



GETHSEMANE
CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Parent Handbook
Preschool and Kindergarten
Handbook

**Gethsemane Christian Academy is a ministry of
Gethsemane Church**

**1035 E. Guadalupe Road
Tempe, AZ 85283
Phone 480.839.0906**

www.gatempe.org

WELCOME FROM DIRECTOR

Welcome to Gethsemane! We are excited that you will be part of our family for this school year! Our school was established in the fall of 1978 as a way to reach the community with the love of Christ. We consider it a privilege to work with our Gethsemane families in providing them a quality Christian education.

Our mission is to make Jesus and His plan of salvation a very real experience each day.

To open little minds to the wonders of God's creation, our staff is trained to know and teach to the Arizona Early Learning Standards in a hands-on, developmentally appropriate manner. Areas of study included in these standards are social and emotional literacy, language arts, science, social studies, fine arts, and mathematics.

We are committed to teaching children in the best God honoring environment possible. Sharing the love of Jesus is a privilege that we take seriously and thoroughly enjoy. We can't wait to see what God has in store for us at Gethsemane this next year!

Our prayer is that all of our families will share in the everlasting, steadfast love that the Lord has for us.

Sandy Rosenbaum

Director

WELCOME FROM PASTOR TROY

Welcome to Gethsemane! We are excited and thankful that you are part of our school family. While a developmentally appropriate learning classroom setting is a top priority of our school, we are blessed to provide a Christian environment where your child can grow and learn. We put a strong emphasis on the entire student and look for ways to develop both knowledge and character throughout their school experience at Gethsemane.

We realize that many of you may attend another church or may be open to finding out more about the offerings here at Gethsemane. Regardless of your church background, we are available to assist in any way possible. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions you may have at 480.839.0906.

God's blessings on the school year ahead!

Troy Schmidt

Lead Pastor

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Gethsemane Christian Academy reserves the right to revise policies, procedures and the contents of any of its handbooks at any time, as deemed necessary.

MISSION STATEMENT

As a community joined together, our church and school's mission is:

To know Jesus more, and to make Him more known.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Gethsemane Christian Academy is a mission of Gethsemane Church. Our purpose is to spread the good news of salvation beginning with our youngest students. We believe that a good spiritual foundation is essential to building a happy, thriving and successful individual, especially in this ever-changing world. All subjects become more meaningful to our preschoolers as they discover God's greatness through his creation and continued presence in our universe.

Emotional growth is emphasized through the teachings of Jesus. All classrooms have Jesus Time every day and chapel once a week. Students learn how Jesus would like them to act through his example. Our staff strives to be positive, patient, and loving. Teachers and staff endeavor to model respect, kindness, and sensitivity while encouraging these characteristics in each student. At this young age, much of our focus is on kindness and learning how to get along with peers.

GCA adheres to the Arizona State Standards where we teach hands-on, developmentally and emotionally appropriate curriculum with a strong spiritual foundation. Our teachers provide a nurturing environment fostering a love of learning.

As research shows, preschoolers learn best in an environment filled with age appropriate discovery based learning. Areas of study include mathematics, literacy, STEAM, fine and gross motor skills, music, and physical education. We use *One in Christ* bible curriculum to build our weekly lessons in encouraging children to know Jesus more.

At Gethsemane, we encourage families and teachers to use a policy based on Matthew 18. This requires parents to talk to teachers about student challenges before they talk to administrators. If unresolved at the two-person level, the matter is prayerfully and in an orderly fashion, moved upward in the school organizational structure. This is the Lord's way of solving people-to-people problems.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

- Gethsemane is a Christian church and school. Being Christian means that we believe that all of us are negatively affected by sin from birth and unable to remedy this problem on our own. We believe that we are rescued from this sin by the undeserved mercy of God. Through faith—a relationship of dependence upon Jesus that God Himself gives us—forgiveness and more become ours. We view God's Word—the Bible—as the source for this truth and life. We don't keep this good news to ourselves but seek to serve and love those around us as we bring the saving message of Jesus to the ends of the earth.
- Gethsemane is part of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS). To be Lutheran simply means that we accept the scriptural truths that inspired the reformation of the Christian Church in the 16th century which ultimately led to a renewed focus on the Gospel.

