

**Saint Francis Preschool
3s and 4s
&
St. Joseph Club**

123 E. Eleventh Street, Traverse City, MI 49684
231-944-7474
www.gtacs.org

HANDBOOK

JANUARY 2025



GRAND TRAVERSE AREA
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



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GTACS mission statement

The Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools are dedicated to providing a Catholic education – ensuring educational quality for all families willing to enter into a partnership to develop each child to his or her fullest spiritual and academic potential.

ST. FRANCIS PRESCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

At St. Francis Preschool we believe that parents play a vital role in the education of their child as their first teacher. We want to be an extension of your home, and provide a safe, nurturing environment where our experienced faculty and staff can educate your child- mind, body, and spirit. We believe that each child is a gift from God, each with their own unique gifts. We will foster your child's love for learning and provide both structure and the freedom that young minds need through purposeful and meaningful play.

A PRAYER FOR OUR SCHOOL

God, our Father and Creator, be with us in our school.
Help us to treasure your gift of life
and treat one another with care.
Let us always remember that we are all created in your image.
Come, Lord Jesus, and be with us in our school.
Guide our teachers,
guide our parents,
and lead our students
to recognize you in all people.
Come, Holy Spirit, and be with us in our school.
Give us a vision for the future,
and the determination for shaping a faith-filled future.

Amen.

<https://dioceseofgaylord.org/schools/prayers>

CURRICULUM AND DAILY/ WEEKLY SCHEDULES

St. Francis Preschool strives to educate the whole person, heart, mind, and soul. A strong academic curriculum is supported by Catholic Tradition and an emphasis on Christian family values. All aspects of student formation (intellectual, spiritual, psychological, physical, and social) are evaluated in light of how the mission of the school is to be lived out. Those families wishing to enroll at our schools must be willing to accept the standards, values, and regulations of the school. The curriculum is in keeping with Diocesan guidelines and the Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools accrediting directives. St. Francis Preschool will use developmentally appropriate materials and equipment. Our daily schedules will provide a balance of activities including:

1. Daily Outdoor play, weather permitting.
2. Large and small muscle activities.
3. A balance of quiet and active play.
4. Small group and large group activities.
5. And a balance of teacher-initiated activity and child-initiated activity each day.

SCHEDULE OF OPERATION – Monday through Friday (See full school calendar for scheduled breaks and days off)

Doors open at 7:35 and Carline runs from 7:35- 7:55 - Students at St. Francis Preschool should not arrive earlier than 7:35 a.m. as there is no supervision until that time.

School day begins at 8:00 a.m.

DISMISSAL Half Day.11:00 a.m.

DISMISSAL Full Day.2:30 p.m.

EARLY RELEASE DISMISSAL....12:30

LATE START: Carline runs from 8:15- 8:35

OFFICE

The school office is managed by the secretary from 7:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m., Monday - Friday. The school answering machine is closely monitored and all messages will be promptly returned.

SCHOOL BAGS

Each child will need a school bag and pocket folder. Please label your child's bag with his/her name. This bag should be large enough to carry snow pants/boots/shoes. It is important to check your child's school bag daily.

WEEKLY SPECIALS

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Students will use the St. Francis High School gymnasium at least once per week for physical education.

LIBRARY

Students are assigned a weekly library period. Students may check out books from the library and are reminded of the special care that they should give to the books. A fine may be charged for all books that are not brought back to the library on time. There is also a fine for damaged or lost books. Please see the school librarian if you would like to donate a book that would be inscribed to commemorate a birthday, anniversary, or memorial.

The library exists for the use of our students to:

- *Support the instruction and learning taking place in the classroom.*
- *Provide for personal intellectual growth.*
- *Promote interest in good literature; and*
- *To assist students in learning how to use reference materials.*

MUSIC

Students will have a music teacher join the classroom once a week for music.

CATACHISIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD (CGS)

CGS is a prayerful, peaceful method of presenting Scripture and the Truths of our Faith to young children in an atmosphere of tranquil joy. It has been used in parishes and schools across the world for more than 60 years. It takes place in a prepared space called an Atrium. This space has developmentally appropriate materials for students which will allow them to develop their relationship with Christ through Sacred Scripture and the Traditions of the Catholic Church. Children will be able to visit the Atrium for CGS once a week.

Note: Part time students may not receive all specials offered due to scheduling.

TYPICAL DAILY ROUTINE

Each class attends morning specials at least one day/week: Music, PE & Library. These offerings are built in around their typical routine of morning guided activities, recess, snack, 11:00 lunch, 11:30-12:45 rest time, afternoon choice time. Schedules are tailored for age appropriateness and available for parents during back-to-school conferences.

