

First UMC
The Growing Place
Early Childhood Center

Brochure
2019-2020



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Welcome to First UMC- The Growing Place!

First UMC- The Growing Place is a Christian early childhood center, serving children ages one through Kindergarten. Established in 1963 as a ministry of the church, our school is founded on Christian beliefs, values, and traditions. We value community and family involvement and take great pride in providing high quality Christian early childhood education in a nurturing, stimulating, and anti-bias environment. First UMC- The Growing Place welcomes families from all backgrounds, faiths, ethnicities, and nationalities as we value being part of a culturally diverse community.

Why choose First UMC- The Growing Place for your child's early learning years?

Our Toddler program (one - two year olds) is rooted in the belief that young children learn and grow in their development through purposeful play and meaningful classroom experiences, rich in creative expression and exploration. With a strong focus on predictable and consistent classroom routines, warm, loving and nurturing relationships with trusted caregivers, self- help skills, and supporting development in language, physical, cognitive and social/emotional domains, your toddler will acquire the skills to become a confident and inquisitive learner.

Our Preschool program (three - four year olds) is geared towards active classroom participation, hands-on learning, and the belief that preschool age children are driven by a need to discover and investigate as they learn about the world around them. With a curriculum that supports the development of the whole child and a strong focus on developing readiness skills in early writing, reading, math, social studies, science, and the arts, learning becomes meaningful, fun, motivates and supports interdependence and self- reliance in your preschool child.

Our Kindergarten program is a unique and well-established program in the community. With innovative educational approaches in place to support a strong academic program, a purposeful commitment to the arts, environment and culture, frequent field trips, and community outreach projects, your Kindergartner will develop their academic potential, develop 21st century thinking skills, and their role as a responsible and caring citizen in our community and society. All of our Kindergarten students gain admittance to first grade programs at public, charter, magnet, and private area schools.

Our qualified and experienced teaching teams celebrate each child's unique individuality, support collaboration between school and home, are committed to the field of early education, participate in professional development, and strive for excellence in providing a meaningful, creative, and spiritual learning experience for your child.

With low teacher to student ratios, small class size, an active parent teacher organization, church family events, and community outreach, we are confident your family will feel at home at First UMC- The Growing Place as we partner together in providing your child with the best educational experience.

We are here to support you in your decision making and appreciate the opportunity to answer any questions you may have. School tours are available and may be scheduled by contacting our school office at 305.446.0846. If you would like to discuss your child's needs, or if I can assist in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me by calling the school office or by emailing me at: cdekker@fumccg.org

Warm regards,

Ms. Corina Dekker- Director

VISION

First UMC-The Growing Place is an innovative Early Childhood Education Center, rooted in the values and beliefs of The United Methodist Church, serving children and families from a culturally rich and diverse community, including children with diverse needs, in providing high quality early childhood education.

MISSION

First UMC -The Growing Place aims to serve its community by providing Early Childhood Education of the highest quality, within the context of Christian belief and practice through:

1. Encouraging an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promoting Christian values through the experience it offers to all its children and their families
2. Providing a safe, secure, spiritual and nurturing environment where young children can thrive and develop their full potential
3. Contributing to the Christian nurturing of the family
4. Serving as an active and engaged ministry of the church

PHILOSOPHY

First UMC -The Growing Place's educational practice and approach is founded on the beliefs and research of the "Constructivist Theories" (Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky) where learning is viewed as a complex process of individual and social experiences, and where children construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through a multitude of experiences and reflecting on those experiences. Classroom practice is child centered and developmentally appropriate.

Children are viewed as competent individuals and active learners. Teachers are facilitators and co-learners, who present children with meaningful learning experiences, based on children's interests, and geared towards creativity, self-expression, exploration, discovery and investigation. The classroom environment is designed with furniture, materials and resources to facilitate and support this process of child centered, active and engaged learning.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Our teaching staff and administration help children to appreciate, show and understand God's love for all God's creation, including people of different cultures, races and religions. Throughout the school year and implemented in daily classroom practice and routines, Children:

- Are given opportunities to experience the creative power of God as they discover the world God created.
- Are encouraged to participate in Christian worship and music.
- Participate in a variety of Christian celebrations in the classroom and during school and church sponsored events.
- Broaden their experiences and build ideas, feelings, and understandings related to the Christian faith through Bible stories, pictures, songs, Bible verses, and play activities.

CURRICULUM

Building on our educational philosophy, First UMC-The Growing Place uses HighScope curriculum, a research based, and innovative approach to learning and development for toddler, preschool and elementary age children.

WHAT IS THE HIGHSOPE CURRICULUM?

HighScope's educational approach emphasizes “active participatory learning.” Active learning means students have direct, hands-on experiences with people, objects, events, and ideas. Children’s interests and choices are at the heart of HighScope programs. They construct their own knowledge through interactions with the world and the people around them. Children take the first step in the learning process by making choices and following through on their plans and decisions. Teachers, caregivers, and parents offer physical, emotional, and intellectual support. In active learning settings, adults expand children’s thinking with diverse materials and nurturing interactions.

HOW DOES THE HIGHSOPE APPROACH DIFFER FROM OTHER EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS?

The HighScope educational approach is consistent with the best practices recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Head Start Performance Standards, and other guidelines for developmentally based programs. Within this broad framework, however, HighScope has unique features that differentiate it from other early childhood programs. One is the daily plan-do-review sequence. Research shows that planning and reviewing are the two components of the program day most positively and significantly associated with children’s scores on measures of developmental progress.

