



Parent Handbook

All policies are subject to change at the discretion of the school Director and approval of the school Committee and will be updated as needed at any time.

We are delighted to welcome you to our First United Methodist Church Children's Center family where our mission is to provide high-quality, affordable Montessori education for children ages 3-6. We are honored to partner with you in your child's development and education. We rely on your communication, support, and involvement to ensure a successful experience for your child. We invite you to learn the roles of parents, teachers, and children in our school. This handbook will orient you to our policies, procedures, and routines.

Communication with Families

We do our best to remain in close communication with our families in several different ways:

- **Parents are responsible for reading the monthly update email sent at the beginning of each month, which includes important information related to the school.**
- All planned school closures, vacations, emergency closures, and delays will follow the Cherokee County Schools calendar and announcements.
- We will use primarily email and may use a Text Message system to send information and reminders about events, closings, and delays.
- For an emergency and if you need to contact us during school hours, please call the school landline (828) 837-2718 (the church's main office number).
- Contact the Director/Lead Teacher, Bridget Esterhuizen at preschool@murphyfirstumc.org with any questions. She is your first line of communication.
- If you believe your questions are not being addressed, please contact Children's Center Committee Chairperson, Charlene at preschoolcommittee@murphyfirstumc.org.
- Questions about billing should be directed to Murphy FUMC Treasurer: treasurer@murphyfirstumc.org or (828) 837-2718

Hours of Operation, Tuition & Payment Policy

The 2026-2027 school term runs from August 24, 2026 - May 28, 2027. School hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 11:55. Drop-off is 8:00-8:30 a.m.; pickup is 11:30 to 11:55 am with **NO LATE PICKUP**; see detailed “drop-off and pick-up procedures” section. **Early drop-off and/or late pick-up are not available and may be cause for dismissal.**

Tuition is \$290 per month due on the 1st of each month, one month ahead of the current month enrolled for a total of 9 months. The first tuition payment is due on August 1st for the 2026-2027 school year. For families who enroll mid-year, their final tuition payment will be on the first of May; For families enrolling at the start of the year and paying on time, their last tuition payment will be due on April 1st for the month of May. ***A NON-REFUNDABLE application fee of \$25 is due at the time you apply.**

An annual supplies fee of \$125.00 is required at the time of acceptance/enrollment to secure your slot for the upcoming year (or current term for mid-year enrollment). The application and materials fees are non-refundable. If you have more than one child in the school program, there is a **10% discount** for each additional child from the same family after the first child is enrolled. Families receiving financial aid are not eligible for the sibling discount and are required to pay all fees in full.

All payments are due by the 1st of each month. Any tuition payment made after the 1st of each month will have a \$25.00 late fee added. All rates must be paid on the monthly payment plan or paid in full in advance. Payments can be made online (see instructions below) or with Maggie in the church office during office hours (T-Th, 9am-1pm).

1. Please pay online at [this link](#).
2. Select “preschool” and then the appropriate sub-fund category for your payment.
3. BE SURE TO SELECT whether you want the payment to be a one-time or recurring payment.

NOTE: Payments online incur a processing fee. If you would like to avoid paying the fee, you are welcome to pay by check or cash in the church office (by dealing directly with Maggie, the Office Administrator) during office hours (Tues-Thur, 9am-1pm).

Rolling Enrollment: Families who enroll during the school year will be required to pay the application fee, then the supplies fee and first month of tuition all at the time of registration and prior to the child’s start date. The supplies fee is a flat fee and cannot be prorated. If a student’s start date is on or after the 15th of the month, the student’s first month of tuition will be prorated to \$145. The child will do a gradual start for the first three days of school to allow for the best adjustment possible. Their first day will be 8:00-9:00; their second day will be 8:00-9:30; the third day will be 8:00-10:00. Subsequent days will be a normal schedule unless another plan is made.

Snack, Volunteering and Community

We invite families to bring a box or bag of their child's favorite snack at the beginning of each month. Please bring enough for 20 servings. Snacks should be low in sugar (unless it's a birthday snack). Good snack options include: string cheese, fresh or dried fruit, hard boiled eggs, whole grain crackers, yogurts/gogurts, and food bars.

