



Stepping Stones Early Childhood's Mission Statement

Stepping Stones Early Childhood Program is a ministry of Cornerstone Church. This Christ-centered program is intended to show children the love of God in a safe, caring, nurturing environment helping each child develop to their fullest potential by utilizing developmentally appropriate material, activities and interacting with the community.

Stepping Stones is a hands-on learning environment (learning through play).

Stepping Stones Early Childhood Programs

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STEPPING STONES EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM IS A PLACE WHERE YOUR CHILD:

Learns that God loves all children through Bible stories and the teaching of Christian values

Develops at his/her own rate

Grows physically by using equipment that develops his/her large and small motor skills

Expresses themselves freely through art, music, games, and books

Grows socially and emotionally by encouragement of self discipline, tolerance, spontaneity and satisfaction in inter-personal relationships

Learns acceptable, constructive ways to handle frustration

Learns limits of behavior regarding safety, health and respect for the right of others

Has an opportunity to gather and classify information to correct misconceptions and to seek answers to questions, hereby extending and enriching their understanding of the world around them

Stepping Stones Early Childhood Program is a ministry of Cornerstone Church. The program admits children 2 to 5 years of age and of any religion, race, color, creed, and ethnic origin.

Stepping Stones Program is based on a developmental philosophy in which play is considered to be a child's most important job. Through play, children experience the love of God and the world around them. We will provide a large variety of play experiences for the children through large motor play, books, music, art, exploration and investigative opportunities. Children are by nature curious individuals and the staff works very hard at developing curriculum that will stimulate and offer a wide variety of discoveries for your child. Age appropriate learning activities are a part of the daily program for all children. Physical and emotional needs are considered along with developing basic skills for responsible living in our society. Through motivation and imagination, children develop concepts of size, color, texture, numbers, etc. Creative activities using paint, clay, crayons, fabric, paste, etc not only develop the child's motor control but also give him /her the sense of achievement and pride in his/her work. The use of music, finger plays and exercising to music develops coordination and motor control within group activities. Playtime incorporates many learning activities.

Two Classes operate as part of the Stepping Stones Program.

Mixed Age Class for children ages 2 - 4. Children must be 2 by September 1st to enroll in this class. This class introduces socialization skills, colors, numbers and letter recognition. Each child is encouraged to learn at his/her own readiness.

Class meets Monday - Thursday from 9 AM - 12 noon. Children are invited to "drop-in" and join us on the days of your choice. The door will open at 8:55 AM and children should be picked up between 11:50 AM and 12 noon.

Class size is limited to 18 children each day. Slots are reserved on a weekly basis by email only to: llovery@umc-cornerstone.org. Email should be sent after 9 AM on Wednesday to reserve slots for the following week. Slots are reserved on a first come first served basis. All reserved slots must be paid for. Each child will be allowed three sick days per quarter. (Sept.-Nov.; Dec.-Feb.; March-May)

Child does not have to be potty trained to be a part of this class. Please provide diapers and wipes for changing.

Four Year Old Class - Children must be 4 years old by September 1st to enroll in this class. This class will help children with the benchmarks for Kindergarten readiness. "Handwriting Without Tears" and "Jolly Phonics" are the curriculum resources that are currently being used. The \$8 cost for the handwriting book will be added on to the registration fee for this class.

This class meets Monday - Thursday from 9:15 AM - 11:45 AM. Children may attend two, three or four days each week. Slots are chosen upon registration for the same days each week. These slots are considered permanent slots and must be paid for each week. Each child will be allowed three sick days per quarter (Sept.-Nov.; Dec.-Feb.; March-May)

Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures

- ❖ A sign in sheet will be located by the entrance of your child's room. Please provide an emergency # for the morning and sign your child in
- ❖ Assist your child in washing hands in one of the washrooms in the hallway before they enter the classroom.
- ❖ You should sign out your child before picking them up in the classroom
- ❖ Children will only be released to a person authorized by the parent. **Photo ID will be necessary to pick up the child.** We must have authorization in writing on the release form. If changes occur, they must be in writing and handed to the teacher. It is best to include several names authorized for pick up, in case of an emergency that makes you unable to pick up your child.
- ❖ Do not leave children alone in the car. If you need help getting your child into or out of the building talk to one of your child's teachers or Linda Lowery.

Late Pick Up

If pick up time is over and your child is not picked up a late fee will be assessed as follows- 10 minutes past the designated pick up time there will be a fee of \$5.00 and \$1.00 for every minute after. Emergencies do arise so please call and let us know if there is an emergency and you will be late for pick up.

