



Parent & Student Handbook

Revised July 2026

First Baptist Church
450 E Hwy 287
Waxahachie, TX 75165
972-937-1940 ext: 110
firststeps@fbcwax.org

Purpose

First Steps exists to minister to young children and their families in our church and community. Our primary goal is to provide a safe, nurturing environment that meets each child's physical, spiritual, social, and emotional needs.

Standards

First Steps operates as a ministry of First Baptist Church. First Steps admits students of any race, nationality or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality or ethnic origin.

General Program Information

First Steps will meet September - May, Tuesdays Wednesday & Thursdays, from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Program dates primarily follow the Waxahachie Independent School District calendar and follow their directives for inclement weather and other closures. If Waxahachie ISD is closed, First Steps Weekday Education will be as well.

Policy and Procedures

Policies and procedures are updated annually to reflect changes in minimum standard requirements, tuition and fees, hours, etc. If a change must be made during the school year, each family will receive notice through a handout and/or newsletter that will need to be read and signed for compliance. To ensure that First Steps operates as effectively and efficiently as possible, policies were set by the First Baptist Church Weekday Education Team, Minister to Children, and Church Staff at the recommendation of the First Steps directors.

Questions and concerns regarding policies and procedures should be brought to the directors. Any changes or exceptions will be decided in cooperation with the Weekday Education Team.

Texas State Minimum Standards for Child Care

<https://hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/doing-business-with-hhs/provider-portal/protective-services/ccl/min-standards/chapter-746-centers.pdf>

Curriculum

All of our classes offer developmentally-appropriate, hands-on activities that promote spiritual and academic growth. First Steps curriculum will include the following elements: Bible stories, dramatic play, creative art, health & safety, music, language arts, number readiness, science & nature, physical fitness, chapel, outdoor play (weather permitting; students go outside if the temperature is between 40° and 94°) We will offer music once a week.

Enrollment & Student Information

Registration for enrollment in First Steps Weekday Education is open year-round, space permitting. Registration and payment of the registration fee ensures that your child will have a place on the class roster or that your child will be placed on a waiting list if their age group is full. You will be notified of openings as space becomes available.

Please continually update emergency information, as needed, in Brightwheel. This includes emergency contacts and a list of additional persons authorized to pick up your child.

Brightwheel allows us to contact parents, guardians or family members in the case of an emergency. If your child needs immediate medical care and we cannot reach you, Brightwheel and our medical release form authorizes your doctor to administer the necessary care. Your child's records are accessible only to the First Steps Administration, the child's teacher (under supervision by an administrator) and the parent or legal guardian.

Brightwheel

Brightwheel will be used for checking students in and out, communication between parents, teachers and directors, billing, and student record keeping. The Brightwheel app can be downloaded on any smartphone or tablet. If you need an invitation to access your child's account, email: firststeps@fbcwax.org

All adults who will be dropping off or picking up students must have the Brightwheel app and login prior to dropping off or picking up. It is the parent's responsibility to communicate this with other adults who will be taking care of their child. Once adults are added to the child's profile an invitation from Brightwheel will be sent to the added adult and will allow them to create their own login. Questions regarding the app may be sent to firststeps@fbcwax.org.

Immunization Record (copy from your doctor or clinic)

No child will be permitted to begin school without immunizations on file. Please compare your child's record with the state requirements. If your child does not have the necessary immunizations, we will notify you. Additionally, children who are age 5+ must have a vision and hearing check from their doctor as well. Your doctor may email them to:

firststeps@fbcwax.org.

Medical Release Form

This form, which can come from your child's pediatrician, must be signed by your child's physician and returned. By signing, your physician acknowledges that your child is physically able to take part in the daily activities of the First Steps Weekday Education program.

Attendance & Fees

Attendance, health and identification records are kept for each child. There will be no refunds for temporary absences. Continued payment assures that your child's place is reserved for their return to the program. Monthly tuition will be submitted via a recurring invoice sent monthly through Brightwheel. Any questions regarding payment should be sent in a message via Brightwheel or emailed to firststeps@fbcwax.org.

Fees for the fall/spring school year are prorated based on days the program is in session.