We ask that each family contribute to the school community by volunteering a few hours each semester. We will invite you to sign up for helping with various activities such as holiday parties, basic teacher helper tasks, clean up days, and other activities throughout the year. Your support will help the school tremendously and build friendships.

Our Financial Aid Fundraiser is held in the Spring and is a main contributor to raising money for financial aid. We have several families each year who are only able to attend the Children's Center because of our fundraising efforts and generous donations. We ask that all families contribute to this very important event through attendance and ticket sales.

A Montessori Curriculum

We use the Montessori curriculum, philosophy, and related classroom management approaches. Our Teachers are professional educators who use developmentally appropriate strategies.

The Montessori Curriculum offers children five key areas of development and study: Practical Life (Care of Self, Care of Others, Care of the Environment), Sensorial (refining all of the senses), Mathematics, Language, and Cultural Studies (Zoology, Botany, Culture and Geography). Each area of study is made up of specifically designed educational materials developed by Maria Montessori and her legacy of educators. Materials and learning areas increase in complexity as students grow. Children progress through the Montessori Curriculum at their own pace based on their stage of development and interests. The Montessori curriculum also includes Art, Music, Movement and Dance, Drama, social-emotional development, social-emotional skill-building. Our school week also includes a weekly chapel time that explores principles of faith in the Methodist tradition.

Positive Approaches to Discipline

FUMC Children's Center grounds its entire program in the significant relationship between adult and child. A positive, supportive and loving bond promotes the child's self-esteem and sense of security. Role modeling teaches children positive problem-solving techniques and courtesy. Children are continuously taught how to solve problems, deal with frustration, and express feelings in a manner that is growth-producing and positive. Some examples of positive methods of discipline include:

- Redirecting or distracting a child from an unacceptable activity to a constructive one
- Planning ahead to prevent problems
- Encouraging, teaching, and modeling appropriate behavior
- Setting consistent, clear rules

- Helping the child name, process and appropriately express the feelings they are having
- Offering alternative solutions to the problem
- Involving children in solving the problem
- Explaining and connecting the behavior to its natural consequence
- Tailoring the method of discipline to the individual child
- Removing the child from the source of conflict
- Students who are disruptive or hurtful to others will be asked to reflect on their choices.

If a negative behavior is repeated a plan will need to be worked out between parents and teachers in a private meeting with two teachers or the lead teacher and a school committee member present.

Special Events and Programs

Chapel Time & Moral Education: FUMC Children's Center has regular chapel time with FUMC's Pastor. Chapel Time will teach moral, social, and ethical values in line with both the Montessori-based curriculum and FUMC's Christian Faith. While we are open to families of all or no faith traditions, Chapel Time will be based on FUMC's Christian Faith and geared specifically to engaging children in a fun, positive way. We may celebrate holidays and faiths outside of and including the Methodist Tradition.

New Student Orientation/Staggered Start: For the first week or more of school, we will have a "staggered start." We will orient the students in small groups and then all students will attend together on all days starting the following week. More details about the staggered start schedule will be given in August.

***Cherokee County Schools Schedule and Closures:** We follow the calendar of the Cherokee County Schools and use all of their school closures and holidays EXCEPT HALF DAYS. We will operate a normal school day on Cherokee County School Half Days. Our School Calendar is listed at the end of this handbook.

Student Conferences Parent-Teacher conferences: The Lead Teacher is available for parent conferences as necessary. Email the Director to make arrangements. We believe good communication between home and school is essential to creating the best learning environment for the child.