SNACK TIME

The snack area is as much of a learning experience as any other area in the preschool classroom. It is a perfect time to develop social skills, fine motor skills, and healthy eating habits. Preschool students who attend half day need to bring a snack from home. Students who attend full day will need to bring two snacks (one for the morning and one for the afternoon). Snacks need to be labeled each day with student name and date. Filtered water will be provided on-site. Preschool students will be provided a snack if one is not supplied from home. SJC students are provided snack by St. Francis Preschool and contain at least 2 components of the following food groups: dairy, fruit/veggie, whole grain, or protein.

FOOD SERVICE POLICY

St. Francis Preschool offers delicious, whole food lunches, served at 11:00 a.m. M-F

- Lunches are prepared by chefs in a commercial-level kitchen at St. Francis High School.
- Local, fresh ingredients are an integral part of every meal.
- Menus are posted monthly on the Preschool bulletin board, emailed as part of our GTACS Newsletter and can be found on the GTACS website
- We follow Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines of providing a well-balanced meal.
- Menu options include a protein, baked or roasted vegetables, fresh fruit, whole grains, and savory soups.
- Beverages and food shall be age appropriate, and if necessary modified for a child's individual nutritional requirements/dietary needs
- Our dining services team responsibly stewards the environment, with an emphasis on recycling, reduction of waste and composting.
- The GTACS "Life Balance Initiative," which includes its whole foods lunch program, has become a model for other schools.
- Parents may choose to purchase lunch from school, send lunch from home labeled with student name and date, or choose to do a combination of both – occasional lunch from home and purchase from school.
- The food policy and parent options are included in your online enrollment packet

MICHIGAN CLEAN DRINKING WATER ACCESS ACT- FILTER FIRST LEGISLATION

Water sampling and testing of the filtered water at each filtered bottle-filling station and filtered faucet is required by Filter First. Proper sampling procedures must be followed. Results must be maintained for a minimum of 3 years and provided to MiLEAP, EGLE, parents and guardians, staff, and the public upon request. Sampling will occur yearly in the month of July.

LUNCH FUNDING

Students may pay as they go or prepay for lunches by check or an electronic payment service.

FIELD TRIPS

Preschool classes participate in occasional field trips. You will be notified of these in advance. To ensure a safe and pleasurable experience for all the children, the regular school rules apply on field trips. Parents are required to fill out the approved "Diocesan Field Trip Form" for all trips. Permission will only be accepted on these forms. We cannot accept phone permission. Field trips are a special time for the children in the class, therefore, we ask that siblings do not accompany us on field trips. Fees, if any, may be required dependent upon the trip and will be noted on the permission form.

HOLIDAY AND BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Classroom celebrations are limited to a few a year (typically All Saints Day, Christmas, and Valentine's Day). Planning and organizing are the duties of the teachers. Please see classroom teachers' newsletters for plans and procedures for celebrating birthdays. Please consult with the classroom teacher prior to bringing in treats. Gum is not permitted. To avoid hurt feelings, birthday invitations should not be distributed at school. Please see the school librarian if you would like to donate a book that would be inscribed to commemorate a birthday, anniversary, or memorial.

ADMISSIONS/ WITHDRAWAL

Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools (GTACS) are open to students regardless of race, sex, color, religion, political belief, or national origin whose needs can be reasonably met. GTACS will not deny admission to students because of a demonstrated financial need. In the admission of students to GTACS, consideration will be given to these criteria in order:

1. *To children of families currently enrolled in GTACS*
2. *To children of the five participating Catholic parishes*
3. *To children of non-parishioners*

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

It is imperative that we have up-to-date address, email, and phone information for you and the persons you authorize on the emergency cards. Please update your profile in FACTS or call the school office if changes need to be made.

ENROLLMENT/TRANSFERS

Enrollment of students is considered incomplete until receipt of permanent records from a sending school. Students with special needs will be referred to the intermediate district. St. Francis Preschool has limited provision for "special needs" students and cannot necessarily accommodate all students. The building administrators have the final word as to the enrollment of the student. Our school automatically forwards records of such a nature to requesting schools in which the student seeks or intends to enroll.

CLASSROOM AGE RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure a rewarding school experience, we recommend the following:

- For 3-year-old class, child is to be 3 by September 1, 2023
- For 4-year-old class, child is to be 4 by September 1, 2023

These guidelines are based upon the State mandated 5 years old by September 1 to enter Kindergarten.

