

Miss Mollie's School of Grace Handbook

*Our school is named in memory of Mollie Storck,
whose life taught us to cherish every child.*

***Before I was born the Lord called me; from my birth he has made mention of my
name.***

Isaiah 49:1

Welcome to Miss Mollie's School of Grace! As an integral part of both the Education and Outreach Ministries of Grace Lutheran Church, our goal is to celebrate and affirm the unique life of each child within a loving, secure, and creative environment. Our program is a combination of teacher-directed and free play activities designed to promote exploration and development in preschool children. Curriculum areas include gross and fine motor skills, language development, number usage and concepts, letter and sound recognition, socialization, and "independence skills." Guided instruction, learning centers, free-play, stories, art, music, field trips, drama, and worship all provide opportunities for learning, growth, and fun. We want your child to come to school excited about what the morning will bring and secure in the knowledge that he/she is welcomed and valued.

Mission Statement

To awaken the spirit of each child to the love of God, the mind to the wonders of the universe He has created, and the character to those tools of self-discipline which help to create respect for both self and others.

The Learning Environment

Statement of purpose

Miss Mollie's School of Grace seeks to provide high-quality early childhood education which fosters the development of the whole child in a loving, supportive Christian environment.

Philosophy

As has been often noted by early childhood specialists, “Play is a child’s work.” Children are naturally curious and learn through their exploration of the world. When they explore their environment and are encouraged to creatively combine and synthesize their growing awareness, their “work” advances. A loving, small group setting which encourages exploration and gently guides the developing preschooler is, we believe, the best environment to enhance a child’s development.

Goals

To provide a program which is:

developmentally based: appropriate for the age and ability level of each child
comprehensive: focused on addressing the development of the whole child
environmentally stimulating: rich in sensory experiences and materials which provide opportunities for exploration, discovery, creation, and manipulation
instructionally appropriate: flexible in approach, realizing that abilities, interests, knowledge, and learning styles are unique to each child
parent-friendly: welcoming to parents, the first and primary educators of their children
Christ-centered: dedicated to providing a loving environment where Christ’s love is experienced and taught through word and deed.

Teacher Guidelines

The role of teachers at Miss Mollie’s School of Grace is threefold: instructor, nurturer, and facilitator. Our role is to assist in the “unfolding” of each child. In providing support, encouragement, and direction, we enable children to explore their own abilities and take delight in their growing competence and awareness.

Enrichment Programs

Arts: Art, music, movement, and drama are incorporated in activities throughout the day. Additional music classes which encourage singing, finger plays, and rhythmic expression using a variety of instruments are an enhancement to our program.

Field trips: Field trips are scheduled throughout the year to take advantage of local resources. Visits to the Pumpkin Patch, the Museum of Life and Science, and Strawberry Farm are yearly, school-wide events, and teachers of individual classes coordinate with parents to arrange other age-appropriate experiences outside the classroom. These explorations outside the school setting provide reinforcement to classroom activities and opportunities for parents, students, and teachers to share experiences.

Fun Fridays: Children are encouraged to wear their Miss Mollie’s shirts each Friday, which begins with a whole school gathering of song and movement activities. One Fun Friday each month features a special guest from the Durham Community.

Parents as resources: Parents are welcomed to share interests and skills with children throughout the year.

Worship: Each day begins with a simple prayer service where children share in stories, song, and prayer. Pastors will lead worship on a regular basis in the church. Parents are invited to join us at these times.

Sample Daily Schedule

9:00 – 9:30	Free Play
9:30 – 9:45	Prayer time
9:45 – 10:30	Centers and teacher-directed theme activity
10:30 – 10:45	Snack
10:45 – 11:00	Clean Up
11:00 – 11:30	Circle – learning games, sharing, story, calendar
11:30 – 11:55	Playground or playroom

Policies and Procedures

Arrival and Departure

The red doorway which opens onto Green Street should be used when arriving at school. Door will open at 8:50 AM. To ensure your child’s safety, doors are kept locked at all other times. Late arrivals should ring the bell and wait for a staff member to respond.