Typical Daily Schedule (subject to change)

8:00 - 8:30 am: Drop-Off (at the playground in most weather)

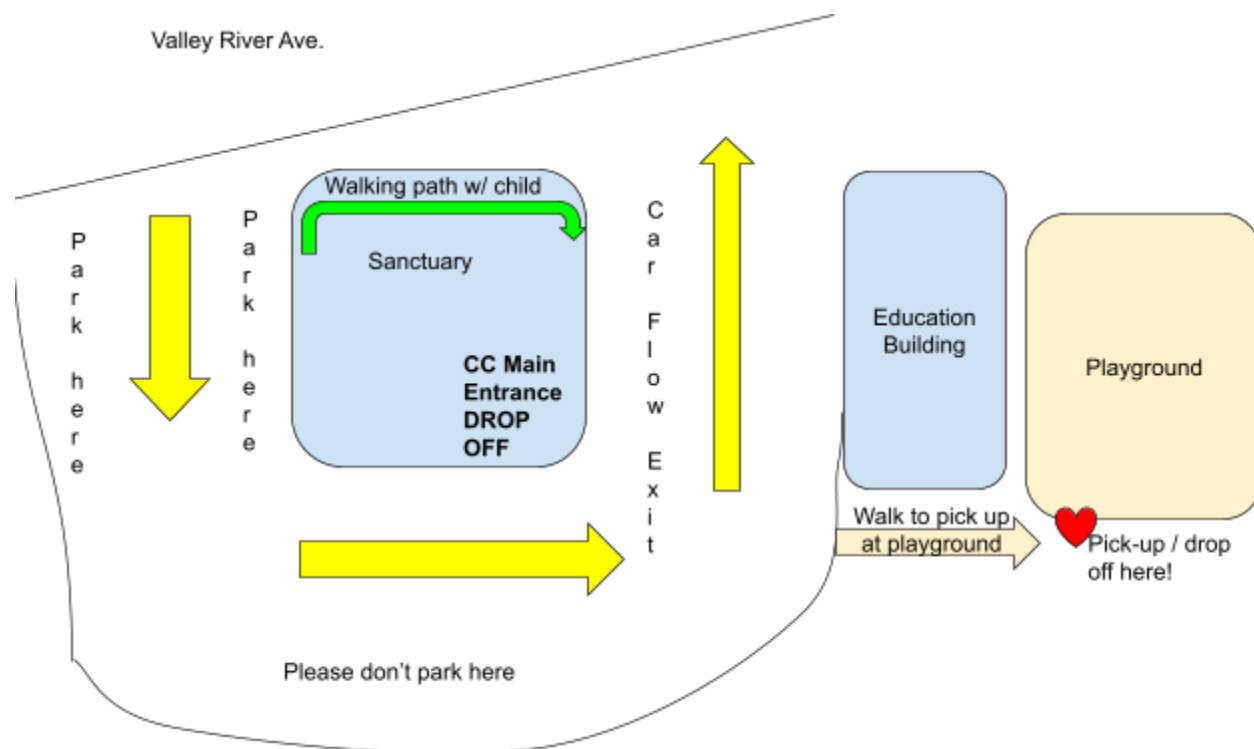
8:30 - 11 am: The Uninterrupted Montessori Work Cycle: Children engage in a wide variety of works as they build their attention span, curiosity, and independence. Students receive lessons from the Lead Teacher in a Montessori format, one-on-one, in pairs or groups.

11- 11:30 (approx): Tidying up, preparing for home, and transitioning to Outdoor Time (weather dependent) or Gross Motor Movement Inside (drama, music and dance).

11:30-11:55: Pick-Up (at the playground in most weather) Parents pick up no later than 11:55.

Drop-off

School Hours are 8:00 a.m.--11:55. Drop-Off is 8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. We ask that you drop off your child within the 8-8:30 window. Late drop-offs affect the rhythm of the day; children are more successful with the rest of the day when drop off happens within the 8-8:30 window.



Traffic Flow Procedure: Please park in the first half of the lot (on the back-entrance side). If it is full or raining, you may form a traffic line around the building. IF you have a small baby in a carseat, you may park in the spots closer to the playground. Otherwise, please keep the parking slots on the second half of the lot (between the main entrance and the education building) empty to allow for cars to move through easily to the exit. Traffic will have a one-way-only flow from the back entrance of the school, to exit near the front entrance and the education bldg.

Be cautious in the parking lot at all times.

