



Parent Handbook

ST. ALBERT ALLIANCE CHURCH

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Parent Handbook

*Growing Roots Preschool
St. Albert Alliance Church*

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Parent Handbook

*Growing Roots Preschool
St. Albert Alliance Church*

Vision

Growing Roots Preschool (St. Albert Alliance Church Growing Roots Preschool Society) is under the mission and outreach of St. Albert Alliance Church. Growing Roots is a play-based early learning program that incorporates an emergent curriculum and evidence-based teaching. Children aged 3-5 will grow strong foundational root systems to nurture growth and well-being. The interactive, hands-on program cultivates curiosity and a love for learning, supporting cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual and physical development in a fun, faith-filled environment.

Goals

- To provide a healthy, nurturing, and safe environment
- To love, accept, respect, and appreciate each child and family
- To provide age-appropriate activities and materials that support children's curiosity and learning in fun and engaging ways.
- To encourage the physical development of large motor skills through play as well as fine motor development through manipulative toys, blocks, and puzzles.
- To encourage creativity and imagination by offering experiences in music, art, dramatic play and literature
- To encourage interest in language through games, stories, and conversation
- To partner with parents in the care and teaching of their children.
- To encourage confidence in growing skills in independence.

Our Staff

Our staff at Growing Roots Preschool are:

- Caring Christian Educators certified to work in an early childhood setting.
- Passionate about creating play-based invitations to learn and creating opportunities to challenge and engage each child.
- Complete Criminal Record Vulnerable Sector Checks and Child Welfare Record Checks every 3 years.
- Complete yearly Protection Plan Training.

Communication

Classroom Activities and events will be communicated through:

- Calendar available on the Growing Roots Website
- Monthly Calendar and Newsletter sent by email and posted outside the classroom
- Reminder emails and text messages

Guidance Policy

From the first day of school children will be taught in age-appropriate ways how to be kind to each other, how to be safe and how to be responsible. Children will be encouraged to talk about potential problems before they occur and how to treat others with respect. Staff will get to know each child and understand them to help them find solutions to problems that suit the individual child.

Staff will participate in yearly Protection Plan Training to learn about protecting and preventing child abuse. Punishment, discipline, isolation, restraint or abuse will not be used under any circumstance in the program.

Staff will use positive child guidance strategies to help children learn independent problem-solving skills and develop pro social behavior. Children will be involved in learning problem solving solutions to conflicts and assisted in building verbal communication and problem-solving skills. When a child's behavior requires guidance because it is unsafe or is negatively impacting another child or the classroom, staff will first remind them of classroom acceptable behavior. If the behavior persists the staff will either join the child in the center to model and practice appropriate behavior or will guide the child from the center or activity towards another, redirecting their attention towards positive activities.

Issues with behavior are seen as problems to be solved and skills to be developed through ongoing guidance, redirection, modeling, environmental modification and proactive planning, over reactive measures. The goal is for children to begin to be responsible for their own behavior, developing self-control, empathy and responsibility.

Should a child have ongoing issues with a particular behavior or set of behaviors, the child's behavior will be discussed with a parent or guardian at the end of class. Issues that are extreme or require support greater than what is available in the program will be discussed with parents to work towards solutions and find sources of extra support for the child.

Daily Activities

A typical day at Growing Roots will include:

1. **Circle Time**- Introduce and discuss learning concepts and ideas. Learning happens through discussion, questioning, singing songs, group activities, experiments, reading stories, movement and games.
2. **Dramatic Play**- includes centers such as a playhouse, dress up and other temporary centers based on current curriculum. These are set up so that children can role play and learn through experience. The students learn social skills such as turn taking, sharing materials, group interaction and friendship development.
3. **Creative Center**- includes an easel, playdough station and creative art table. Students are provided with different mediums and materials to encourage self-expression and to increase competence with tools. The focus is on process, rather than product.
4. **Directed Project Center**- Children are encouraged to participate in directed projects in small groups. Students learn to follow directions and reach a goal. They have assistance in learning to write their names and to learn proficiency in using scissors, writing implements, glue, paint, pastels and other materials. Children gain confidence in their ability to learn about letters, and the meaning and rules that these symbols have.
5. **Math**- A variety of open- ended learning activities are provided to allow children to explore concepts such as counting, 1 to 1 correspondence, patterns, and subitizing.
6. **Literacy**- We provide play -based activities to explore letter recognition, phonics, rhyming and sequencing. Our class uses Jolly Phonics to teach phonics and pre reading skills.
7. **Reading Center**- A quiet corner where students can look at books or have an adult read to them. Puppets, felt boards and other materials provide opportunities for children to tell and retell stories.
8. **Building Center**- Children can use blocks and other materials to engage in building and block play.
9. **Manipulatives**- Children can engage with various manipulatives and loose parts in open-ended play.
10. **Sand and Water Tables**- Center to promote sensory exploration.
11. **Gross Motor**- facility includes space where children can engage in gross motor and music activities. Students play games and engage in activities that require whole body movement, eye- hand coordination and develop pro social skills. Children learn by using equipment, wide games, music and other movement activities.