ADMISSION POLICIES

Gethsemane Christian Academy admits students of any race, color, religion, nationality, or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally made available to students at the school.

Admission applications are accepted based on availability throughout the academic year. After touring the campus and completing an application, families will be invited for an interview with the Director of GCA. Enrollment is complete after parents fill out the registration packet which includes a copy of immunizations, birth certificate, emergency contact form, and other school records from previous schools, and the registration fee has been paid. Please remember that all students are required to have completed immunization records when they enter GCA in compliance with the Arizona State Department of Health regulations. Families opposing immunizations must complete the required form indicating their exemption.

We seek to meet the needs of each student but understand that we may not be able to meet the special needs of some children. If a student has been through the Arizona Early Intervention Program or has suspected special needs, a discussion or review needs to take place with the Director prior to enrollment to determine if Gethsemane would be a good fit for the student. As a private school, Gethsemane reserves the right to refuse admittance for any reason deemed necessary by the administration.

If you need to terminate your child's enrollment, a two-week written notice is to be given to the school director; otherwise you will continue to be charged your monthly tuition. (No reimbursement of tuition will be granted.)

If you decide to take an extended leave of absence, (leave of absence defined as 30 calendar days or more) we can hold your child's spot by paying a 25% of tuition per month fee.

The extended leave of absence also applies to those who choose to not send their child(ren) to school after the reopening from a forced closure, like a pandemic or emergency-related forced closure. ,

SCHOOL MINISTRY TEAM

The administrative team at Gethsemane Christian Academy is composed of the Director and School Ministry Team. The administrative team meets monthly. Meetings are open to all church and school families. If sensitive information needs to be discussed the board may elect to go into executive session. The School Ministry Team consists of laypeople elected by the Voters' Assembly of Gethsemane Church and they serve for two years. The Chairman also serves on the church's Mission Director Team.

SCHOOL OFFICE HOURS

The school office is open for normal business from 7:00 am until 5:30 pm.

DEVOTIONS

Every Tuesday and Thursday morning all teachers will meet together for devotions and staff meetings. Please make arrangements to meet with your child's teacher at a time other than this time so they can keep their commitment to this important part of the week.

SCHOOL HOURS

School for all preschool students begins promptly at 8:30am and ends at 11:30am. Classroom doors open at 8:15 am. Preschool students must be signed in and out, and dropped off and picked up in the school office.

School for all kindergarten students begins promptly at 8:30am and ends at 2:30pm.

Students who arrive prior to 8:00 am will go to Extended Care and will be charged Extended Care fees. Students arriving after 8:00 am, will not be charged an additional fee.

If a student is not picked up by 11:30am the student will be checked into Extended Care and his/her account will be charged accordingly. At 11:30 am your child will be brought to the office. If they haven't been picked up by 11:40 am, arrangements will be made for lunch. Extended Care is available before and after school from 7:00am-5:30pm.

TARDINESS

Regular attendance is essential to successful schoolwork. Parents are encouraged to schedule medical appointments, vacations, and other activities outside the school day. Absences should be avoided except for illness and emergencies. In the event of an unplanned absence, please send a Brightwheel message to your child's teacher to indicate they will not be in school that day.

If a student must leave school prior to the end of the school day, please make the teacher aware if possible through email or use of Brightwheel messaging. The student must be signed out in the office by the person designated to pick the student up from school. School office staff will contact the student's classroom to have them meet you in the office.

Tardiness results in class disruption and loss of instructional time for the class and the student. Please be respectful of the teacher and the learning environment and make every effort to be on time.

EXCESSIVE ABSENCES

Kindergarten students who have 5 or more unexcused absences will be notified by the administration. Students who have 18 excused or unexcused absences a year (9 a semester) will put the promotion to the next grade level in jeopardy. Subsequent absences must be accompanied by a doctor's note.

SCHEDULING

It is best to keep a child's schedule to be consistent. When you register your preschooler, you are selecting the days he/she will be coming to school. Because of staffing concerns, there cannot be any switching days, making up days, or adding days due to illness or work schedules.

If your schedule changes and you would like to change your child's days permanently, a written form notifying the office of desired change is required. Administration will approve the change based on enrollment numbers and staffing.