TUITION, SAVINGS PLANS AND SUPPORT

Tuition schedules, tuition assistance forms, and loan applications are available at the Business Office at 946-0652.

TUITION ASSISTANCE

A tuition assistance program is funded by the Grand Traverse Education Foundation (GTEF). The GTEF allocates funds based on an independent outside firm's assessment. The assessment requires an application, a copy of the last income tax return, and a small fee. Personal finances are kept confidential.

TUITION REDUCTION INCENTIVE PLAN (TRIP)

TRIP helps each family reduce their individual tuition costs by receiving tuition dollars based upon purchases from participating local and national retailers and businesses. Participation is easy through the use of gift cards or certificates (universally known as "SCRIP" or "substitute money") which may be purchased either "on hand" (available upon request) or by pre-ordering a day or more in advance of pick-up at the GTACS TRIP office in the St. Francis gym lobby. SCRIP participating retailers agree to sell gift certificates to the TRIP program at a discount. You are able to redeem them at full face value, and the difference, anywhere from 1% to 15% of your purchases, goes toward your own personal GTACS "tuition savings account." Certain retailers offer Internet redemption programs where certificates may be used online.

In April of each year, the balance in your individual account may be used for your family's tuition, to sign over your balance for another GTACS family's tuition, or to P.A.C.E. (People Aiding Catholic Education). There are regular program participants who, through simply buying where they typically would (Meijer, Home Depot, Speedway Gas, etc.), save several hundred dollars a year. The most creative families who network family members, friends, friends' businesses, and relatives to purchase gift cards or certificates have saved enough to cover an entire year's tuition! The TRIP program operates year-round, even during the summer months. To have your order filled and waiting for you on Wednesday for pick-up, TRIP order forms may be dropped off up until 6 p.m. Tuesday. Orders may also be filled while you wait during TRIP hours.

The TRIP office is open Tuesdays from 2-6 p.m. Wednesdays from 12-2 p.m. and Thursdays 8-10 a.m. in the lobby of the St. Francis gym. For more information call our TRIP coordinator, Lynn Montroy at 932-4848.

CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION AND WITHDRAWAL:

A student application must be submitted online via FACTS prior to receiving an invitation to enroll online. **Preschool children must have a completed Health Appraisal including up-to-date immunization record before the child can start school. The health form must be signed by a physician and is good for one year.** Student emergency information records will be generated from the online SIS database, FACTS.

St. Joseph's Club (SJC) students are required to complete an application, annual registration fee, and submit the Child Information Record in August, or prior to enrollment in the program.

SJC SIGN-UP and BILLING

In order to provide a quality experience and maintain appropriate staffing levels, we require online sign-up at the platform called Popsicle. You will be able to set up a Popsicle account after your registration form and fee is received. You will be billed weekly for charges related to St. Joseph Club usage. Payment is due on a weekly basis. Account must be in good standing to allow continued use of this service. The school has the right to modify schedules based on behavioral needs of the student.

PRESCHOOL & SJC TUITION & FEE POLICY

When a child enrolls in the Preschool, a \$30, non-refundable fee is made payable to GTACS. This amount is not deducted from your total tuition due. Tuition will be billed to you and may be paid in full or in nine (9) monthly installments via check or online credit card payment. Your first tuition payment is due August 1st to hold your child's place in the preschool and at the 1st of each consecutive 8 months. If your child misses preschool due to illness or vacation, full tuition is still billed. This also includes days off for any teacher in-service, scheduled school holidays and snow days. Make checks payable to GTACS and mail or drop them off in the Preschool office, 123 E. Eleventh Street, Traverse City, 49684. SJC fees are billed weekly based on use of the program and can be paid via check or online with a credit card.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

A family that wishes to withdraw shall notify the Preschool in writing two (2) weeks in advance of withdrawal. We need this time in order to fill the vacancy and ensure our Preschool no financial burden due to loss of tuition. There will be no refund of tuition for non-attendance of a child. If a family gives two weeks prior notice of a withdrawal, they will receive a refund for any tuition paid beyond the date of withdrawal.

St. Francis Preschool/SJC holds the right to modify schedules or dismiss a child for the following reasons: Consistent non-payment of tuition/fees, the suitability of the program for a particular child and specific behaviors that are deemed unacceptable as outlined in the discipline policy.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY OF NON-PARTNERING FAMILY

Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools are dedicated to providing a Catholic education ensuring educational quality for all families willing to enter into a partnership to develop each child to his or her fullest spiritual and academic potential. This partnership with parents is highly valued; however, situations can arise where the partnership is significantly damaged. In these situations, administrative discretion may be used to ask a family to leave the school and deny future enrollment.