Arrival: Parents should park cars along Green Street or in the church parking lot and bring children to classrooms. As delayed leave-takings can be distracting to teachers and hard on children, please bid your child a positive and reassuring goodbye and then exit the classroom. Parents who will remain in the building for any length of time for school or church activities are asked to park in the lot and leave curbside spaces free for others.

Dismissal: Children are dismissed at 12:00 PM through the playroom door, located under the ramp by the playground steps. Teachers will bring children to parents, after which time parents are responsible for monitoring children’s whereabouts and safety. **Parents and children are welcome to use the playground as a secure place to gather after children are picked up. Please do not allow your children to play on the ramp leading to the church or on the sidewalk in front of the building.**

It is important to be punctual at both ends of the day. The free play which begins each day provides time for children to transition into the day’s routine. Arriving late results in a child feeling rushed and harried, and children begin the day a step behind. Likewise,

children who remain behind after others have been picked up do not understand why their parent has not come on time and can become anxious. **A late fee of \$1.00 per minute for each minute past 12:05 will be assessed for late pick ups.**

Behavior management

Redirection is often the most effective tool in managing preschoolers, who are only beginning to experiment with group dynamics. Positive reinforcement and praise, coupled with simple, age appropriate, clearly-defined rules for behavior and consistency of expectations are used as incentives to encourage positive behaviors and self-discipline. Time in the “Quiet Corner” is helpful in certain situations as well. Teachers will work with parents if behaviors become troubling. Problems which do not respond to a variety of strategies may result in parents being asked to withdraw their child from school.

Birthday Celebrations

We will acknowledge each child’s birthday, and parents are encouraged to provide snacks on that day. A “half-year” celebration for children with summer birthdays is recommended. Suggestions for snacks include ice-cream, cupcakes, cookies, fruit or pudding cups, etc. Keeping things simple is best. **We appreciate your sensitivity to passing out invitations to birthday parties at school. If you cannot include the whole group, please mail your invitations.**

Children’s Personal Belongings

Please provide a **complete change of clothing – including socks and underwear** -- labeled with child’s name, to be kept at school. Parents should provide pull-ups and wipes for two year old who are not potty trained. We will supply smocks when needed.

We have opportunity for “show and tell” each week, and children are encouraged to bring items from home on that day. Individual teachers will schedule their particular day and inform parents. During the beginning of the year, your child may need a special blanket or toy from home to ease the transition to school. After the first month, please limit items from home to show and tell days. Toy weapons are not permitted.

Class Parties

We hold class parties for special days such as Halloween, Christmas, Valentine’s Day and other major holidays. Parents are asked to provide items for these parties throughout the year, and sign up sheets will be posted outside classrooms.

Clothing

Proper school attire is clothing which is neat, clean, comfortable . . . and washable! Expect your child to dabble in paint, clay, and other media which may come home on clothing as well as in art projects. Clothing should be easy for the child to manage in the

bathroom without too much help from teachers. Flip flops, crocs, and high heeled shoes are not allowed, as these create safety hazards.

Communication

School communications are sent on a regular basis via group email. School group email should not be used for unrelated purposes, such as advertising or solicitation. Please see director if you do not have email available to you.

Community Outreach

The Mollie's Moms group coordinates and sponsors several outreach activities each year to aid those in the Durham community and beyond. We keep the Preschool Pantry stocked with canned goods for those who come to the church seeking help and also participate in collection of gently used clothes for Welcome Baby and preparation of boxes for Operation Christmas Child. Suggestions for projects are welcome. The Moms are also active in arranging meals and child care for school families in times of illness, bereavement or other crises, and we encourage families to let us know when help and support are needed.

Conferences/Assessments

Conferences are scheduled twice yearly to discuss children's progress. The initial conference in September is for the purpose of "touching base" with parents regarding child's adjustment. The mid-year conference is a time to discuss teachers' more lengthy evaluations of child's progress. There will be no school on conference days, which are noted in the school calendar. If teachers see a specific need which needs to be addressed, or parents have concerns, each may schedule conferences aside from the designated times. We are here to assist in your child's development, so please do not hesitate to contact us if you have concerns on any matter.

