until 8:20 am. Please bring your child to school on time. This will help them begin their day smoothly and prevent class disruption. A child may feel uncomfortable arriving after everyone else has become involved in learning activities. When you bring your child, you must walk them to our health screening station and stay with them until their screening is completed.

Afternoon Enrichment Program: Afternoon Enrichment is a program offered to all students who attend the elementary school and is held from 2:45/3-5:20pm. Your child may attend two, three, or five days a week depending on availability. Special enrichment opportunities and tutoring are offered at this time. We highly recommend sending an appropriate, nourishing snack/refreshment in addition to a packed lunch if your child is enrolled in our Afternoon Enrichment program.

Special Programs: The children participate in two programs during the school year. The programs are held at Christmas and at the end of the school year. We also celebrate religious holidays which take place in the Sanctuary whenever possible.

Field Trips: The school encourages field trips on a regular basis . You will be notified in writing in advance of each field trip. Parent chaperones are often asked to attend field trips. Parents with proper insurance may also be asked to provide transportation. Each child is safely secured in a seat belt or booster seat and each car also carries a cell phone and first aid kit.

STEM Fair: STEM Fair is held during the Spring semester, student participation is mandatory.

Birthdays & Other Special Days: We encourage students to celebrate birthdays. Miniature cupcakes, donuts or cookies are handled easily by the children and greeted as a special treat. Birthday party invitations will not be distributed in school, unless all students in the class are included. We cannot guarantee that the invitations distributed in this manner will get home.

The school will celebrate many special days, including birthdays, however, we will not distribute candy, candy bags, goodies or other unhealthy items to students. Please refrain from sending them to school.

Birthday Book Club: Your child is invited to join the Birthday Book Club by donating a book or money for a book to the school in honor of his/her birthday. A special bookplate is placed inside the book giving the donor's name, birthday, and age at the time of the gift. The books are kept in the library and are available for use by all classes.

CURRICULUM

General: Our child-centered, learner-driven, developmental curriculum is continuously renewed and adapted. We stay abreast of the latest research in elementary education both on a national and international level. We review and reform our curriculum after careful reflection on theory and practice, keeping in constant focus our unique community of learners.

The curriculum of First Presbyterian Elementary School is drawn from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) which are widely adopted standards in both public and private schools in the state of Texas along with proprietary holistic child development standards. Our teaching methodology, however, is unique. We follow a Reggio Emilia approach to early education, which promotes key fundamental values relating to how children learn. These core values have been adapted to our school based on our culture, environment and the specific needs of our community. Our interpretation of the Reggio core values, as outlined in the summary of our approach below, continues to progress as our educational methods develop to connect the intellectual, spiritual, social, physical and emotional needs of each child we serve.

The distinguishing features of our Reggio approach: Each child is viewed as a strong, capable, resilient, curious citizen with great potential. Children arrive prepared with amazing skills! As educators we facilitate and support the revelation of these skills through our developmentally appropriate curriculum, from First to Sixth Grade. Inspired by their own interests, exploration and wonder, children have ample opportunities to become a successful community of learners.

The most recognizable feature of Reggio pedagogy is the use of the environment as the third educator, following parents and teachers. The center-based environments are rich with stimuli and related opportunities, contributing to the quality of experiences for both children and the adults involved in the school. The environments prompt communication and relationships thus inspiring an extraordinary social exchange.

In collaboration, the child, teacher and parents along with the community are all active in the learning process in an authentic way. Each “player” is a rich natural resource available to support the education of each child and one another. Through a powerful documentation process we are able to continuously detail an account of each child’s learning journey. Teachers use an assortment of documentation methods resulting in a portfolio with artwork, photos, writing samples, progress reports, completed projects and quotes from the child.

Our curriculum offers opportunities for bilingual and multicultural experiences. In keeping with Reggio approach, and acknowledging our unique geographic and cultural context, we incorporate Spanish language and Mexican traditions into our daily programming.

Students are exposed to the repetitive rudiments of the Spanish language through greetings, prayers, songs, books, stories, natural routines and new vocabulary. The benefits of dual language are directly related to higher brain development, flexible thinking skills, higher intelligence levels and cultural, racial and religious tolerance and understanding.

Music produces “beat-ful”, “tuneful”, and “artful” children. The ability to keep a steady beat is vital to language and motor development. The ability to match pitch creates an inner-voice, which is vital to intellectual development. And finally a shared experience that promotes healthy emotions, and builds a sense of beauty is the “art” part of music classes. In a society that seems increasingly disconnected and individualistic, music at our school emphasizes positive feelings and belonging.