Drop-Off Procedure: Please enter the Church parking lot between 8:00 and 8:25 a.m. at its entrance, park your car, walk your child to the main entrance of playground (or the school in inclement weather), via the front of the sanctuary (on the sidewalk), and deliver them to a Teacher's care. We will then sign them in and you'll be acknowledged by a teacher that we have taken your child into our care. Do not leave until a teacher has checked your child in.

Pick-up Procedure:

Pick-Up is 11:30-11:55 am. We ask that you are ready in person at the playground gate by 11:55 at the latest to receive your child. **We do not provide early drop-off or late pick-up/child care.**

More than two late pick-ups will be addressed with a warning and may result in a fine or dismissal.

Please plan to be early enough for pickup to compensate for any parking unpredictability.

Because of FUMC's location in downtown Murphy, the parking lot is often busy and used by more than just school parents, so please plan ahead for possible parking challenges or traffic.

Pick-up is from 11:30-11:55 a.m.. Please park your car as soon as 11:30 a.m. and line up, in person, at the playground entrance gate (good weather) or school main entrance door (very cold or rainy weather) ready to receive your child. On very rainy days, you may form a car line to pick up your child at the main entrance.

In order to keep our focus on the safety of all the children, we are able to have only very brief check-ins during pickup. Therefore, if you'd like to discuss anything about your child or the school, please email us to arrange a time to have a meeting.

You will have an opportunity to provide names and contacts of approved adults who may pick up your child which you are responsible for keeping updated. Anyone picking up your child must be able to provide their Driver's License or photo ID.

Snow and Bad Weather Policy:

If the Cherokee County schools are closed due to bad weather, we are closed too. If the Cherokee County schools are delayed by one or two hours, drop off will begin at 8:30 a.m. (for Cherokee County one hour delay) or 9:30 a.m. (for Cherokee County 2 hour delay). Please only travel if roads are safe for you.

Cherokee County announces school delays and closures on their Facebook page, and on the school district website. (www.cherokee.k12.nc.us)

In regards to going outside during various weather conditions, we follow the NC state guidelines which are copied here below for your convenience:

Many parents request that their child stay indoors when they have an ear infection or other illness, however medical personnel indicate that being outdoors does not make a child sick, and in some ways, can be better for them. Air inside can be stagnant and full of germs while the outside air gives children an opportunity for fresh air.

The rules indicate that children should go outdoors daily, weather permitting. In a child care center, there shall be outdoor time, weather permitting, either as part of a small group, a whole group, or individual activity, for no less than the following durations:

<i>Program Operating Hours</i>	<i>Ages of Children</i>	<i>Minimum Daily Outdoor Time</i>
<i>Less than 5 hours</i>	<i>0-12 years</i>	<i>30 minutes</i>

Classrooms serving NC Pre-K children must provide outdoor time for no less than 45

minutes per day, if weather conditions permit. For family child care homes, each child shall have the opportunity for a minimum of one hour of outdoor play each day that weather conditions permit.

"If weather conditions permit" means:

(a) temperatures that fall within the guidelines developed by the Iowa Department of Public Health and specified on the Child Care Weather Watch chart. These guidelines shall be used when determining appropriate weather conditions for taking children outside for outdoor learning activities and playtime. This chart may be downloaded free of charge from <http://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/Files/HCCI/weatherwatch.pdf>; and is incorporated by reference and includes subsequent editions and amendments; (b) following the air quality standards as set out in 15A NCAC 18A .2832(d). The Air Quality Color Guide can be found on the Division's web site at <https://xapps.ncdenr.org/aq/ForecastCenter> or call 1-888-RU4NCAIR (1-888-784-6224); and (c) no active precipitation. Caregivers may choose to go outdoors when there is active precipitation if children have appropriate clothing such as rain boots and rain coats, or if they are under a covered area.

COVID-19: FUMC Children's Center will follow the North Carolina Division of Child Development recommendations, guidelines, or policies. These recommendations, guidelines, or policies may change at a moment's notice. We will promptly inform parents via text and/or email.