PARENTS ON CAMPUS

If you would like the opportunity to visit your child's classroom, or volunteer on campus please speak to your child's teacher, or the office staff. We welcome parent volunteers and helpers on campus and will have a variety of ways parents can be helpers.

TRANSPORTATION

Gethsemane does not provide transportation services for our families to and from school. If you desire your student to go home with a friend, a signed note must be turned into the teacher giving Gethsemane permission to release the student at the end of the day or at the end of preschool. It is best to have that person added to your Brightwheel account as an approved pick up person for your child.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are a valuable part of the educational experience at Gethsemane. Permission for field trips is given in the registration packets. Transportation for field trips is generally provided by staff or by parent drivers in their personal vehicle. Teachers will notify parents ahead of time if personal vehicles are needed. If parents are to drive for a field trip, an up-to-date "Volunteer Driver Form" must be filled out and on file in the school office.

PERSONAL PROPERTY

Please keep all toys and electronic devices at home (not in a backpack). When teachers decide on a "show and tell" day, you will be informed a week in advance. The show and tell item needs to be kept in the backpack except when being shown to the class.

LOST AND FOUND

Gethsemane is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen property belonging to students. Any items of value will be taken to the lost and found box outside of building one. Throughout the year, any articles that remain in lost and found for more than one month will be given to a charitable organization.

SNACKS

Parents need to pack a healthy morning snack for their child. The snack needs to be put into a bag or container with your child's name on it. Parents may send a drink or your child may use his/her water bottle. If your child is staying for lunch, the snack should be separate from the lunch, and in a container with his or her name on it. Parents of two-year-olds will be provided with a nutritious snack both in the morning, and afternoon, (if staying all day).

LUNCHES

Our hot lunch program will be available daily for \$3.25 per lunch. Hot lunches are **not** available over school breaks and holidays. Lunches are ordered a month in advance through our website or the QR code in the front office. If ordered the same day, the fee per lunch is \$5.00. Microwaves are not available for student use. Students may purchase milk for .25 cents in the lunchroom. Soda is not permitted during the school day.

If you would like your child to stay for Lunch Bunch, it runs from 11:30-12:30 at the cost of \$8.00 per day. This cost does not include lunch. It does include a supervised lunchtime from 11:30-12:00 and a playground time from 12:00-12:30.

BIRTHDAYS AND PARTIES

Birthday and party invitations may not be distributed at school unless the entire class is invited. Students may not hold birthday parties at school. Treats are permissible but must be store bought and in individually wrapped packages. We do encourage healthy snacks for celebrations and birthdays. Please coordinate with the teacher and check for food allergies in the class.

ANIMALS ON CAMPUS

Please do not bring pets on campus when picking up or dropping off your child. Even the best behaved pet can become agitated by the presence of so many people and safety is our primary concern. Also, many children and adults may be allergic to pets. The safety of our students is our primary concern

Teachers may allow pets to be brought into the classroom for special events when arrangements have been made in advance.

SKILLS ASSESSMENT

During Parent-Teacher Conferences, preschool parents will be given a skills assessment. The assessment is based on the Arizona Early Learning standards and teacher input. Kindergarten parents will receive a report card which assesses their child's growth.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Conferences are held twice during the school year. One of the keys to successfully educating our students is the partnership between school and family. One way we strengthen that partnership is through communication. With that in mind, at least one parent is required to schedule a conference with their child's teacher so the teacher may personally present the skills assessment and discuss the student's progress.

CHAPEL

Chapel is every Wednesday at 9:00-9:30am. We will meet all together for chapel, parents and guests are welcome to attend these services. We have a Community Chapel the last Wednesday of each month where family, friends and church members are encouraged to attend chapel.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

One of the ideals which Gethsemane prides itself on is a strong community. Parent participation is encouraged. We have many opportunities throughout the year where we can come together and celebrate our awesome school.

As a service to our school we ask that you donate 10 hours of your time to help with community events and classroom activities. This helps build relationships with faculty, staff and families, keeps tuition costs down and strengthens our community. The yearly requirement is ten hours per family. It is encouraged that you find ways that your family can help our school.

