

Parent's Handbook



Footsteps

West University Church of Christ
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Introduction

Footsteps is a program designed to offer children the maximum in spiritual, intellectual, and physical growth. The curriculum allows the child opportunities to learn about God and His plan for mankind. Basic moral principles are taught that help provide the children with a good foundation for facing the future. Much emphasis is placed on the home, loving, sharing, giving, and obeying. Parents are encouraged through newsletters and verbal communication to work with their children at home to reinforce their family unit and provide a positive attitude toward learning.

Each school day is divided into three main segments: classroom participation, learning centers, and physical exercise. In the classroom the students are involved in Bible stories, application stories, handwork, and arts and crafts. The children also learn group participation and classroom discipline during this educational period. The learning centers provide intellectual growth through a non-competitive environment. The students are worked with individually, not as a group. Basic pre-school skills designed to aid them in Kindergarten are taught. Each child has the opportunity to move at his or her own pace until he or she has mastered his skills. Unstructured free play is scheduled at least once in the day. Both an indoor and outdoor area is provided for their physical development. We do not take children outdoors if there is an Ozone Alert issued by the City of Houston and observed by HISD.

Footsteps provides many other activities during the year such as Community Helper visits, Holiday parties, and dress-up days. Every activity is designed to broaden their scope of understanding and to guide their environmental experiences into a positive atmosphere for learning.

A child's world is so fragile. Their susceptibility to all kinds of influences is at their peak between the ages of one and five. At Footsteps, time becomes of maximum importance in molding and shaping these young lives. We, the staff, take our role as your child's teacher, very seriously.

This handbook is written to give the reader a glimpse inside Footsteps School at West University Church of Christ. It has taken years of hard work and preparation in developing a foundation for this program. It is the sincere hope of those involved in the planning of this program that it be used to the glory of God.

Parental Notifications and Communication

We feel it is very important to communicate to parents. We will use several different methods to communicate information and any other changes. We will use verbal notification, written correspondence, notes posted in the hallways and classrooms, and e-mail notes.

Likewise, should you feel the need to review and discuss the policies and procedures of Footsteps Mother's Day Out, please feel free to contact the director. You may contact the director through any means comfortable and convenient to you.

It is equally important to encourage parents to visit with their child about their day at school. Open communication between parents and teachers promotes a positive relationship and stimulates parent-child interaction. We want to make you, as parents, feel a part of the program. Your child has a better chance for growth in the right direction with all of us working together toward this goal.

Schedules

Classes are held each Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from September to May. The hours of operation are 9:30am to 2:30pm. You have the option of choosing from two schedules:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday – 3 day program

Tuesday and Thursday – 2 day program

Footsteps will operate on a nine month school calendar, much like Houston Independent School District (HISD). The months of operation will be September to May of each calendar year. Our program will follow the HISD school calendar for major holidays and weather closing.

Each class is provided with a daily schedule. We reserve the right to modify the schedule to suit our Bible story or special holidays and events. We expect to notify you of any changes either verbally, through written correspondence and/or via e-mail. Please make it a point to have your child here every day possible and allow her or him to attend the entire class day. This will offer security to the child and establish a routine. Besides, this way your child won't miss a thing!

Important Monthly Events

September

1st Day of School

November

Thanksgiving Holidays

December

Christmas Holidays

March

Spring Break/Easter

May

Last School Day

The parents will also receive a monthly calendar indicating class themes, parties, and holidays. Parents are encouraged to participate in our special activities. You will be notified and invited to do by verbal notification, written correspondence, notes posted in the hallways and classrooms, and e-mail notes.

Our program dates follow HISD school calendar.

Centers

Footsteps provides Manipulative Centers for ages two-five. Each Manipulative Center provides the child with an awareness of his or her environment through practical life skills and sensorial development. The Centers encourage the child's conquests for natural development of his skills. Many areas of development are presented. The child experiences math and language development, pencil control, eye-hand coordination, sequence of events, dressing skills, and the development of their sense of order so that he or she can manipulate life in a progressive direction. The child is given a chance to explore and develop without competition or criticism. Many children have never experienced "being me" and it is so important that

children be allowed to discover themselves. Their functions spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and socially depend on their abilities to accept and love themselves as they are, as God created them. It is the purpose of the Manipulative Centers to provide an environment so that these things can be accomplished.

Curriculum and Administration

Footsteps will be administrated by the Director, and the Elders appointed to the congregation. The Mother's Day Out Task Force is a body selected by the director, approved by the elders to aid in administration and policy development.