- Non-refundable deposit of \$150 due at time of registration.
- A \$50 supply fee goes out at the beginning of each semester. This will allow First Steps MDO to purchase items such as classroom supplies, wipes, paper plates, sanitizing wipes, zip-lock bags, tissues, etc. Traditionally, these are items that we have asked you to bring in the past. Now, the only items you need to provide are your child's day to day items (snacks, lunch, diapers, etc.).
- Monthly payment of \$315 for 2 days or \$415 for 3 days is due on the 1st of each month.
- We take the total tuition amount, which is \$3,150 or \$4,150, and spread it over 10 months. This helps keep the monthly payments smaller and more manageable.
 - The second child in a family receives a \$25 discount on tuition.
 - First responders and military will receive a \$25 discount on tuition.
 - Both of the discounts apply to both 2 and 3 days tuition.

A late fee: of \$15.00 will be charged on the 15th of the month unless prior arrangements are made with the director. If an entire month of tuition is missed, there is a possibility your child will forfeit their spot in the program.

Arrival & Dismissal: Arrival for each day will begin at 8:45 am. A car line will form in the circle drive around the building. MDO staff will receive children from cars at the drop off location at the crosswalk. Parents MUST unbuckle each child and staff members will receive them from the car. Parents should wait until the car line has stopped and a staff member is prepared to receive their child before exiting the car or unbuckling their child.

Dismissal will take place in the same car line, beginning at 2:00 pm. Parents should stay in their vehicles until their child is brought to their car by a staff member. Car tags MUST be

displayed in the car in order for a child to be released. If a car tag is not present, the adult picking up the child must be on the approved pick up list and have their ID. Please let MDO staff know if there are changes in your child's pick up person.

By law, we are not allowed to release a child to anyone who is not listed in our records.

Directors and staff will only release children to persons whose names are listed on the child's **Authorized Pick-up List** in Brightwheel. The directors and staff members will ask to see a photo I.D. if they do not know or recognize the person intending to pick up your child.

Continued Late Drop-off fee:

We understand that occasional late drop-offs can happen. However, our program has a strict drop-off cut-off time of 9:15 AM.

If you anticipate being late, please notify us immediately through a message on Brightwheel.

If late drop-offs become consistent, a fee of \$5.00 per child will be assessed for each occurrence.

Late Pick-up Fee: \$5.00 per child will be charged to you at 2:25 *p.m.*. There will be one late pick up without charge viewed as a grace period. Any late pick-up thereafter will be charged through Brightwheel. Charges may be sent with or without notice. **Late fees must be paid upon receipt of invoice.**

Withdrawing from the Program: The Weekday Education administration appreciates as much notice as possible if you plan to withdraw from the program (preferably 2-4 weeks). This allows families on the waiting list to be notified of the opening. If your child is absent for 4 or more consecutive program days with no communication from the family, his enrollment status will be changed to inactive. At this point, if the next tuition payment is not received or if your child does not return by the first Tuesday of the next month, he/she will be automatically withdrawn from the program, requiring re-enrollment and submission to any forms and/or fees required for re-enrollment. When leaving the program for any reason, there will be no refunds for paid tuition and all outstanding fees will be due.

Special Events

Throughout the year, there will occasionally be special events to which parents and other visitors are invited. If these events fall on a school day, there may be special instructions for drop off and/or pick up. Any stipulations or restrictions of our building, classrooms, or hallway are put in place for the safety and security of our students and staff. We thank you for your cooperation.

Safe Sleeping: Texas childcare safe sleep standards require infants under one year to be placed on their backs to sleep on a firm, flat surface in a crib free of soft bedding, pillows, or toys. Babies under 12 months of age may not sleep with restricted arms.

Outdoor Play: Weather permitting, MDO will take children outdoors to play 2 times a day for a total of 60 minutes. We implement this practice to meet the following requirements: (A) The benefits of physical activity and outdoor play; (B) The duration of physical activity at your operation, both indoor and outdoor; (C) The type of physical activity (structured and unstructured) that children may engage in at your operation; (D) Each setting in which your physical activity program will take place; (E) The recommended clothing and footwear that will allow a child to participate freely and safely in physical activities; and (F) The criteria you will use to determine when extreme weather conditions pose a significant health risk that prohibits or limits outdoor play and (G) A plan to ensure physical activity occurs on days when extreme weather conditions prohibit or limit outdoor play.