Technology has a respected place in our curriculum as a tool that students, teachers and parents use collaboratively to discover new things and document the learning process.

Our outdoor environments truly unite us in collaboration with nature! The playground’s intentional design encourages skill development in a variety of domains concurrently, resulting in whole-child learning and conducive spaces that our teachers and students will spend much of their day learning in. The natural beauty and serene atmosphere serves as an antidote to the sometimes frantic world of children.

Morning Launch Discussion: Socratic Method, SEL talking circles, literacy exercises, calendar math

Core Skills: Core Skills are focused primarily during the morning

Project Cycles: Project-based learning

Specials Classes:

Spanish:

Homework: Homework has long been a staple of school experience, but is it really a good practice? A quick Google search on the subject will reveal that it's a hotly debated issue. The most recent large-scale research on the subject was done by Harris Cooper in 2006, and it indicated there was no strong evidence of correlation between homework and student achievement in grades 1-6.

Because the Reggio Emilia approach adopted by our Elementary school relies so heavily on exploration, creativity, and group collaboration, it might be better to ask the question, "What kind of homework complements this approach?" The answer to that question will likely look a lot different than traditional rote memory homework, worksheets, or repetitive problems.

First Presbyterian Elementary School encourages all students to read at home each night, both aloud with family and individually. Login details for carefully chosen adaptive math programs will be sent home with each student for daily practice, 10-15 minutes a day is recommended, to complement classroom curriculum. Students in the upper grades may have long-term projects that require research (exploration) and occasional collaboration with other students outside of school hours. Students who are learning to play a musical instrument should practice at home daily. Conversations around the dinner table about current events or playing a board game with the family are also valuable home-learning opportunities.

Finally, as parents you are the first and most important teachers our students have--we would much rather they spend valuable, quality time with you during their time at home. Cook meals, read books, explore cultural traditions, learn something new together--those are the real "homework" experiences that will be remembered and valued for a lifetime.

Assessment: Throughout the year, as the teacher plans the curriculum, he/she will use anecdotal observations, work samples, project exhibitions, progress reports and feedback from families to help him/her plan work that is appropriate for the children in his/her class. Each of these assessment tools provide the teacher with a clearer understanding of the individual

abilities and needs of the children in his/her class. In both informal and organized ways, teachers document how a child progresses throughout the school year. During parent/teacher conferences, teachers share this information about each child's milestone achievements with their family. To assist the teacher in developing the most appropriate curriculum for the students, he/she may share observations and progress reports with the school's administrator. Any assessment information is kept confidential in the child's file. In the event that individuals other than teaching staff, administrators or child's legal guardian desires access to assessment information, permission must be given by the parent/legal guardian before that information may be released.

Nine Virtuous Roots: The roots of a tree connect it to the earth, hold it upright, and provide it with nourishment to grow. In the same way, our core values connect us to our communities, help us to make good choices, and provide nourishment for our spiritual and emotional growth. The nine virtues we emphasize at First Presbyterian Elementary School come from the Christian Bible but have been embraced and practiced by people of good character in many traditions.

- Love** - Everyone is valuable, beautiful, important. We care about each other, and we try to take care of each other.
- Joy** - We like to laugh, smile, and play. It's okay to be sad sometimes, but we look for happiness and try to share it.
- Peace** - We try to solve our problems in a way that works for everyone, respects everyone, and helps everyone.
- Patience** - Growing and learning take time. We wait for each other and we forgive each other, again and again and again.
- Kindness** - We are friendly and nice to everyone we meet, and try to treat other people the way we want to be treated.
- Goodness** - We do what's right, and try to see the best in the people and things around us.
- Faithfulness** - We keep our promises and our commitments, and try to tell the truth.
- Gentleness** - We are careful and thoughtful, and try not to cause any harm with our words or with our bodies.
- Self-Control** - We are responsible for decisions, and we try to think before we speak or act.

These virtues extend beyond the classroom and take root in the conversations, interactions, and decisions of our wider community-- parents, teachers and students alike. In this way, we are all connected, all nourished, all growing, teaching and learning together.

Guidance Counseling & Discipline: First Presbyterian Elementary School is a vital part of First Presbyterian Church. The Pastoral staff of the Church is available to our students and families for guidance or counseling. Their doors are always open.

As part of our curriculum, teachers work to assist students in developing appropriate social skills as they build relationships. As students' social skills develop, conflicts may arise. When students demonstrate inappropriate behaviors or express emotion in an unhealthy way, teachers and administrators guide the child as he/she resolves the conflicts, identifies feelings, and discovers solutions. There is no one-size-fits-all response to inappropriate behavior and each situation will be given individual consideration and response, always demonstrating a healthy respect for the student and the community.