Preparation for School

Self-Care Routines: It's helpful if your child has practiced the following with you before starting school and is on their way to independence (we will help them gain even more independence with these activities):

- ☐ **washing their hands** independently for a full 20 seconds of lathering with soap before rinsing
- ☐ getting a tissue, **blowing their nose** independently, and putting used tissue in the trash
- ☐ taking their own **shoes** on and off (choose shoes that are easy for independence but not crocs, please; we find that shoes with a strap work well)
- ☐ the **toileting** sequence, fully and independently: pulling down their own underwear and/or pants, sitting on the toilet, wiping, pulling clothing back up, and washing their hands; students may need reminders, but need to be able to do this on their own
- ☐ putting their **coat** on and off (this means sending them in jackets and sweatshirts that they can remove and put on independently without frustration (we find that front zipping or buttoning clothing works best)

Do feed your child breakfast and have them use the toilet before arriving—especially if your child tends to have a morning bowel movement. Please make sure your child has a nourishing, healthy breakfast (high protein and low sugar!) before sending them to school. We will serve a mid-morning snack of 2 to 3 choices.

Dress: Please dress your child so that they are comfortable for a variety of activities, such as painting, sitting on the floor, playing outside, jumping in puddles, gardening, etc. We go outside each day so please dress your child appropriately for the weather (including boots and jackets for rain, wet, or snow). *Sneakers or tennis shoes are the best footwear. Please no cowboy boots, slides, heels or clogs.* **When the weather turns cold, we will still be starting at the playground as long** as it is above 32 degrees fahrenheit with a wind chill under 15 mph. Please dress them appropriately. **(Hat, mittens, scarf, and winter coat or snowsuit).** Please dress them in a rain jacket and rain pants for drop off in rainy weather. (see our weather policy above). Note: mittens tend to be easier to put on and warmer than gloves.

Hair: To prevent the potential spread of head lice, we recommend that all children with long hair keep their hair tied back in ponytails or braids. We have not had lice in our facility yet, but prevention is key! Beware of tee-ball season and helmet sharing!

Starting on the first day of school, please send your child with:

1. A **backpack** to be used exclusively for school and brought daily. It should be big enough for **a change of clothes, a water bottle**, hat and mittens in cold weather, and space for rolled up art. Help them learn to zip and pack their backpack with their water bottle by themselves. Please keep it free of everything except items on the list below.
2. A pair of **indoor shoes** with clean soles to wear inside the classroom (sneakers or slip-on playshoes with non-skid soles are best rather than slippers; **no “cros” please**). These will stay at the school for the year. We will mark the back bottom of the shoe, “In” for inside, with a magic marker. *Have them practice putting these shoes on and off at home to make sure they can be put on by the child independently.*
3. **One box of tissues** to keep in their locker for blowing their nose (we will ask you to replenish as needed!).
4. A zip-lock bag, **name on it**, that includes a **change of clothing** and underwear (if your child has an accident, we will send the soiled clothes home in the ziplock).
5. A spare winter coat, hat, mittens or gloves, and a scarf, may be kept in the child’s locker when weather turns cold—this is nice in case the weather turns colder after drop-off.

If it is a hardship for your family to provide any of these items, please let us know and we can help.

*Please label all items above with the child’s first name and last initial.

More about the daily backpack: Include a water bottle (with water ONLY), and any special clothing needed for the weather, e.g. sunhat, warm hat, rain jacket, etc. *Please label ALL items with your child’s name.* (Please apply any child-safe sunscreen and bug spray before arrival.) Please make sure there are no extra toys, hand sanitizers, lip glosses or keychains hanging off of your child’s backpack. They can be distracting to other children.

Show and Tell, toys and jewelry: Show and tell will be the first school day of each month. Please keep all other personal toys and jewelry at home and keep backpacks clear of belongings other than their water bottle and change of clothes.

Food and Nutrition: FUMC Children's Center employs good nutritional practices because of the recognized importance of nutrition in the growth and development of school children. There will be a healthy snack provided each day for your child. There may be children with specific food allergies. We will adhere to food allergy guidelines. You are asked to keep us updated and informed of all allergies your child has. You may pack a lunch or healthy snack for your child to eat at the playground during our midday outside time if you feel they would benefit.