Some examples of ways to participate include:

Lunch/Recess Duty
Help in classroom
Building
repair/technology

Music/Art Programs
Teacher appreciation
Field trip chaperone
Donations

Playdough making
Cafeteria helpers

Volunteer hours can be recorded on the Parent Portal of our website.

DRESS CODE

Please send your child to school in comfortable clothes that can get dirty or messy. We do many hands-on activities and your child may get dirty.

Please send your child with shoes that fully enclose the foot and are worn with socks. Sandals are allowed if there is a backstrap to keep sandals safely on feet and the foot is fully enclosed. Shoes with velcro fasteners are preferred unless your child is working on shoelace tying so that students can be independent in taking shoes off and putting them on. Shorts need to be worn under girls' dresses and skirts.

We recommend parents mark all clothing with their child's name. In case of an accident, we require that all preschoolers have a change of clothing (except shoes) in a ziplock bag with their name on it. This will be kept at school. For more information, contact the school office.

CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE

Students are led to understand that in order to be safe in the classroom there are certain rules and guidelines which need to be followed.

At Gethsemane, we do not think of discipline as a form of punishment, rather, as the teaching of self-control, attitude, spirit, and responsibility. It is how we attempt to “train up a child in the way they should go.” (Proverbs 22:6) Our staff are trained to interact in a positive way with our students in accordance with the teachings and philosophies of Christ.

Children do best when the teacher builds a positive, firm yet fair relationship with all students. We believe also that when students are actively engaged in an interesting, developmentally appropriate curriculum which offers a mix of child and teacher initiated activities, behavior concerns are limited.

As a parent, you will be kept current on any behavior concerns we have. Our goal is to work together to put together a plan that will be successful for your child if needed.

If, however, teacher/parent strategies do not solve the problem and students are continually being hurt or are kept from learning, you will be invited to a meeting with the teacher and the administrator. During this meeting an action plan will be created to determine how to best help your child succeed and whether or not we can provide the services to help them. We reserve the right to release a child when we feel we can not meet the needs of that child, or provide a safe learning environment for all students.

MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY INFORMATION

If a child should become ill or injured at school, a member of the staff will notify the parents. For this reason, it is important that we have accurate, up-to-date contact information on file in the school office for parents and emergency contacts. Our school staff are all certified in CPR and first aid; however, in the event of a medical problem or injury that is severe or life-threatening, 911 will be called. If the injury is not life-threatening, the staff will administer first aid and determine if the child is able to stay at school or needs to go home.

As a Preschool, we have documents and guidelines we will follow in COVID-19 illness related events. These documents will be provided to the parents as well as copies available in the school office.

Parents will be notified if a child should become ill or injured while at school. If a student develops a temperature of 100.4 degrees or over, the parent will be asked to pick-up the child from school.

For the health and well-being of all children and staff, the following state guidelines must be adhered to in regard to sick children:

- Fever: A child with a fever is to remain at home until fever-free for 24 hours without medication. If your child has a fever at school and you are called to pick him/her up, he/she may not return to school the next day. A fever is defined as any temperature 100.4 degrees or over.
- Vomiting: If a child vomits at school they must be picked up. They may return to school the next day if they do not have a fever and are no longer showing symptoms of illness.

- Colds: The symptoms of a cold are described as an irritated throat, watery discharge from the nose, and sneezing. A cold may or may not produce a fever. Children are most often contagious in the early, runny stage of the cold. A green discharge can signal an infection. A child may return to school after 24 hours of medication.
- Pink Eye: Your child may return to school after antibiotic treatment has begun and eye ooze has stopped. If it is viral, the child may return with a doctor's note when they are no longer contagious.
- Chickenpox: A child must stay home five days after the onset of blisters, or until all pox is scabbed over and dry.
- Head lice: No child may be present while there are any nits present in their hair. If a case of lice is discovered at home, please report it to the school. We will keep details of reports and incidents confidential, but we do need to alert parents about them. Discovery of lice requires the child to be sent home and treated. When lice is discovered, that child needs to be kept home at least through the next school day. All nits must be removed before the child can return. Upon return, the child's scalp will be inspected by a staff member.