Administrative Procedures

PARENT ACTIVITY COMMITTEE

All parents/guardians with children enrolled at St. Francis Preschool are members of the Parent Activity Committee (PAC). The mission of the PAC is as follows:

- *The GTACS PAC recognizes that a child's spiritual and educational development is a shared responsibility between school and family during the entire period the child spends in school.*
- *To support the goal of GTACS to educate all students effectively, the school and parents must work together as knowledgeable partners.*
- *The mission of the GTACS PAC is to contribute to the educational success of the students attending GTACS by fostering a partnership between families, staff, administration, and the community, which promotes a positive faith-based environment, valuing everyone's participation. The PAC will fulfill its mission by focusing on the following core values: open communication, educational enrichment, sense of belonging; school spirit, and fundraising.*
- *By-laws are available in the school office.*

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

The schools abide by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, our school will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the academic records and to other school-related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the school with an official copy of the court order.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Individual issues involving discipline, academic progress, socialization, etc. are private concerns to be shared and discussed only among those persons directly involved. No staff member shall discuss such matters outside the school, and within the school only with those other persons who have a legitimate need to know. Parents are also expected to refrain from discussion of such issues unless they are directly involved in the matter. Questions or concerns should be addressed to the principal.

VOLUNTEER CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY 3350 School Form

In the course of working with students in classroom settings, school activities, or accompanying students on field trips away from the school, volunteers may occasionally develop their own opinions or insights or become aware of possible sensitive information regarding students or their families. The volunteer should hold any such opinions, insights, or information in confidence.

If the information potentially involves abuse or other harm to the student or others, the volunteer should convey the information to the school principal immediately. When in doubt as to the nature of the information, the volunteer should discuss the information with the principal.

Parents wishing to volunteer on a regular basis will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement and possible background checks as part of a Diocesan Policy effective Oct. 1, 2003.

ADMINISTRATION 1135-School

THE HUMAN BODY AS A CONSTITUTIVE ASPECT OF THE HUMAN PERSON

The Church teaches that our differences as male and female are part of God's good design in creation, that our bodies –including our sexuality – are gifts from God. In fact, "'being man' or 'being woman' is a reality which is good and willed by God" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 369). A person cannot change his or her sex. A person should accept and seek to live in conformity with his or her sexual identity (sometimes called "gender identity") as given by God. The human person is a body-soul union, and the body-created male or female-is a constitutive aspect of the human person. Having a proper understanding of the human body- and more generally, of the moral law - enhances, rather than restricts, man's freedom.

1. **It is the policy of the Diocese of Gaylord that all schools, shall respect the biological sex of the human person as given by God and shall apply all policies and procedures in relation to that person according to that person's God-given biological sex.**
2. **Employees and volunteers shall conduct themselves in accord with their God-given biological sex.**
3. **Diocesan schools partner with families to educate and form students consistent with the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. Students and parents (or legal guardians) shall conduct themselves in accord with their God-given biological sex.**

Policy Adopted: June 28, 2021
Policy Revised:
Approved by the Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley

COMMUNICATION

Weekly school newsletters are included in the email containing the GTACS News. Classroom newsletters also serve as a vital link between home and school.

All families are encouraged to become actively involved in the school. Suggestions for improvements, constructive criticism, and positive comments are always welcome. Concerns regarding policy or the general operation of the school should be addressed to the principal. The protocol for resolving grievances regarding classroom issues is to be handled as follows:

1. *All parental inquiries and/or concerns are to be directed first to the specific teacher involved in verbal or written form. If written, it must be signed.*
2. *Irresolvable issues between a parent and teacher then need to be addressed by the administrator.*
3. *After sufficient time has elapsed to address issues, the protocol for grievances then proceeds to the following: superintendent/presiding pastor, Vicar, Vicar General, Diocesan Secretariat for Education.*
4. *Severe concerns and/or highly critical issues are reserved for the Diocesan Secretariat for Education. The final authority in all matters rests with the Bishop of the Diocese of Gaylord after all other means of appeal have failed.*

CONFERENCES

Conferences will be held in January. All parents are required to attend these conferences.

Individual conferences are encouraged and may be called by either parent or teacher whenever necessary. If a conference is desired, parents must call the office or schedule an appointment with their child's teacher.

REPORT CARDS AND PROGRESS REPORTS

Report cards are sent home two times each year. In January before conferences and in June during the last week of school. Progress reports are sent home two times each year. In November after the 1st marking period and in April after the 3rd marking period.