Children should dress in washable, comfortable clothing that enables them to freely participate in all activities and move easily. Clothing and shoes that they can put on and take off on their own helps them build confidence in their ability to meet their own needs and become self- reliant.

Daily Schedule

Time	Activity
09:00- 09:10	Arrival & Manipulatives
09:10- 09:20	Circle Time
09:20- 10:30	Centers
10:30- 10:45	Clean up & Bible Story
10:45- 11:00	Snack Time
11:00- 11:20	Music & Movement
11:20- 11:30	Story Time & Science
11:30	Pick up

Special Helper Days

Children will take turns being recognized as the special helper of the day. Children's special helper day will be marked on the monthly calendar. Children will be able to share a photo, video or special item from home on their special day. What they are to bring will be included on the calendar. (first rotation will be a special item from home, second rotation will be a picture of their family, third rotation will be to bring something that is their favorite color, forth rotation will be a favorite food or a picture of their favorite food).

Off Site Field Trips

Parents are informed about off-site activities through the monthly calendar sent home each month. Parents will be given information about the trip, the date and time of the trip, how many parent volunteers are needed, and transportation arrangements. Off- site field trips will be planned monthly. Children will meet teachers at field trip locations within St. Albert, transportation to be arranged by families to and from locations within the city limits. Examples of possible field trips are St. Albert Public Library, the Art Studio, or a local business.

Twice per year Growing Roots Preschool will charter a bus for an off-site field trip outside of St. Albert. (Examples of possible bus field trips are Rutherford House, Telus World of Science, Safety City or the Zoo). Details will be provided ahead of each trip. Parents will be required to register and pay in advance of each trip. Field Trip fees are not included in the monthly fees for the program and are optional. A minimum of 1:4 ratio will be maintained on all class trips. Some field trips may be booked on alternate class dates. To decrease costs, classes may be combined.

During off site trips, 1 staff member will carry a bag with a first aid kit, emergency medication, portable records for each child, an attendance sheet and a consent form with signed permission for each child on the trip. All parent volunteers will need to complete a criminal record check with vulnerable sector and child welfare record check to attend field trips. Volunteer forms will be sent out before the first week of class.

Special Celebrations

There are several special celebrations throughout the year outside of regular school days where parents and families are encouraged to attend with their children. Check the school calendar for the dates of the events.

Parent Orientation Night

Family Advent Celebration

Mother's Day (during class time)

Father's Night

Year End Wrap up & Graduation Evening

Birthdays – each child can bring an approved snack or treat to celebrate their birthday (see snacks section of the handbook for guidelines)

Admission/Enrollment/ Withdrawal Policies

Eligibility for Enrollment

- Children that are 3 or older before the first day of class and are potty trained, or working on potty training, are eligible to be enrolled at Growing Roots Preschool.
- The parent is responsible for submitting all enrollment forms for the child's attendance.
- Growing Roots Preschool is committed to supporting all children and families but realizes there are children who may be better served through the support of other local agencies. Parents will be notified if concerns arise.
- Children with extra support needs or attending preschool with a support aide will be integrated in the class with the least restrictive environment possible. To accomplish this, Growing Roots staff may work in coordination with other agencies and/or health care providers as needed. No contact with outside organizations will be made without written parental consent.

Waiting List

In cases when enrollment space is unavailable, children will be placed on a waiting list. Enrollment will then take place as space becomes available.

Registration Fee

Upon registration, the family must pay the \$100 registration fee. This fee is non-refundable should the family decide to not attend.

Withdrawal

Growing Roots Preschool understands that life circumstances may arise that would require families to withdraw from the program. In that instance, we request the following:

- 1 month, advance written notice stating when attendance will be ending
- Payment for the last month of attendance
- If the child is pulled without 1 month notice, payment is to be made immediately for the month.

Operational Policies

Board

- Growing Roots Preschool Society has an Advisory Board made up of members chosen by the St. Albert Alliance Church Board of Elders and the Preschool Director.
- The Board meets monthly to review the financial report, enrollment information, and other information as presented by the Preschool Director.
- The Advisory Board assists the Preschool Director in areas of policy, budget preparation and management, staffing decisions, and other facility operations.