Bad Weather

If inclement weather creates a need to cancel MDO, notifications will be sent via Brightwheel. If Waxahachie ISD closes, we will close as well. If WISD schedules a late opening, we will not have school. If severe weather arrives while we are in school, we will take all the necessary precautions and possibly call for an early dismissal. In the event of inclement weather, there will be no refunds or credits to tuition, and billing will proceed as normal.

Emergency Drills

Emergency drills will be done on a monthly basis. This will allow our directors, teachers, students, and church staff to be thoroughly prepared and knowledgeable if an emergency were to arise. This also allows our students to not be caught off guard or afraid if action needs to be taken.

Discipline

We are committed to providing a positive learning environment for all children. As a basic rule, we use positive reinforcement practices, modeling and redirection from teachers, and intervention from a director if needed. A strong teacher-parent partnership will be one of the most vital tools in helping our students. If disruptive, negative, destructive, or aggressive behaviors are continual, parents will need to meet with the teachers to devise a plan to help their child be successful in the classroom setting.

Aggressive Behavior Policy

When a child shows any aggressive behavior or willful disrespect toward the teacher, a notification will be sent to the parents via Brightwheel. If aggression is shown towards another student, both of the children's parents will be notified, and the child involved will remain

anonymous to the other family. Aggressive behaviors include, but are not limited to: hitting, kicking, and biting.

When a child shows aggressive behavior, he/she will be sent home if:

- There are two or more instances of unprovoked aggression in one day
- The child bites/hits/slaps/kicks on the face
- The child leaves a bruise or bleeding wound

The length of time the child must remain at home will be decided on a case-by-case basis and may range from 1 day to 1 month, and is at the discretion of the Director.

Upon their return, if a child continues to be aggressive, despite the teachers' and the parents' efforts to stop the behavior, the child may be removed from enrollment. Age, severity of wounds, temperament, cooperation of parents and teacher documentation will be considered when making the final decision. Readmission will be considered after a period of six weeks, based on a case-by-case basis, and if there is an available spot in the class.

At our Mother's Day Out program, the safety and well-being of all children is our top priority. We understand that young children are still learning how to express emotions and resolve conflicts. However, aggressive behavior that puts others at risk will be addressed immediately and consistently.

Definition of Aggressive Behavior

Aggressive behavior includes, but is not limited to:

- **Hitting, biting, kicking, pinching, or scratching**
- **Spitting or throwing objects with intent to harm**
- **Verbal threats or intimidation**
- **Destruction of property with aggression**

Our Approach

We use a positive and proactive approach when handling aggressive behavior:

1. Redirection and Calm Intervention

Caregivers will step in immediately to stop the behavior, ensure safety, and help the child regulate their emotions.

2. Individual Support

The child will be given time to calm down, followed by age-appropriate discussions to help them understand their actions and learn acceptable alternatives.

3. Incident Documentation

Any aggressive incident will be documented and shared with the parent or guardian at pickup. A copy may be kept on file.

4. Parent Communication

Parents will be notified of repeated or serious incidents. We will work with families to identify triggers, strategies, and possible referrals for additional support.

5. Behavior Plans

If aggressive behavior continues, a behavior support plan may be put in place. This includes consistent communication, strategies to reduce triggers, and goals for improvement.

Suspension or Dismissal

If aggressive behavior becomes a frequent safety concern or causes harm to others:

- The child may be temporarily suspended from the program.
- In rare and severe cases, dismissal from the program may be considered after efforts to support the child have not been successful.

We understand this can be a sensitive area, and we are committed to working closely with families in a loving, supportive, and professional way to help every child succeed.

Health & Wellness

For the protection of your child and other children, parents are required to keep a child at home when any of the following symptoms/conditions exist or have existed in the past 24 hours.

- Fever of 100 degrees or more
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Any symptom of usual childhood diseases
- Common cold (symptoms persisting for one week), with excessive cough and/or a runny nose with green or yellow mucus.
- Sore throat

- Croup
- Any unexplained rash
- Any skin infection (boils, ringworm, impetigo)
- Suspected Mononucleosis
- Pink Eye and other eye infections
- Lice

We will follow the Texas Health and Human Services Communicable Disease Guidelines for readmission criteria which can be found at:

https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/IDCU/health/schools_childcare/Communicable-Disease-Chart-Schools-and-Childcare-Centers-072922.pdf

If a child develops a fever or other symptoms while at school, the parents will be notified to pick up their child immediately. Children who are ill will be isolated and given appropriate care until a parent/guardian arrives. It is important that you pick up your child promptly. Children will also be sent home if an illness or symptom prevents them from fully participating in First Steps MDO activities.