Contacting teachers/director

Please call the school and leave a message if you wish to arrange a conference with a staff member, and we will arrange a time convenient for all. Director may be emailed at jean_marie_sam@hotmail.com and teachers may choose this communication option as well. **As teachers have responsibilities during arrival and dismissal, these are not convenient times for discussions, and we prefer not to discuss children in their presence.**

Early Intervention

We are all fortunate that early childhood intervention has progressed so significantly in the past decade. A school setting may sometimes bring to the fore behaviors which do not appear as discernible problems in the home, and teachers may suggest an evaluation by outside sources. We encourage parents to pursue this option when recommended, as early

interventions for small difficulties so often avert problems later on in life. The school requests the right to have outside evaluations made available to teachers and director so that we may best serve your child. Confidentiality will be observed by all staff members.

Field Trips

We believe that hands-on learning is valuable and schedule field trips throughout the year. **A fifty dollar (\$50.00) activity fee payable by September 15th covers the cost for a parent and child for Pumpkin Patch, Museum of Life and Science, and Strawberry Farm trips, as well as a Miss Mollie's tee shirt for your child.** Children are required to wear school tee shirts on field trips. A blanket consent form will be sent home at the beginning of the year. We need parent drivers and chaperones for trips and, because parents are needed for supervision, please check with teachers before including siblings. **Regular classes are not held on field trip days.**

Inclement Weather/Severe Weather

In the event of inclement weather, announcements for delays or closings will be made on WTVD 11 or News 14 Carolina. Please watch the television or check websites for Miss Mollie's School of Grace listings. Parents may also call the school number 919-682-6030 to check recorded message. Should weather become threatening during the school day, feel free to get your child early from school.

Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch is an optional lunch/play program, available to three and four year olds, which begins at the close of the school day and continues to 12:55 PM. Children should bring their lunch and drink in a lunch box or bag. We cannot provide for refrigeration or microwaving. Small lunches are best, and parents can gradually add more items if/when children indicate a need. A half sandwich, drink and fruit; yogurt, drink, crackers, etc. will usually suffice. Most children do not eat a great deal at this time. A sign up sheet is posted on the bulletin board outside the threes' classroom before the beginning of each month. Cost is four dollars (\$4.00) per day *when days are requested in advance*. Days missed because of children's absences are not transferable. Parents may elect drop-in days for Lunch Bunch on a random basis, and the cost for these days is five dollars (\$5.00) per day. Checks for Lunch Bunch must be written separately from tuition payments for bookkeeping purposes. **Late pick up fee of one dollar per minute will begin for Lunch Bunch children at 1:00 PM.**

Lutheran Schools Week

We celebrate Lutheran Schools Week during the first week in March with special events throughout the week. Parents are welcome to come with their child to participate in special events which occur on days when a child would not normally attend school.

Lettering

It is our policy to use manuscript lettering when writing child's name (e.g. – not all capitals) and you can help your child to identify his/her name by following the same procedure at home.

Mollie's Moms

Mollie's Moms (Dads welcome!) meet the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 9:00 AM for coffee and conversation. This group functions as our "PTA" and is instrumental in planning and assisting with special events.

Snacks

The school provides snacks each day. (Example: crackers, cheese, fruit, vegetables, and water.) **We do not allow peanut products in our snack program or at luncheons or other events, as this allergy is so potentially dangerous. Individual "allergy-alerts" will be posted in each classroom. We will work with parents whose children have documented allergies to provide snacks which are safe for the child but do not serve different food to children based on individual preferences or family lifestyle choices.** We expect that children eat breakfast before arriving at school and do not allow breakfast foods or drinks to come in with children in the morning.

Special Needs

Our mission is to affirm the unique life of every child. Therapists are welcome to work with special needs children or make observations during the school day, provided these do not interfere with classroom activities. If we find that we are not able to accommodate a child's needs for special care, we will work with parents to find another facility which better fits their child's situation.

Toilet Training

Children in three and four year old classes must be potty-trained unless arrangements pertinent to special needs have been made in advance with director.