A second unique feature is our curriculum content, the social, intellectual, and physical building blocks that are essential to young children’s optimal growth. Our content areas are organized in eight main categories that correspond to state and national learning standards; the categories are (1) approaches to learning; (2) social and emotional development; (3) physical development and health; (4) language, literacy, and communication; (5) mathematics; (6) creative arts; (7) science and technology; and (8) social studies.

Within these preschool content areas are 58 key developmental indicators (KDIs), formerly called key experiences. The KDIs are statements of observable behaviors that define the important learning areas for young children. HighScope teachers keep these indicators in mind when they set up the environment and plan activities to encourage learning and social interaction. They also form the basis of HighScope’s child assessment tool — the Preschool Child Observation Record (COR). Excerpts: HighScope. To read and learn more about HighScope, please visit: <http://www.highscope.org>

EXTRA CURRICULAR EXPERIENCES

Weekly Chapel Worship, Christian Music Education, Art Experiences in our Art Studio (Preschool and Kindergarten), Spanish Language Immersion (Pre-K and Kindergarten), and “Learning Without Tears/Get Ready for School” (writing, reading and math readiness for Pre-K) are offered to incorporate “The Arts” and enrich the children’s learning experiences.

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE (DAP)

Developmentally appropriate practice, often shortened to DAP, is an approach to teaching grounded in the research on how young children develop and learn and in what is known about effective early education. Its framework is designed to promote young children's optimal learning and development. DAP involves teachers meeting young children where they are (by stage of development), both as individuals and as part of a group; and helping each child meet challenging and achievable learning goals.

3 CORE CONSIDERATIONS OF DAP

1) Knowing about child development and learning.

Knowing what is typical at each age and stage of early development is crucial. This knowledge, based on research, helps us decide which experiences are best for children's learning and development.

2) Knowing what is individually appropriate.

What we learn about specific children helps us teach and care for each child as an individual. By continually observing children's play and interaction with the physical environment and others, we learn about each child's interests, abilities, and developmental progress.

3) Knowing what is culturally important.

We must make an effort to get to know the children's families and learn about the values, expectations, and factors that shape their lives at home and in their communities. This background information helps us provide meaningful, relevant, and respectful learning experiences for each child and family.

RATIOS

First UMC-The Growing Place adheres to the teacher to child ratios set forth per accreditation standards, ensuring low ratios and a high standard of care. All of our age groups have a teaching team in place (lead and assistant teacher). Per our accreditation criteria through the United Methodist Church Association for Preschools, Teacher to Child Ratios and class size shall be as follows:

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Ratio</u>	<u>Class size</u>	<u>Compared to: NAEYC</u>	<u>DCF</u>
Walkers	1:4	Max 8	1:4	1:6
Early Twos	1:5	Max 10	1:5	1:6
Twos & Early Threes	1:6	Max 12	1:6	1:11
Threes	1:8	Max 16	1:8	1:15
Fours	1:10	Max 20	1:10	1:20
Kindergarten	1:12	Max 24	1:12	1:25

I WANT TO FIND A HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL FOR MY CHILD. WHAT SHOULD I BE LOOKING FOR?

Based on a number of research studies, there are seven elements of a high-quality preschool program.

1) It has a child development curriculum.

- a) Of all the ingredients in a high-quality program, a curriculum that recognizes the value of child-initiated active learning is the most important.
- b) The best early childhood activities build on children's natural curiosity, are matched to children's current and emerging abilities, and allow for exploration and variation rather than having to perform in a single "right way."
- c) Learning is a process of "developmental change"—that is, a process in which we learn by relating and adding new information to what we already know, and if necessary, changing the way we thought before.
- d) Learning does not happen when children are simply told something. To learn, they must see and do things for themselves, with parents and teachers present to encourage and challenge their thinking.
- e) Children must be secure and confident in what they already know before they are ready to move to the next level.

2) Low enrollment limits.

- a) Studies have found that the fewer children per adult, the better the adult-child interaction.
- b) In addition to good staff-child ratios, the total group size should be limited based on standards recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

3) Staff trained in early childhood development.

- a) Adults who provide care and education for young children need specialized training in child development and early childhood education.
- b) Research also shows that the higher the level of teachers' formal education, the more developmentally appropriate are their teaching practices.

4) Supervisory support and in-service training.

- a) In addition to hiring well-qualified staff, program administrators play a central role in arranging for their ongoing and appropriate training.
- b) Teachers should have regular training in order to further their skills and keep up with new information in early childhood.

5) Involvement of parents as partners.

- a) Parent involvement is essential to good education throughout their children's school years.
- b) Although there are often many obstacles to such involvement (for example, working-parent schedules and multiple demands on the family), high-quality programs are creative in overcoming these barriers. They offer many options for inviting family participation.

6) Sensitivity to the non-educational needs of children and their families.

- a) Today's families cope with many demands and stresses.
- b) In addition to having concerns about their children's education, many parents also contend with financial, medical, social, or legal issues.
- c) Early childhood programs cannot be expected to meet all these needs directly.
- d) However, as part of a community network, staffs of high-quality programs are aware of the services available and help families obtain the assistance they need.

7) Developmentally appropriate evaluation procedures.

- a) The two main objectives of early childhood evaluation are to assess program quality and to assess children's development.
- b) Administrators use program evaluation to make decisions about agency policies and staff development.
- c) Teachers use child evaluation to plan appropriate educational activities for individual children and the class as a whole.