A child who was ill may return to First Steps MDO when:

- The child is free of symptoms of illness for 24 hours (must be fever free without the use of medication) or
- You have obtained a health care professional's statement that the child no longer has a contagious disease or condition.

Please notify the Directors if your child is ill with a communicable disease such as: Fifth's Disease, Hand Foot and Mouth Disease, Impetigo, Lice, Mono, Pink eye, Scabies, Flu, Measles, Hepatitis A, Chickenpox, Strep Throat, Covid, Whooping cough or any other communicable disease.

First Steps MDO reserves the right to request a written permission slip from the child's physician before your child can return to our program. Please let your judgment err on the side of caution, as we know you would like other parents to be as considerate of your child's health and safety.

Children cannot be kept in their classroom while their class is outside on the playground. If a child is too sick to go outside, they must be kept at home.

Illness At School

If your child becomes ill during the day, they will be isolated from the group, and you will be notified to pick up your child as soon as possible. In a non-life-threatening illness or accident, our first attempt will be to contact the parents. If we are unable to contact the parents, we will start contacting people on your emergency contact list. Please make all of your emergency contacts aware that they may be called and expected to pick up your child in case of an illness or accident. **A continual problem of not being able to reach a parent when a child is sick or hurt could result in the child being withdrawn from the MDO program. Medication will not be administered at MDO. The only exception to this, is for children who have a diagnosed allergy and provide a prescribed epipen.**

Medical Emergency

In the event of a medical emergency we will call 911 and notify the parents immediately. Additionally, we will reference the child's medical application form.

Social Media

It is important to remember that not all parents, guardians, and foster parents share pictures of their children on social media. With that in mind, we ask that you share pictures of **only** your child, unless given permission from the other parent, guardian or foster parent. The director reserves the right to take action on any shared or posted information that conflicts with First Steps policies.

Birthdays & Holidays

Birthday treats **MAY** be sent from home. All treats must be store bought with ingredients listed on the packaging. You must contact your child's teacher, via Brightwheel, before sending a birthday treat. First Steps has special days set aside for holiday celebrations. Parents will receive sign-up lists for class party days.

Diapering & Toilet Training

A child is considered toilet-trained (urination and bowel movements) when he/she:

- Can anticipate the urge to use the toilet; and
- Communicate that need to their teachers.
- Control the urge and get to the toilet on time.
- Pull down his/her pants.

- Use the toilet.
- Pull up his/her pants.
- Wash up after him/herself.

****Our teachers are happy to support and encourage children as they progress through the potty-training process. However, potty training is the primary responsibility of the child's parent or guardian and should be established at home before the child is considered fully potty trained at school.**

Teachers will assist children by providing gentle reminders, encouragement, and opportunities to use the restroom throughout the school day. Teachers may also assist with clothing adjustments and basic cleanup when necessary.

Please understand that our teachers are not responsible for actively potty training children or for implementing an individualized potty-training program during the school day. Consistency between home and school is important, and we encourage families to communicate with their child's teacher regarding their progress and any strategies being used at home.**

*****All children entering 3s and PRE-K classes are required to be toilet trained, including during nap time. Children must be willing to go to the bathroom and try to potty when asked by their teacher.*****

Clothing & Footwear

Students should wear clothing that is loose enough to provide comfort and freedom of movement and large enough to pull on and off easily. Ensure students are wearing clothes suitable for the weather for outdoor play. All garments should be washable; we get messy!

For girls - shorts **MUST** be worn under dresses and skirts. Tennis shoes or shoes with rubber soles are the best choice for our program. Flip flops, sandals and other open toe shoes are highly discouraged.

WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL:

Anything brought from home must be labeled with your child's name, including bedding, coats, lunch boxes, cups/bottles, and backpacks.