Class Options & Fees

Small class sizes (maximum 16 students per class) allow children to build healthy relationships with each other and their teachers, creating a positive, small community atmosphere that allows children to be nurtured and flourish.

Three Days A Week: Morning Class

Monday, Wednesday & Friday | 9:00-11:30AM

Fee: \$100 per month for 10 months (September - June)

Two Days a Week: Morning Class

Tuesday & Thursday | 9:00-11:30AM

Fee: \$50 per month for 10 months (September - June)

Please note: the Federal-Provincial Child Care Agreement will automatically cover \$100 per child. The actual cost of our classes before the Federal-Provincial Child Care Agreement is as follows:

Three Days a Week: \$200

Two Days A Week: \$150

Field Trips to be paid in advance of each field trip.

Payment and Fee Schedule

All tuition payments are due monthly, regardless of child's attendance.

Billing

- Invoices will be emailed on the first of the month and payable at that time.
- Fees can be paid by:
 - Online through the link in the email you receive monthly.
 - Or by etransfer. send etransfers to St. Albert Alliance Church (ettransfer@staalliance.org). Please ensure your etransfer message includes your child's name and that the payment is for preschool so that the payment is applied to your account.

School Closures

Growing Roots will close for the following holidays:

Labor Day
National Day for Truth & Reconciliation
Thanksgiving
Remembrance Day
Christmas Break
Family Day
Easter
Spring Break
Victoria Day

There are two school breaks during the year, the preschool will be closed:

3 weeks for Christmas Break (beginning 1 week before the Public School's winter break)
1 week for Spring Break (following the St. Albert Public School Calendar)

The Preschool will be closed for time in lieu of the following evening events:

Parent Orientation Night
Family Advent Celebration
Father's Night
Year End Wrap up & Graduation Evening

Bathroom Procedures

Children must be potty trained or working on being potty trained to attend Growing Roots Preschool.

Encourage your child to use the washroom before coming to preschool. If you are not able to use a washroom before you arrive, please have your child use the washroom when you arrive.

The preschool classroom has a washroom that is always available for students to use. It is not necessary for students to request to use the washroom as they are encouraged to grow in independence and confidence through using the washroom when they need to. Children are expected to wipe their own bottoms, and staff are not able to do this for them. Children will wash their hands after using the washroom.

We understand that bathroom accidents do happen and that children in preschool are still gaining mastery of this skill. If a child wets their pants a staff member will locate the child's extra clothes and help them to change. This will be done as privately as possible but without closing doors, to maintain safety for staff and child. If a staff member needs to go into the washroom, to assist a child another adult will be called to maintain clear sightlines. The parent or guardian will be called if the accident is too messy for a simple change of clothes.

Child Attendance, Arrival, and Departure

Arrivals and Departures

- Church doors open at 8:45am. Classroom doors will open at 9:00 for the start of class.
- Pick up from class is 11:30am.
- We ask that children stay close to parents and calm while waiting for class doors to open and when departing as there are staff working and other events happening in the church.
- Parents/guardians are required to sign children in each day they are in attendance.
- Please advise if your child will be absent from school.
- For your child's protection, only persons authorized by the parent/guardian are permitted to take the child from the facility.
- Parents/guardians must list the names of anyone allowed to pick up the child as well as the names of anyone denied permission.
- Individuals listed in the child's file may be asked for photo identification to confirm their identity.
- On field trip days times may occasionally be shifted to accommodate the scheduled trip (ie. Pick up 30 minutes early due to short program or pick up 30 minutes late to accommodate bus trip).

Separation Anxiety

For many children coming to preschool is one of their first experiences being without family in a novel environment. Some children are eager to take on the new challenge and separate easily from their caregivers on arrival. Other children need more support in gaining confidence in their ability to meet the challenge. The most important thing a parent can do to support this process is to believe that your child is ready for this new adventure and that they will be able to get their needs met and thrive in the preschool environment. Children pick up on your confidence in them, so if you believe that they are capable, strong and brave, they will too!

At preschool we will always validate a child's feelings, assure them that it is normal to be anxious about trying something new and meeting new people. Of course, they miss their parents while they are at school, but it is okay to come and have fun with their friends and learn new things and they will see them when they are through. The hard part (especially for parents!) can be figuring out how and when to separate and leave if your child is having a tough time with the separation. We can support you in two different ways as part of this process.

The first is to leave quickly. Sometimes it works best to say a quick goodbye, hug your child once (or twice), tell them that they'll have a great time and you can't wait to hear all about it at pick up and then leave quickly. If this is the technique that works best for you, we will come alongside your child, comfort them, validate their feelings and help them see that they are cared for, that they are safe and that school is an environment that is fun and engaging for them.