The curriculum is thematic in nature, with each theme revolving around several related concepts. They are consistent with the Christian principles taught at West University Church of Christ and based on the authority of the Bible (in the event there are discrepancies found in the material to the Word of God, appropriate changes will be made.) The daily schedule allows for a balance of indoor/outdoor, teacher initiated quiet/active, large muscle/small muscle, and individual/small group activities. The curriculum is always available for parents to review.

Enrollment Process

Admission shall be open to any child without discrimination in regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religious belief, or political beliefs. Priority registration for West University Church of Christ members and current enrollments will be in March of each spring semester. All children must be re-enrolled if they plan to return to the program the next year. The following items must be returned, as well as, the first and last month's tuition in order to complete each child's enrollment:

- Enrollment/Application Form
- Immunization Record
- Registration Fees (non-refundable)
- First and Last months tuition

Should the enrollment process change, we will use verbal notification, written correspondence, notes posted in the hallways and classrooms, and e-mail notes.

Immunization Requirements

Each child enrolled to the Footsteps program must meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of State Health Services. This requirement applies to all children in care from birth to 14 years of age. All immunizations required for the child's age must be completed by the date of admission. For a current schedule please visit the following web-sites: www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize or www.cdc.gov/vaccines.

Acceptable documentation for immunization records will consist of the original immunization record or a photo copy of the original record. The immunization record must include:

1. The child's name and birth date;

2. The number of doses and vaccine type;
3. The month, day and year the child received each vaccination; and
4. The signature and stamp of the physician or other health care professional who administered the vaccine.

No child will be admitted to Footsteps without immunization records. Footsteps believes the risk is too great to its current student body and its teachers to admit a child who is not actively participating in a state approved and state recommended immunization program.

Statement of Health

Health status information is critical to ensuring that the individual needs of children are met, while protecting the health and safety of all children in our care. Therefore, it is a requirement that each child, have on file, a Statement of Health.

Upon the initial enrollment into the Footsteps program, the child's custodial parent may provide a "statement of health" followed by their signature, and the name and address of the child's current pediatrician.

Within 12 months of the date of admission to the Footsteps Mother's Day Out Program, each child must provide Footsteps Office with a written statement, from a health-care professional who has examined the child within the past year, indicating the child is able to take part in the child-care program.

Hearing and Vision

Each child who is 4 years old by September 1st is required to be screened or examined by a professional for possible vision and hearing problems. Footsteps is required to obtain each child's screening records and keep them on file in the Footsteps Office. For more information please feel free to visit the following web-site: www.dshs.state.tx.us/vhs/.

Fee schedule

Class	Monthly Tuition 3 days	Monthly Tuition 2 days	Registration	Supply Fee
12-18 months	\$325.00	\$250.00	\$100.00	\$150.00
18-24 months	\$325.00	\$250.00	\$100.00	\$150.00
2 year old	\$325.00	\$250.00	\$100.00	\$150.00
3 year old	\$325.00	\$250.00	\$100.00	\$150.00
4-5 year old	\$325.00	\$250.00	\$100.00	\$150.00

THE REGISTRATION AND SUPPLY FEE ARE NOT REFUNDABLE.

*We will offer sibling discounts as follows:

- 1st sibling \$20 discount monthly on tuition=\$230/month
- 2nd sibling \$30 discount monthly on tuition=\$220/month

We will follow HISD guidelines regarding age limits for each class. Each child must be the age according to the class by September 1st.

Tuition is based on a certain number of classes during the nine-month school year. The charge per month does not fluctuate. Because our program requirements force us to engage staff based on the number of children enrolled, we cannot give tuition refunds for class days missed. Tuition must be paid by the first class day of the month. Footsteps will accept checks, cash, and money orders. Please make checks payable to Footsteps. Registration and supply fees are due at the time of enrollment. A 10-day grace period is allowed for payment; however, a late payment fee of \$25.00 will be assessed for any monthly tuition not received by the 10th of each month. A charge of \$25.00 will be assessed for any returned checks. After receiving two returned checks, only money orders, cashiers checks, or cash will be accepted.

If a child is not picked up by 2:40 p.m., he/she will be moved to the front office and the parents will be assessed at \$10.00 late fee. An additional \$1.00 will be charged for every minute after 2:40pm. Late fee money will be used to compensate the classroom teacher(s) and enhance your child's classroom.

If you will be traveling and absent for 30 days or more, please discuss available options with the director. You may lose your enrollment status and fees, if arrangements are not made prior to your absence.