- Backpack big enough to fit a class folder and change of clothes
- Change of clothes (including socks and undergarments for older students)
- Lunch with age appropriate foods
- Spill and leak proof water cup appropriate for your child's age (no Owala bottles please)

- Nap roll/blankets (Pre-K does **NOT** need)
- Diapers for children not yet toilet trained, enough to be stored several school days

WHAT NOT TO BRING TO SCHOOL:

- Personal toys from home (unless requested by the teachers for a special activity)
 - Medicine
 - Personal valuables or money
 - Gum/candy
- *Please note*** MDO staff will not apply sunscreen or bug spray to children. If parents wish to have their children wear these products, these must be applied before they arrive.

LUNCH AND SNACK:

- Bottle fed babies need to have pre-filled bottles with lids.
 - Formula should be premixed.
 - Breastmilk should already be thawed and in bottles.
 - Bottles are placed in our fridge upon arrival.
 - Send as many bottles as your child will need for 6 hours, plus one extra.
- Daily Snack
 - This should be a small, healthy and easy option that does not require clean up.
- Lunch in a disposable bag or lunchbox.
 - Cut food into small bite size pieces.
 - All food must be ready to eat from the lunchbox; no food that requires heating
 - No carbonated drinks allowed. Water and fruit juices are best.

Lunch and Snack time are also times of learning. We will take time to teach your child how to feed themselves as well as open their food and drink items. Don't forget to practice with them at home. All bottles, cups, lunchboxes, thermoses, reusable bags, forks, spoons, tupperware should be labeled clearly with your child's name.

Parents Rights: §746.521. What rights does a parent of a child in care of my child-care center have? Subchapter B, Administration and Communication Division 5, Parents Rights August 2024 A parent of a child in care has the right to: (1)Enter and examine your center during its hours of operation without advance notice; (2)File a complaint against your center; (3)Review your center's publicly accessible records; (4)Review your center's written records concerning the parent's child, as outlined in §746.601 of this chapter (relating to Who has the right to access children's records?); (5)Receive from your center: (A)HHSC's inspection reports for your center; and (B)Information regarding how to access your center's compliance history online; (6)Have your center comply with a valid court order signed by a judge that prevents another parent from visiting or removing the parent's child from your center, as

outlined in §746.4101 of this chapter (relating to To whom may I release a child?); (7) Be provided with contact information for Child Care Regulation, including the department's name, address, and telephone number; (8) View any video recordings of an alleged incident of abuse or neglect involving the parent's child maintained by your center as long as: (A) Video recordings of the alleged incident are available; (B) The parent is not allowed to retain any portion of the video depicting a child who is not the parent's child; and (C) Your center notifies in writing the parent of any other child captured in the video recording, before allowing the parent to inspect the video recording; (9) Obtain a copy of your center's policies and procedures, as outlined in §746.503 of this subchapter (relating to Must I provide parents with a copy of my operational policies?); (10) Review, upon request of the parent, your: (A) Staff training records; and (B) In-house training curriculum, if any; and (11) Be free from any retaliatory action by your center for exercising any of the parent's rights. Access these at:

hhs.texas.gov

For more information or concerns call: 817-321-8604 or 800-252-5400

Contact

Teachers can be reached via Brightwheel on school days from 7:00am-4:00pm. Unless there is an emergency, all messages sent after hours will be answered the following day. Brightwheel is monitored during the day for parent communication, but if there is a true emergency, please call the church office at: 972-937-1940, to ensure the message is received in a timely manner.

Directors can be reached via Brightwheel or email at firststeps@fbcwax.org

In most cases, we are able to respond the same day. If the need arises, and the teacher has availability, you can reach out to schedule a phone call or meeting. If any of our policies change, parents will be notified via Brightwheel and a note home.

Our teachers and staff are dedicated to making your child's school experience positive, uplifting, and educational. We do everything in our power to ensure your child feels loved and safe, and enjoys coming to school. To help ensure this happens, we encourage teachers to "unplug" when they are home and focus on their families when the day is over. Thank you for supporting our phenomenal teachers as they work tirelessly to plan and prepare each week for your children.

First Steps MDO

Parent Acknowledgment

I have read, understand, and agree to follow the rules, policies, and procedures outlined in the First Steps MDO Policy Handbook.

Parent/Guardian printed name

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

Child(ren) Name and Date of Birth

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____