The second strategy that is effective is to stay until your child is comfortable before leaving. Some children respond well to knowing that their adult will stay until they feel relaxed and engaged. There can be a wide variation in how long children need with this strategy. Some children only want their adult present for a few minutes. Other times a parent might stay through morning circle time and then leave or a parent may need to stay for a few days of school to help their child acclimatize. Our classroom open-door policy means that parents can stay as long or as often as they need or want to support their student. Parents will sign in with their child when they are planning to stay as an occasional observer.

In this strategy we do ask that when you have told your child that you are going to leave that, again, you say a quick good-bye and then leave. Delaying can cause a child to feel like they have something to worry about or possibly like the parent does not have confidence that the child is able to be at school on their own, strengthening the separation anxiety. We have also found that taking a child home when they are struggling with staying can often increase the separation anxiety and create a larger emotional response when they come back to school next time.

Preschool teachers want to support parents in whichever strategy works for them and their children as they navigate the newness of going to school independently. The decision to leave promptly or the decision to stay can both be difficult choices for parents. We are happy to send a text when your child has settled after you leave to reassure you that they are doing well.

Medical Policies

Medication

Preschool staff will only administer emergency prescription medication to children. Emergency medications are kept in a place that is accessible to staff but out of reach of children. All children who require emergency medication will have a completed medication record form signed by a parent or guardian. Medication must be kept in its original packaging with the pharmacy label detailing the child's information and dose. Medication will be administered according to label directions.

Information about the administration of the medication will be recorded, including information about who received the medication, the date, the dose and who it was administered by. The report will be stored onsite, an incident report will be completed, parents will be contacted, and Childcare Connect will be notified.

Emergency medication will be transported on off-site trips, and a copy of the medical consent will be carried with the portable records. Medication administered will be considered emergency first aid.

Should a child require non-emergent medication administered during class times, such as antibiotics for a medical condition or medication or feeding administered through a feeding tube during class time, this would be considered beyond the scope of training of the classroom educators. Educators will work with parents or support aides to create a plan that would allow for the child to receive their needed medication. This could include a parent, support aide or other caregiver staying for the duration of the program with the child or coming back to the class to attend to the needs of the child at the needed time. Medications would need to remain with the adult administering the medication to ensure safe handling and security of the medications.

Should a child appear to be unwell, and the child be unable to participate fully in the program, the parent or emergency contact would be called to pick up the child.

Communicable Diseases

- Staff members are trained in the signs and symptoms of illnesses and in proper hand washing procedures to prevent the spread of communicable disease.
- Every means will be taken to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.
- Please do not send your child if he/she is ill or has been ill in the last 24 hours. If your child is too ill to go outside or participate in activities with their class, they are too ill to attend.
- You will be called to pick up your child if any of the following symptoms exist:
 1. vomiting
 2. severe coughing
 3. fever
 4. diarrhea
 5. suspicious rash
 6. difficult or rapid breathing
 7. red, encrusted, or runny eyes
 8. lethargic behavior
- Every effort will be made to separate a sick child from the rest of the class while they are waiting to be picked up.
- Please do not give your child medication and send them to preschool if they have been ill through the night.

Incidents

Preventative measures will be taken to ensure the safety of staff and children. If an accident or serious illness occurs:

1. Staff will focus on the child's immediate care and administer first aid as needed. All staff are trained in Child Care provider first aid.
2. 911 and the parent/ guardian or emergency contact will be called.
3. A staff member will remain with the child until the parent/guardian/ emergency contact arrives. This includes if an ambulance needs to be called and the child requires transportation to the hospital. Should the staff member need to leave the preschool site, church staff will be asked to attend the class.
4. Staff will complete an incident report about the incident, which will be reviewed and signed by the program lead and the parent. Incident reports will be stored on site.
5. The program lead will report the incident to Child Care Connect immediately and will forward the written documentation within 2 business days.
6. All incidents are reported via the St. Albert Alliance Church Online incident report form. This form is used to report any unexpected event or circumstance that disrupts regular activity and ministry of the church. This could range from accidents, injuries and emergencies, to threats, security breaches, or to natural or human made disasters. These reports are submitted to the Lead Pastor who will follow up with action as required.

Safety and Emergency Plans of Action

- Children will never be left alone or unsupervised.
- There will be a minimum of 2 staff members present during the hours that children are present.
- Each employee is certified in CPR and First Aid.
- Fire evacuation and severe weather plans will be posted in each area that is used by the children.
- Fire drills will be held quarterly and at varying times. A record of drills is kept in the office.