Program Specifications

Safety

All children must be signed in and out daily. This is a requirement set forth by the State of Texas Department of Childcare Licensing. In accordance with this policy, Footsteps will provide class rosters in the front rotunda where parents, grandparents, nannies, and any other caregiver will be required to comply with said regulation. Each parent or caregiver's name must be signed clearly and the time arrived next to the child's name. Parents, or caregivers, should leave any notes or special instructions on the sign in sheet so that the teacher can readily see them. Special instructions should also be verbally conveyed to the teacher. No child will be released to someone other than a parent without written authorization. Any person authorized to pick-up children must be prepared to show photographic identification before the child will be released to them.

Procedures for Release of Children

No child will be released to someone other than a parent without written authorization. Children will only be released to the Custodial Parent(s) and/or any person designated on the Footsteps Enrollment Form. This list of responsible persons will be designated by the Custodial Parent(s) at the time of enrollment into the Footsteps program. Any person authorized to pick-up children must be prepared to show photographic identification before the child will be released to them. It is the responsibility of the Custodial Parent(s) to keep this list updated and current.

If at any point, the designation of Custodial Parent changes due to separation or divorce, the Footsteps director must be given a copy of the court order containing a Judge's signature and court approved seal/stamp. The signature of an attorney or law clerk is not acceptable.

Open-Door Policy

Footsteps utilizes an Open-Door Policy. You, as the parent, without prior approval, may:

- observe your child during hours of operation
- observe the centers operations during the hours of operation
- observe the programs activities during hours of operation

Discipline

Planning ahead to prevent problems, defining limits, redirection and positive reinforcement are all techniques used at Footsteps. There will be no corporal punishment. Occasionally, brief periods of "time out" will be used if necessary. Biting is a very serious and dangerous occurrence with little children. The staff will at all times attempt to work with the child and family to stop the biting. If biting continues, however, a child may be subject to dismissal from the program.

Illness

Children, who have vomited, had diarrhea; fever or rash **within the last 24 hours must remain at home.** They may not return until they have been **symptom free for 24 hours without the use of acetaminophen, Imodium, or other suppressive medications.** If a child becomes ill with a contagious disease, it is imperative that the school is alerted in order to notify other parents and proper authorities if necessary. We expect to notify you of any contagious diseases or parasites either verbally, through written correspondence and/or via e-mail. If a child becomes ill while at school, he/she will be isolated, and parents will be called to come immediately. This would consist of an oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater; underarm temperature of 99.4 degrees or greater; accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness until medical evaluation indicates that the child can be included in program activities.

In case of sudden illness or accident, the program will urgently attempt to contact parents and if unsuccessful, those persons listed to contact in case of emergency on the application. In extreme emergencies, the child will be transported by ambulance to Texas Children's Hospital.

Dispensing Medications

Under NO circumstances will the Footsteps program or its staff administer medications. Exceptions to this policy would be Benadryl and/or an EPI pen for a several allergic reactions and diaper rash ointment.

Any child with a life threatening allergy will have written notification from the parent(s) and the child's current pediatrician. An EPI pen will have a prescription label from a recognized pharmacy containing the child's name and address, as well as, the pharmacy's name, phone number and address. The EPI pen must have an expiration date clearly visible.

Diaper rash ointment should be label with the child's name. If the ointment is in the child's bag, it is understood and implied that the Footsteps staff has the parent's permission to use and administer the diaper rash ointment.

Food Administration

Snacks will be provided both by the program itself and by parent volunteers. Lunches must be sent from home with all children on a daily basis. We ask that parents provide lunches for their children that are not high in sugar, salt, fat, and preservatives.

Teachers will eat along side the children during snack time and lunch in order to serve as models for children. Children will be encouraged to eat, but they will not be forced. Uneaten food will be sent home unless it cannot be transported in a clean fashion. Should a concern regarding an ongoing eating problem develop, it will be addressed to parents.

On special occasions, Footsteps will provide meals or special snacks. We expect to notify you of these special occasions either verbally, through written correspondence and/or via e-mail.

Arrival and Departure

Children will be allowed to enter classrooms at 9:30 a.m. Parents must accompany children to their classrooms and wait with the child outside the door until the teacher or assistant is ready to receive students. The teachers will be in their classrooms from 9:00 - 9:30 a.m. each school morning. It is important to allow the teacher this time undisturbed to prepare for the children's arrival. The teacher will greet each parent and child individually at the door and take any belongings the child is unable to carry. Parents are asked not to enter the room or linger after telling the child good-bye. If there is a need to speak with the teacher further, please arrange a time she may call you or meet for a conference.

Parents are asked to collect their children at 2:30p.m., or earlier. Parents should collect their children from their classroom door. Footsteps is a friendly and nurturing environment for all children and their parents. You are encouraged to visit with other families and it is a wonderful place to create new friendships. Please be mindful of the teachers and their schedule. The teachers need time to prepare for the children's departure, to vacuum, remove trash and ready their classrooms for the next school day. Please do not linger and allow your children to play in the classroom.