Registration and Tuition

- ❖ In order to reserve a spot for your child a completed registration form and a registration fee of \$40 must be received.
- ❖ Tuition is \$15 a day and can be paid daily, weekly, or monthly.
- ❖ Tuition may be paid by cash, check, or online at: www.umc-cornerstone.org. Checks should be made payable to Cornerstone Church.
- ❖ Returned checks due to insufficient funds will result in a \$20 charge for each occurrence. If two checks are returned, cash or money order will be required.

Clothes

Washable, comfortable, play clothing should be worn at all times. The children often participate in messy activities so their clothes get messy. Please allow your child the ability to fully enjoy the activities without worrying about getting their special clothes dirty. Tennis shoes/rubber soled shoes are highly recommended for preschool. They are the safest shoes for active play indoors and outside. Open toed shoes or sandals are not allowed.

Children should come each day dressed for the weather. Classes will go outside to play on days that are 20 degrees or above. Children should have boots, hats, mittens and snow pants for outside play.

Children should bring a back pack and change of clothes with them each day. Unexpected spills and accidents do happen occasionally.

Please label all items with your child's name.

Inclement Weather

Stepping Stones Preschool will close on inclement weather days. The closing will be announced to you by phone call.

Holidays, Vacation Days, and Special Events

Stepping Stones is open from September to May. A yearly calendar is available which includes days off and special events. The calendar will also be posted on the Parent Board outside the classroom.

Parent Communication

Stepping Stones believes that the parents are the most important person in the child's life. Thus parent/teacher communication is vital. It is important to maintain open communication between the home and the preschool. We do ask parents to check the posted information and read monthly calendars and newsletters. The staff is eager to casually talk with parents before class. However, we would rather not discuss the children in their presence. For more formal discussion, please set up a conference with the teacher or if urgent telephone the teacher.

Separation Anxiety

Children sometimes have difficulty being dropped off by their parents. The easiest way to ease your child into this transition is to have the same routine for drop off daily. It is difficult to walk out when your child is crying; however, it's more difficult many times for the child to settle into a routine at the beginning of the program if you drag out leaving. You are free to call the program and check on your child at any time to see how they are adjusting. Usually, you will see improvement in two or three weeks. If other changes that may be causing stress for your child exist, please let your child's teacher know (job loss, illness, family death or a pet that has died, new sibling, etc.) Please send a current family picture that will stay in the classroom. The picture will be present for those moments when child needs a 'family bond'.

Personal Belongings

While we understand that your child's personal belongings are important to him/her, we ask that you please leave them at home. This will keep these precious items from being lost or causing problems with other children in the program wanting to play with them. There may be days when the teacher would like the children to bring in something special. On those occasions a note will be sent home to let you know. We do make an exception for our younger students. We encourage our younger students or

those new to the program to bring a security item with them. As a child becomes more comfortable and has successfully transitioned into the classroom, they will naturally not need the security item at all times and they can start leaving it in their backpack.

Discipline Policy

Stepping Stones believes that discipline is providing children with the guidance they need to become self-motivated, self-controlled individuals who respect other individuals and property. This goal is achieved through positive guidance techniques in offering children an alternative when their behavior is not appropriate. Corporal punishment is never used. The following are some of the techniques that are used:

- ❖ Discussion - We talk to the child to help work out the inappropriate behavior. We will include other children in the discussion if another child is involved and help give the children words to express themselves to resolve the situation.
- ❖ Redirection -We direct the child away from the conflict to another activity that they may be more interested in or successful with
- ❖ Time away from the activity - As a last resort we will remove the child from the group to help them focus on the inappropriate behavior and how they may correct this. This is done with the teacher and child discussing when they feel they may be ready to join the group and participate appropriately. The

- time out will last no longer than one minute per the age of the child.
- ❖ Parent Conference-A meeting will be conducted with the parents, if behaviors persist that we believe distracts from the learning environment for the other children, puts staff or other children in danger or otherwise makes a group setting for the child unsuccessful. We will work with the parent to find a solution to the problem until such time as the preschool or the parent deems that the child's behavior is not improving and is putting that child or others in the preschool at risk. (See page 18)

Child Injury

If your child is involved in a minor injury, the Preschool staff will administer first aid. An accident report form will be sent home. We ask that you sign a copy of the accident form for our files. If the injury requires medical attention, we will contact the parent immediately and take appropriate action to get the child immediate medical care. An ambulance will be called and the child will be transported to Provena - St. Joseph Hospital.

A plan to acquire the services of a certified practitioner for a child exempt from medical care on religious grounds will be specific to a particular child and discussed with and approved by the parent(s).

Insurance

In case of an accident or injury, Stepping Stones Early Childhood program does carry secondary insurance to that of the child's family. If your child does get injured while at preschool, an accident form will be sent home. Additionally we will inform our insurance company of the accident to help cover whatever your insurance does not cover.