Emergency Plan

- Emergency plans are located in each classroom.
- At the sound of the fire alarm, all preschool staff or volunteers must line up all children in classroom and evacuate to muster points.
 - During cold winter months, emergency evacuation blankets are located in marked bins in the Elementary Teaching Room by the evacuation door, to place around children as they evacuate.
 - The Nursery has a wagon located behind entry door to place small children in, to aid in evacuation.
- Front line team or office staff will come to Xtreme Kids hallway to assist in evacuation.
- Roster tablets and portable records (when preschool is in session) must be taken to ensure all children have been evacuated.
- Once room is cleared, lights are shut off and door is closed but not locked as indicator to fire department that room has been cleared.
- Evacuate to muster point sign located in the Northeast Corner of parking lot.
- Once at muster point, cross reference roster tablets with children present to account that all children are present. During preschool programming, parents or emergency contacts will be contacted through roster tablet communication to pick up their children.
- Report if children are all present or if there are children unaccounted for to the Preschool Director or the Xtreme Kids Ministry Staff.
- Preschool Director or Xtreme Kids Ministry Staff will report if all children are accounted for or if there are children missing to the Fire Marshall.
- Once all children are accounted for, parents will pick up children from muster point.
- In the event that it is not safe to remain outdoors during Preschool programming, such as during inclement weather, children will be picked up from Joseph Demko Elementary School, 200 Jenson Lakes Blvd, St. Albert.
- Preschool staff or Volunteers to sign child out on roster tablet when a child has been placed in the parent's care.

Parental Responsibilities

We recognize the importance of partnering with parents in their children's development. Preschool is an opportunity to build bridges between home and school to create community. Parents and families are welcomed into the program to attend events, field trips and volunteer. The program has an open- door policy where families are welcome anytime, communication is open, and feedback is accepted and addressed. Ongoing struggles are addressed with communication between family and school staff, creating space to collaboratively find strategies that will allow the child to succeed.

We do not require parent volunteers to run the classroom. Parents are welcome to participate in ways that enrich the children's experience but are not utilized for supervision ratios in the classroom during regular class time.

Supplies

Children require the following supplies:

- a backpack (large enough to hold their clothes and craft projects)
- a set of clothes (pants, shirt, socks and underwear) in a large Ziploc bag that will come back and forth to school with them to change into if they get wet or dirty.
- a pair of indoor shoes that will stay at school (please label with your child's name)
- a snack container or snack bag and water bottle (please label with your child's name). Each child will bring a nut free snack each day to eat at school.

Snacks

Children bring their own nut free snack from home to have during the program. A supply of nut free packaged snacks, such as granola bars, apple sauce, goldfish crackers or fruit snacks is kept on site in case a child does not bring a snack or if there is an accident or spill.

Children are able to bring a nut free snack to share with their class to celebrate their birthday. The program will follow AHS guidelines for preschools that allows parents to send a low-risk special treat to share. **The snack must be approved by the teacher in advance of the date.** Parents and teachers will make every effort to ensure that the snack is able to be enjoyed by all, taking into account dietary restrictions and allergies.

Occasionally for special events, a nut free snack may be prepared in class or provided by the preschool and shared.

Parents will include information about allergies and dietary concerns on the registration form. A list containing this information will be posted in the classroom to remind teachers of the needs of the children. No foods containing nuts will be permitted in the classroom.

Files

- Parents are responsible for keeping all information (addresses, phone numbers, work phone numbers, immunizations, emergency phone numbers, etc.) current.

Clothing

- Dress your child in clothing that is comfortable for a variety of active, and sometimes messy, activities as well as outdoor play. We do go outdoors as often as possible.
- Each child should be able to handle fastenings with minimum of help.
- Accidents happen. In case of a toileting accident, crafting accident or spill, please provide a complete set of clothing that is appropriate for the season in a ziploc bag in your child's backpack.
- Mark your child's name clearly on all articles of clothing.
- If your child is sent home in a change of clothes that belongs to Growing Roots Preschool, please wash and return it as soon as possible.
- As the weather changes, be sure to send sweaters, jackets, coats, gloves, hats, boots, etc. as warranted.

Our Connection to St. Albert Alliance Church

On occasion, you will receive information about St. Albert Alliance Church and activities that might be of interest to you. Growing Roots Preschool is a ministry of the church and welcomes all families to consider themselves a part of the broader church community. Please accept our warm welcome to attend any service or program. The church has pastoral staff available to you and your family should you want or need support. Everyone is welcome. For more information about St. Albert Alliance Church and its community please visit staalliance.org.