Water and Paint Activities

We will expose and allow the children to play with a water table, play dough, a sand table, washable markers, washable school glue and washable paints with his/her class. Their clothes may become dirty and/or soiled from these activities. You should send an additional set of play clothes should the need arise for their clothes to be changed.

Field Trips

Footsteps will provide a variety of field trips for the pre-k class, ages 4 and 5 years of age. These field trips will be offered during operational hours. He/She will travel in a vehicle driven by a Footsteps staff member. He/She will be expected to follow the program rules and to exhibit the appropriate behavior designated by the teacher. Each pre-k child is required to purchase and wear a 'field trip' t-shirt for each field trip. These shirts will be available for all students to purchase and wear.

We will use several different methods to communicate information and any other changes. We will use verbal notification, written correspondence, notes posted in the hallways and classrooms, and e-mail notes.

Transportation

Footsteps Mother's Day Out and West University Church of Christ does not provide transportation to and from school. It is the sole responsibility of the parent(s) to provide, arrange and confirm transportation for their child to and from Footsteps Mother's Day Out.

Animals and Classroom Pets

There will be no animals allowed on the campus of Footsteps Mother's Day Out. Currently, there are no classroom pets on the campus of Footsteps. Should the status of classroom pets every change; we will use several different methods to communicate information and any other changes. We will use verbal notification, written correspondence, notes posted in the hallways and classrooms, and e-mail notes.

Minimum Standards Handbook and DFPS Office

You are welcome and encouraged to review the Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers handbook. The Footsteps Office also has a copy that is available to view during the hours of operation. Alternately, you can find an electronic version on-line at: www.dfps.state.tx.us. Upon request, the Footsteps Office, and the director, will provide a copy of the most recent licensing inspection report.

The local DFPS office:

Department of Family Services
2221 West Loop South
Houston, TX 77027
713-940-5200

Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-252-5400
www.txabusehotline.org

Emergency Preparedness Plan

In the case of an emergency, the first responsibility of our Footsteps staff is to move the children to a designated safe area. In the event of a fire, the safe area will be the rear parking lot or the surrounding churches and/or neighbor's yards. St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and School located at 5308 Buffalo Speedway, Houston, TX 77005, will be a designated place to shelter the children.

Footsteps will participate in fire and evacuation drills once a month. These drills are timed and charted for the whole of the student body.

In the case of a flood or hurricane, the building used for the Footsteps program will be deemed the safest place. The children will be kept until a custodial parent can safely collect them from the Footsteps building. Footsteps will make use of the second story in the case of a flood.

Emergency evacuation maps are posted through out the building and in each classroom. Children will be counted and roll will be taken by the sign-in sheets, as well as, the blue emergency cards carried by the classroom teachers.

In the case of an emergency, we will notify the proper authorities such as fire, police, emergency medical services, and the health department.

The phone numbers you have given us will be the numbers our Footsteps staff will use to contact you. Hence, it is very important that you ensure all phone numbers and contact information is up-to-date!

Training and Education

Every member of the Footsteps Staff is trained in First Aid and CPR.

Each teacher is required to receive 15 clock hours of continuing education each year she works at Footsteps. These training hours are documents and records are kept in their personnel file.

Gang-Free Zone

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 penalty.

Nursing Mother's Room

Should you require the facilities to nurse an infant in comfort, please contact the staff or the director for directions. You may also provide breast milk for your enrolled child with written directors for the teachers to follow. Likewise, with our Open-Door Policy you may return at any time to breastfeed your child.

Personal Belongings

What to bring:

1. A complete change of clothing including underwear and socks. Children should be dressed in washable, comfortable play clothes appropriate for active play both indoors and outdoors. Please have your child in rubber soled, closed toe shoes at all times. ALL ITEMS MUST BE CLEARLY LABELED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME.
2. Every child needs a bag or backpack each day labeled with his name. This bag should be big enough to hold the child's work and belongings.
3. Diapers, wipes, labeled bottles or baby food, if needed.
4. Children under 18 months should bring a small blanket for naptime each day. It must fit inside their bag.
5. Older children need a cover for the cot they will rest on. We recommend a knapsack/nap mat, sleeping bag, etc.

What not to bring:

1. Children should not bring personal items to school unless requested by the teacher for a share time. These items can become a great source of unhappiness when they are lost, broken or misplaced.
2. No boots or sandals should be worn to school except on special occasions (such as Go Texan Day!).
3. Coats should not have strings, cords, or straps that hang from them.
4. No candy, gum, or carbonated beverages may be brought to school.
5. No toy guns, weapons, or other war toys are allowed.