Special Holidays and Birthdays: We love to celebrate birthdays! Children with summer birthdays will have a group birthday at the end of the year. You may send a special snack (like mini cupcakes or cookies), but please check with the teacher first. We ask that you do not send balloons, hard candy, or other items that could be dangerous to young children.

Sick Policy--When to Keep Your Child at Home

It is important not to send a sick child to school. Children who have the following symptoms should be excluded from school until:

- (1) a physician has certified the symptoms are not associated with an infectious disease and they are no longer a threat to the health of the other children at school or
- (2) the child is without symptoms for a full 24-hour period before returning.

Fever	Auxiliary or Oral temperature: 99 degrees F. or higher
Respiratory	Difficult or rapid breathing or coughing: child makes high-pitched croupy or whooping sound, or child is unable to be comfortable due to continuous cough.
Diarrhea	An increased number of abnormally loose stools in the previous 24 hours.
Vomiting	An episode within the previous 24 hours.
Eye/Nose Drainage	Thick mucus or pus draining from the eye or nose. Child is unable to be comfortable due to continuous discharge.
Sore Throat	Sore throat, especially when glands in the neck are swollen.
Skin Problems	Undiagnosed or contagious infected sores, drainage which cannot be covered by bandages.
Itching	Persistent itching or scratching of body or scalp.
Appearance/behavior	Child looks or acts differently: unusually tired, pale, lacking appetite, irritable, difficult to awaken.
Unusual Color	Eyes or skin- yellow, stool- gray or white, urine- dark or tea color (these symptoms can be found in hepatitis and should be evaluated by a physician)

Head lice: If you find head lice or nits on anyone in your family, please contact the director immediately by email or phone call. Because the cycle of head lice and hatching nits continues

for at least two weeks, your child will need to be treated for 1-3 weeks before returning to school. A doctor's note may be required for them to return to school. Also, in the interim, all children will be checked for lice on a daily basis until the child(ren) with lice are able to return. We will also take extra cleaning measures at school and in extreme cases may cancel school until cleaning is completed.

Controlling infection: If the staff notices a child showing symptoms of an infectious disease, we call the parents and send the child home immediately. When waiting for parent/guardian pick up, the child will be removed from the other children and under staff supervision

It is also very important that your child has a day or two to rest after a sickness or infection. Sending a child to school when he/she is not completely well only lengthens the healing process.

Fever: We will routinely check your child's temperature at drop-off. If your child has a temperature of 99 degrees fahrenheit or higher, we will ask that they stay home with you to prevent the possible spread of a virus.

Injury and Accidents at School

If your child is injured while at school, we will administer First Aid and notify you. If your child requires professional medical attention and the parents cannot be reached, 911 will be called and the child will be taken to the nearest Hospital emergency room. All children must have medical information concerning allergies or other chronic illnesses and emergency contact numbers on file. If a child becomes sick while at school, the parents will be called and need to come as soon as possible to pick up the child. *We must have current phone numbers, including cell numbers, and the emergency contacts that you have provided for us.* ***The Children's Center board and Director reserves the right to close school due to illness in the community, or a county or state-issued health alert. We will follow Cherokee County School District Guidelines for related closures.**

Medication administration: Staff will not give a child medication except for an Asthma inhaler or emergency EPI pen if provided and trained for it. In the event your child needs medication please arrange a time for it to be given at home.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

Hand washing: Children and staff wash their hands upon arriving at school daily, before and after eating, after using the bathroom, and after blowing their noses.

Materials and equipment: Learning Materials and Equipment are regularly cleaned and sanitized to minimize the spread of disease. Tables and bathrooms are cleaned and disinfected throughout the day and floors are vacuumed and mopped regularly including additional deep cleaning. We provide opportunities for parents to help with deep cleaning seasonally.

Child Safety

Safe Sanctuary Training: The safety and welfare of our children and staff is extremely important. We follow Safe Sanctuary Guidelines as outlined by the United Methodist Church *in addition to* our safety policies, which include policies and procedures for safely interacting with children and vulnerable adult populations. It is our policy not to release a child to anyone other than the parent without a written notification.