Special Visitors

We enhance our classroom experience by having visits from outside visitors. We support and encourage parents and others to share hobbies, skills, jobs, etc in the classroom.

Child Abuse

Stepping Stones Staff members are mandated reporters under the Abuse and Neglected Child Reporting Act. This means the staff is required to report to the Child Abuse Hotline number whenever there is reasonable suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected. The staff is legally responsible for reporting any suspected abuse or neglect to The Department of Child and Family Services. DCFS then determines whether there is sufficient evidence to investigate the suspected abuse.

Tornado Drills

In case there is a danger of a tornado, the staff will take the children to Classroom 8 in the education wing which is a designated tornado shelter. Tornado drills will be conducted twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring. Drills prepare children to feel safer and know what to expect should a real tornado occur.

Fire Drills

Fire Drills are conducted periodically. Children become more used to the loud alarms and the directions they must follow should an actual evacuation need to be conducted.

Health and Illness

Your child's health is a matter of importance to us, not only for your child, but also for the health of the entire class of children. You will be contacted if your child shows symptoms of illness during the class time. In case the parent cannot be reached, we will continue to call the telephone numbers that you have given us for emergencies until someone has been reached. Please remember to keep the preschool up to date on all phone numbers.

Health standards require that your child should not attend school if he/she:

- ❖ Has a fever of 100.4 degrees or more by temporal thermometer. The child must be fever free without the aide of fever reducing medicines for 24 hours before returning to school.
- ❖ Has a heavy nasal discharge, constant cough, earache, or general illness, which prevent the child from participating comfortably in all the program activities.
- ❖ Has pink eye or impetigo (must be covered by bandage while in class)-until 24 hours after antibiotic treatments have been administered.
- ❖ Vomits in previous 24 hours.
- ❖ Has had diarrhea two or more times in the last 24 hours.
- ❖ Has a positive strep culture or has symptoms of a communicable disease until on antibiotics for 48 hours.
- ❖ Rash with any type of fever-do not send your child to school until your doctor has said it safe for them to return.
- ❖ Chicken Pox - Those children who have chicken pox should remain home until all pox have scabbed over. (usually 7 days).
- ❖ Have head lice.

Please report illnesses to your child's teacher or director. If your child has been exposed to a communicable disease, a note will be posted so that you will be aware of a possible infection.

Medications

As much as possible, medications should be administered by the parents. If a situation requires that medication be administered during preschool hours, medication should be brought in original pharmacy container and clearly labeled with child's name and directions on the container. The Director or Supervising Staff Member will only administer medication.

Personal Information

Stepping Stones will not release personal information such as phone numbers, home addresses, email addresses, or names of the children who attend the preschool without written consent from the parents.

Birthdays

Children's birthdays are a special time when we can all thank God for the special gift of each child in our program. Store bought Birthday treats may be shared either for snack or a take home treat. Please consult with your teacher when you are bringing a treat to avoid any allergies.

Open Door Policy

Stepping Stones Early Childhood Program practices an open door policy. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to visit the program at any time. Please consider ways you can participate to help us continue to offer a quality program.

Discharge and Withdrawal

Children will be discharged if special needs or problems become apparent whereby the preschool/parents day out can no longer meet the needs of the child.

Conditions that require withdrawal:

1. Failure of parent to submit required paperwork to preschool
2. Severe behavioral difficulties or emotional problems of the child after every effort has been made to facilitate adjustment

Conditions that require immediate discharge:

1. Severe injury with malicious intent.
2. Excessive foul language that persists despite staff intervention.
3. Abusive behavior verbal or physical by parent or child to children or staff. Reports will be made to DCFS.

Refunds on Withdrawal

The \$40 registration fee is non-refundable.
Any monies paid in advance will not be refunded
upon withdrawal or dismissal from the program.

Contact Information

Any questions or concerns about the Stepping Stones
Early Childhood Program should be directed to the
persons listed below in the order in which they are listed.

Linda Lowery, Director of Stepping Stones
847-464-4673 X16
41W170 Russell Road
Elgin, IL 60124

Directing Pastor
Pastor Jim Bell
847-464-4673 X12
41W170 Russell Road
Elgin, IL 60124

Stepping Stones Early Childhood Program
Cornerstone United Methodist Church

Verification of Receipt and Reading of Handbook

I/We, _____
Please Print Name(s)

Parent(s) of _____
Name(s) of Child(ren)

Hereby certify that I/we have received a copy of the Stepping Stones Early Childhood Parent Handbook. I/We have read the handbook. I/We understand and agree to abide by the information presented in it.

Signature of Parent

Date

Signature of Parent

Date

This completed form will be filed with each student's registration form.