Twos should come to school in pull-ups and in clothing which is easy for the child to handle in the bathroom. Training pants are encouraged for children at that stage of readiness. Parents should check children before bringing them to the classroom in the mornings to ensure that they are clean and dry when beginning the day and provide a supply of pull ups and wipes to be kept at school. Teachers will encourage and reinforce independent bathroom habits; however, as our day is short and our purpose educationally directed, toilet training is not a significant focus of the program.

Worship

Miss Mollie's School of Grace is a Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod institution and, as such, our mission is to acquaint children with the love of God and the wonders of His world. Children participate in daily worship, which is age-appropriate and teaches the basic tenets of Christianity. Our most important message to the children is that they are loved – by God, their families, and their teachers. They learn that worship time is a special time where they can talk to God and offer up prayers and thanksgiving. We respect the religious affiliations of all in our school, and invite parents of other religious persuasions to come and share their beliefs with us.

Health and Safety Policies

Keeping us all healthy

Each child must have a health/vaccination form on file. Bathrooms and classrooms are regularly disinfected, and tables are cleaned and disinfected before snack time. However, if your child has not been in a playgroup or preschool before this time, expect that he/she will contract various colds and minor bugs while building up immunities.

Do not bring your child to school if he/she is sick. Fever, pink eyes, unidentified rashes, heavy mucus, earaches, headache, vomiting or diarrhea are all signals that a child should be at home. Keep child at home for at least 24 hours after symptoms are gone.

Pick up child promptly if contacted by school because of illness.

Notify director or teacher if child is diagnosed with a communicable disease.

Notify director or teacher if head lice are detected.

Medication

We will not dispense medication at school except in the following cases:

Tylenol with written permission of parent *in the event that child spikes a high fever and parent cannot be reached*. Parents must supply the medication.

Inhalers needed for asthma

Epi-pens for severe allergic reaction

Minor Injuries

Slight scrapes, bumps, or bruises will be washed with mild soap and water and band aid or ice pack applied as appropriate. If injury is deemed to be beyond these measures, parent will be contacted.

Emergency situations

Parents should complete an emergency card before child enters school. If an emergency arises and neither parent nor emergency contact can be reached, staff will use discretion in having child transported to hospital indicated by parent on emergency card.

Miss Mollie's School of Grace provides insurance which covers up to \$25,000 per child in the event of accident or injury.

Registration, Fees, Tuition, Forms

Registration, Tuition, Lunch Bunch

Application form and registration fee are due at time of registration. Tuition/fee schedules can be obtained in the office or downloaded from our website: www.gracelutheranchurch.net. Registration fee is non-refundable and is due with the application to secure enrollment. Parents may opt for a "wait-listed" space; if no space becomes available, registration fee will be refunded.

Medical Form and Immunization Record, Emergency Form, and Emergency Card are due by the start of school.

Tuition is due **on or before the fifth of each month**, September - May. Tuition payments are non-refundable and are not affected by holidays or absences.

A late fee of \$10.00 will be assessed after the 5th of the month for late payments unless prior arrangements have been made with director.

A \$25.00 fee will be assessed on all returned checks.

Checks payable to Miss Mollie's School of Grace or cash in labeled envelope should be deposited in designated envelope on the bulletin board outside threes' classroom. **Please do not hand payments to staff members at arrival or dismissal.**

Tuition payments are due during months when families may be away from school for extended periods of time.

Lunch Bunch checks payable to Miss Mollie's School of Grace or cash in labeled envelope must be separate from tuition payments and should be placed in the appropriate envelope beside the Lunch Bunch sign up sheet on the bulletin board outside the threes' classroom.

Late Pick-up

A late fee of \$1.00 per minute for every minute past 12:05 and 1:00 will be assessed for late pick up from school or Lunch Bunch. This charge is due the next class day.

Withdrawal

By parents: A written two-week advance notification is required before child is withdrawn from our program. Tuition will be pro-rated for the month if we are able to fill the vacancy; otherwise the full month's tuition is due.

Requested by school: Preschool can request a child's withdrawal if the child's behavior is consistently disruptive and/or becomes a threat to other children or staff, or if parents fail to meet their financial obligations.

Before a child's enrollment is terminated, a parent will be informed of the specific problem, and time allowed to correct the problem. Upon termination, any tuition paid in advance will be pro-rated and refunded back to the date of termination.