Parent Notifications: Parents or their authorized emergency contacts will be notified immediately of any accidents, injuries, or illnesses. Behavioral incidents will be communicated on a case-by-case basis, depending on the seriousness of the incident (determined by the Lead Teacher). You will be contacted either immediately by phone for urgent matters, or at the end of the school day for less serious matters.

Child Abuse & Neglect: All schools, child care centers, physicians, and others who work with children are required by law to inform Child Protective Services at the Department of Human Services of any suspected abuse or neglect of children. By law, suspicion of child abuse generally means that the reporter has “reasonable cause to believe” or “reasonable cause to know or suspect” that a child is being maltreated physically, emotionally, or mentally. Employees are trained in identifying abuse and neglect.

Employee Screening: All employees are subject to criminal screening through the State Police, and fingerprinted as mandated by the State of North Carolina. Potential employees are required to interview and provide references. All staff are screened for abuse and child neglect.

Smoke-Free Environment: FUMC Children's Center provides a smoke-free environment for our children. We request that all adults refrain from smoking, vaping, or using any tobacco products anywhere on Church property.

Building Security, Emergency Preparation and Visitors

Drills: FUMC Children's Center conducts fire drills regularly as often as monthly. We have a fire escape plan that we practice with the children both in the fall and the spring. A lockdown/shelter-in-place drill and a tornado drill will be conducted each semester. We follow safety and emergency plans that are reviewed on an annual or as-needed basis. During the day, all entrances to the building are locked to the outside (the door can be opened from the inside). Everyone is asked to use the main school entrance and ring the doorbell if needed. In addition, we have a bad weather plan in place, and we review it every season so that our staff is prepared in the event of a weather emergency. Our staff is CPR trained for infants, children, and adults. We have also been trained on standard first aid including choking and the use of EpiPen for allergy victims.

Visitors: We have specific guidelines for visiting that help us maintain a peaceful classroom experience for all children. If you would like to visit or volunteer, please notify the Lead teacher and schedule a visit. Visitors are asked to observe the classroom in a non-obtrusive way so that children can continue their usual routines and keep their focus on their work. Visitors are asked

to engage with ALL children, not just their child, and will be given specific tasks, or places to sit and observe. If you have a particular skill, talent, or work experience you'd like to share, please let us know! No visitor will ever be left alone with a child other than their own child; they will be working with a group of students with at least one teacher present at all times.

Change of Address or Emergency Contact Information: Whenever you change your address, home phone, work phone, or emergency notification information, please notify the school office directly by emailing admin@murphyfirstumc.org as well as the director at preschool@murphyfirstumc.org. Please do not rely on your child's teacher to update the office. Alerting the office is the only way to guarantee the information is updated and documented.

Student Success, Meeting Student Needs, and Possible Withdrawal

Occasionally the learning style of an individual child is not compatible with the climate of a classroom. If the Lead Teacher becomes concerned about the suitability of our learning environment for your child, she will contact you to set up a conference. We want every child to experience the satisfaction and joy of a successful education. Generally, children adapt to the classroom. If we believe that our school will not meet your child's needs, we will recommend alternate environments to you and, if necessary, develop a plan to remove him/her from the class. Tuition and Fees are non-refundable.

Other Reasons for Withdrawal: The school operates on the tuition and fees paid for services. If a family's account is 20 days past due, the child will be withdrawn from the program until the account has been brought up to current status plus payment for the next month. **Written notification (in the form of an email to the director) of intent to withdraw a child shall be made at least 30 days before withdrawal. Tuition and Fees are non-refundable and will be owed in full for the final month of attendance.**

Destruction of Property: If a child deliberately destroys school property or damages materials, we may ask for the family of the child to replace the destroyed or damaged item(s) at cost. If destruction of property continues, we may ask that the child be removed from the program.