MEDICATION

Because of insurance, liability mandates, and state law, ALL MEDICATION MUST BE BROUGHT TO THE SCHOOL OFFICE in the original container and a medication release form must be filled out and signed by the parent. These are available in the school office. Any expired medicine will be returned to the parents and new medications will need to be provided.

EXTENDED CARE

Gethsemane offers state-licensed extended care for all GCA students in preschool through kindergarten. Extended care is available before and after school hours from 7:00 am-5:30pm. The Extended Care Program fee is \$8.00 per hour, per child. Extended Care fees will be billed on your monthly tuition statement.

Our school utilizes a digital check-in and check-out system called Brightwheel. When checking your student in and out, someone on the emergency card must use this system. Late fees will be assessed for students not picked up by 5:30pm. Please respect our extended care workers. At the beginning of the day, and at the end of the day, we may have fewer children, therefore, we may have a multi-age group of students. However, throughout most of the day, the children are separated according to age and stay with one teacher, together in a classroom or play area.

LIABILITY

Gethsemane Christian Academy does meet the minimum liability coverage requirements set forth by the State Health Department. A copy of the liability coverage is available for review in the school office.

Gethsemane Christian Academy and Extended Care is licensed and regulated by the Arizona Department of Health Services, office of Extended Care licensure (150 N 18th Ave. 4th Floor, Phoenix, AZ 85007. 602-364-2539) Inspection Reports are available upon request.

PESTICIDE PROCEDURE

Pesticide application is administered the second Saturday of every month at 2:00 p.m. No pesticides will be applied during school hours.

PLAYGROUND RULES

Students will:

- Be kind and respectful to everyone
- Be safe-keep your hands and feet to yourself.
- Use helpful words at all times.
- Follow the directions of the teachers on duty.

TAX-CREDITS

Arizona state law allows Arizona taxpayers to receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for contributions made to a school tuition organization (STO). These donations can be designated to a particular private, Christian school or a particular student in Kindergarten through 12th grade. Funds from STOs can be used to cover tuition, including the initial tuition payment. We encourage each family to apply to Arizona Christian School Tuition Organization (ACSTO.org) yearly. We seek to make Christian education an affordable option for families. If you have any questions about utilizing tuition tax credits or making Gethsemane an affordable option, please contact the school office.

TUITION/EXTENDED CARE PAYMENTS

Families have the option to pay tuition in full or in ten monthly payments, from August through May. All monthly tuition and extended care payments are due on the 20th of each month. A \$30 per month late charge will be added to all unpaid balances on the 21st of the month. Students may be dismissed from Gethsemane for lack of payment after the account is one month past due. According to current government regulations, tuition payments are not tax deductible.

Electronic statements will be emailed out each month. Families may choose to have automatic withdrawal from a banking account on a monthly basis. Credit cards may be used, but must be registered with the school office first and incur a 3% processing fee. For additional information, please contact the school office.

DONATIONS

Gethsemane is very grateful for any financial gifts or other donations to help support the mission and operations of our school and enhance our students' experience. All checks should be made payable to Gethsemane Christian Academy. All gifts are tax deductible. Many businesses promote employee gifts to nonprofit organizations by providing a matching donation. If you are considering a gift to Gethsemane, you may wish to check to see if your employer provides matching gifts to maximize your donation.

Brightwheel

Brightwheel is a communication tool we use for checking students in and out of school. If you have a non-urgent message you would like to send to the school, or to your child's teacher you may use this app. When checking your child in and out on Brightwheel, it is required that the parent or approved pick-up adult signs your child out.

Parent Portal and the GCA Website:

Important information can be found on the Parent Portal at: gatempe.org.

We recommend that you check this page weekly for:

- Lunch Menu and Sign-Up
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Academic Calendar
- Monthly Newsletter
- Sign-up for Day-care days (days GCA is open but school is not in session)
- Important dates and deadlines
- Policy information

COMMITMENT FORM

Parents must read and sign the commitment form stating they understand and agree to support the purpose, philosophy, and policies of Gethsemane Christian Academy as outlined in the handbook. Forms can be returned to the school office or your child’s teacher.

We/I the parent(s) of _____ understand and agree to support the purpose, philosophy, and policies of Gethsemane Christian Academy as outlined in the handbook

Parent Name Printed: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent Name Printed: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____