At all times, our goal is to guide students as they develop. Teachers and administrators will never use physical punishment such as shaking or hitting, use threats or derogatory remarks or withhold food from a student.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

General Health: The health form must be completed, signed, and dated by a physician within 30 days prior to your child's first day of school and submitted to our office before they attend. The Texas State Department of Health rules that every child should be immunized for DTaP, Polio, HepB, Hib, PCV, MMR, Varicella and Hep A. All children must have their vision and hearing tested annually.

- If your child is sick, please call the office by 8:00 am. Teachers appreciate knowing if your child will not be able to attend.
- Parents are requested to notify the school office if a child has a communicable disease such as COVID-19, chicken pox, streptococcal throat infection, meningitis, impetigo, head lice, conjunctivitis, etc.
- Your child may be sent home if any symptoms of illness appear during the day. In such cases, your child will be immediately isolated from the others, and you will be contacted. The school will not administer any

medications unless we have a signed and completed Authorization for Dispensing Medication Form on file and all medications administered will be documented on the form.

- Please be sure to check backpacks for prescription medication, over the counter medication or other items that may be hazardous to children (example: food that may cause allergic reactions in other children). Sunscreen should be applied prior to your child's arrival at school. If your child requires reapplication, please provide the teacher with the sunscreen labeled with your child's name.
- In order to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), First Presbyterian Elementary school has implemented protocols based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Executive Orders from the Governor, Local City Directives by the Mayor, and the City of El Paso Department of Public Health (DPH). More information about our COVID-19 policies is available [here](#). Please note these will be updated based on the evolving situation and directives.

Keep Your Child Home If They:

- Have a fever or have had one during the previous 24-hour period.
- Have vomited or had diarrhea within the last 24 hours.
- Have an active cold.
- Have heavy nasal discharge.
- Have a constant cough.
- Are significantly fatigued. Rest at such times may prevent the development of serious illness.
- Have symptoms of a possible communicable disease. (These are usually sniffles, reddened eyes, sore throat, headache, and abdominal pain, plus a fever.) Please notify the school immediately if the child does have a communicable disease.
- Have a rash, please consult a physician before returning to school.

Your Child May Come to School If:

- A cold is over, but a minor nasal drip remains.
- There has been an exposure to a communicable disease and the school's designated isolation period has been observed.

Evacuation/Emergency Preparedness Plan/Security: While we hope that we never have to react to an emergency on our property, or in our city, we do have a formal Emergency Preparedness Plan that will be followed in such an event. We practice routine fire drills and emergency preparedness procedures. If necessary to evacuate our property, we have arranged to relocate to the YWCA located at 1600 Brown St. 79902, (915) 533-7475. You may request a copy of the full Emergency Preparedness Plan in the school office.

Accidental Injury: In case of accidental injury, we will make an immediate attempt to contact a parent. If we can't reach you, we will call the child's physician. If necessary, we will also call an ambulance or paramedics. The Head of School, or designated staff member in Head of School's absence, will be in charge and make all decisions about the care of the child until the arrival of a parent, the physician, an ambulance, or paramedics. It is to your child's benefit that you keep the school up to date on phone numbers and emergency contacts.

Parking Lot Safety: Parking lots are a source of danger to children. Please assist us in following these safety rules:

- All school foot traffic will need to enter and exit through the playground gate at the church office entrance. Parking is available on the east side of the building near the church office.
- While driving, enter and leave the parking lot with extreme caution. Be on the lookout for children.
- Always hold your child's hand when going to and from an automobile. Do not let your child run ahead of you. He or she might inadvertently run behind a car that is starting to back out.
- Please avoid conversing with other adults in the parking lot unless your child is seated safely in the car.
- On our part, we will take walks to the parking lot with students and discuss safety precautions.
- NEVER leave your child/children unattended in the car while picking up other children! If necessary, ask another parent to watch your sleeping child.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

You may contact the Texas Abuse/Neglect hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or at www.txabusehotline.org.

It is a criminal offense to possess or consume alcoholic beverages on a public street, alley, or sidewalk within 1,000 feet of a facility that the person knows is a private school offering K–12 instruction. Texas Alcoholic Beverage Code §101.75.

Acts of hazing that occur on or off the campus of an educational institution, including a private high school, must be reported to the appropriate official of the institution. Texas Education Code §§37.151 and 37.152.

All illegal substances including smoking, tobacco and firearms are prohibited.