Admission Guidelines

There is a non-refundable application fee of \$25 to cover processing your application. To be considered for enrollment at FUMC Children's Center, **children should be 3 years of age and potty trained*** (exceptions may be made at the discretion of the Children's Center Director). We serve children 3 to 5 years old and are open to all children regardless of race, sex, religion or creed, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, handicap, or sexual orientation. If a child is eligible for Kindergarten (which is defined as a child whose fifth birthday will occur before the start day of the term), we are not able to accept them. Two spots may be reserved for scholarship recipients (families qualifying for financial aid). See the financial aid application for details.

*To attend **FUMC Children's Center**, your child must be fully potty-trained. This means that your child consistently spends at least three days without an accident and can communicate ahead of time when they need to use the toilet. If your child is not potty-trained at least a month before

enrollment, please let us know and we can withdraw your enrollment. **A child who is fully potty trained at 2.5 years old may be considered for enrollment IF there is availability and they have been determined “ready” in a one-on-one interview and trial period.**

Enrollment

Enrollment is on a first-come, first-served basis. Priority enrollment will be given to children of families with a currently enrolled student and children of teachers and committee members of the Children’s Center and FUMC staff as a benefit for their service to the school. The school will notify you of our admissions decision within 4 weeks after your completed registration application. If your child is accepted and space is available, the school will issue you a contract (our intake form). To apply for **need-based full or partial financial aid**, please apply through our website. If you apply for enrollment but the class is full, your child will be placed on the waitlist until an opening exists.

Rolling enrollment is possible as spots become available at any point in the term. Any eligible students who apply after the deadline or register after slots are filled will be placed on a waitlist and contacted as space becomes available in the order we received their application. See payment policies particular to rolling enrollment.

A Gentle Adjustment to School

We know starting school is a big adjustment for most children and their families. It may be their first time ever being in someone else’s care and your family’s first experiment with separation from your child. There are so many feelings that go with it. Please be gentle with yourselves and your expectations. Because it takes a while to adjust to the new routines of school, and separation from caregivers, we ask families to commit to completing a full 8 week period of school before making any judgements around whether their child “can do it”. It will take time for your child to adjust and trust the new routine. It may feel like they will never adjust or stop crying or stop clinging, but our experience is that when parents stick to the routine and show confidence, the children follow suit. Please reach out to us for support if you need it. We can work with you to create a gradual transition over time into a full day of school to manage any separation anxiety.

Thank you

Thank you for choosing to be part of our FUMC Children’s Center Family! We are excited to get to know you and your child(ren).

2026-2027 School Calendar (Subject To Change)

Date	Event
August 16	Parent Volunteer Day (Deep Cleaning)
Aug 17, 19, 21	Teacher's First Week Back, Volunteers help Prep the Classroom Week
Aug 24, 26, 28	First Week of School: Staggered Start
Aug 31	Open House and Potluck Meet and Greet, 11-1
Sept 7	Labor Day: No School
Oct 6th? TBD	Darnell Farms Field Trip Meet Up (Pumpkin Patch)
Oct 16	Professional Development Day for Teachers: No School
Oct 19	Teacher Work Day: No School
Oct 30	Show Me Montessori Day (Work Cycle, Pumpkin Carving, Costume Parade)
Nov 11	Vetrans Day: No School
Nov 25-27	Thanksgiving Break: No School
Dec 6th? TBD	Christmas time children's Center featured church service
Dec 21-Jan 5	Winter Break: No School
Jan 18	MLK Day: No School
Feb 19	Show Me Montessori Day (Potluck and Conferences)
Feb 12	Teacher Work Day: No School
Mar 7	Fundraiser Depot Dance & Children's Play
Mar 12	Teacher Work Day: No School: Pre K/Kindergarden Registration for Cherokee Schools
Mar 15	Teacher Work Day: No School
Mar 26	Good Friday: No School
Apr 12-16	Spring Break: No School
Late Apr/early May TBD	Mercier Farms Field Trip (strawberries)
May 14	Show Me Montessori Day (Graduation, Potluck and Conferences)
May 17-26	Volunteer Parent Help Needed--End of Year Cleaning
May 28	Last Day of School
June 4	Last Teacher Work Day