VISITORS

To ensure the safety of our children and enable communication with visitors should they need to be reached while on the premises, all adult visitors entering the building are asked to sign in at the school office and wear a visitor's sticker.

MESSAGES AND DELIVERIES

To ensure the safety of our children and minimize interruption to the learning process, **all messages and deliveries must be made through the school office.** This includes lunches and books. End of the day transportation changes must be done through the main office. Please do not email teachers changes as it may not be seen in a timely manner.

SCHOOL ATTIRE

PRESCHOOL UNIFORM GUIDELINES

Uniforms are optional; however, school uniforms contribute toward an environment geared toward learning, and therefore, are recommended even for preschoolers. Families are welcomed and encouraged to follow the below guidelines. When choosing apparel for your child to wear to school, please dress them in "messable" clothing. sturdy, comfortable, hard soled shoes, with closed toes are necessary in the classroom and on the playground for safety reasons. Please no sandals, clogs, crocs or heels. Velcro shoes are helpful in gaining independence. During the winter mons, appropriate outdoor clothing should include snow pants, jackets, boots, hats, and mittens that are easy for your child to put on by him/herself. This is an important learning process for children in our program. During boot weather, please remember to pack appropriate shoes for your child to wear in the classroom.

UNIFORM NOTES

- Undershirts must be white in color.
- Hair styles are to be neat. Hair should be clean, neat, well-groomed, and out of eyes. Boys' hair must be above the collar. Hair color must be of natural tones.
- Jewelry should be simple and not detract from the uniform. Boys cannot wear earrings.
- A separate pair of non-marking tennis shoes are to be kept at school and used only for PE class.
- During the winter months, all students should have a separate pair of boots to wear to and from school and at recess.
- No hooded sweatshirts are allowed in the classrooms but may be worn outside.
- No coats, jackets or hats worn in class. Hats should be removed when entering the building.

Uniform code

| | Girls | Boys |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Shirts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White Dennis Uniform shirts with GTACS logo; see approved styles • Shirts must be tucked in | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White Dennis Uniform shirts with GTACS logo; see approved styles • Shirts must be tucked in |
| Dresses and Bottoms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All pants and shorts must be purchased from Dennis or a cotton pant and short option is available from the Lands' End uniform website. Please use the school codes when ordering. • Short season is from May 1-October 15 • Only navy blue is allowed. All pants and shorts must have approved logo on them. • Girls may wear a jersey polo dress, pleated pique polo dress, Tyler plaid shift dress, or a skirt that meets modesty standards; all must be from Dennis Uniform | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All pants and shorts must be purchased from Dennis or a cotton pant and short option is available from the Lands' End uniform website. Please use the school codes when ordering. • Short season is May 1-October 15 • Only navy blue is allowed. All pants and shorts must have approved logo on them |
| Optional Layering Items | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navy blue bike shorts are available to be worn under skirts/jumpers/dresses • Plain and solid color (navy or white) <u>ankle length</u> leggings may be worn under skirts/jumpers/dresses • Solid color white or navy tights | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ties are optional • Coordinating ties are available from Dennis |
| Accessories | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain navy, black or brown belt • Simple coordinating hair accessories. No scarves or bandanas. Optional accessories are available through Dennis • White or navy socks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain navy, black or brown belt • Ties may be worn and are encouraged on Mass days • White or navy socks |
| Cool Weather Options | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All cool weather options must come from the Dennis Uniform; see approved styles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All cool weather options must come from the Dennis Uniform; see approved styles |

| | | |
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| Shoes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed-toed, secured on the heel • Neutral in color (black, brown, gray, blue, white) • No light up shoes or sparkles • No high tops or wheelies • No high-heeled shoes • Boots are only allowed to and from school and at recess. A separate pair of shoes should be packed for the classroom. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed-toed, secured on the heel • Neutral in color (black, brown, gray, blue, white) • No light up shoes • No high tops or wheelies • Boots are only allowed to and from school and at recess. A separate pair of shoes should be packed for the classroom. |
|--------------|--|--|

WINTER WEATHER GUIDELINES

Please ensure that your child is properly dressed for cold and wet weather. Boots, hats, gloves, and snow pants must be worn during the winter season. Notification that such outerwear is mandatory will be communicated in the school newsletter. As mentioned in our uniform code, boots are not permitted in the classrooms. All students must have a change of footwear to wear in the classrooms during the winter months. Please adhere to the dress code when purchasing boots and shoes.

CASUAL FOR A CAUSE DAYS

Casual for a Cause days are days when children may wear jeans, sweatshirts, T-shirts, shorts, (when the weather is appropriate) and other types of "dress-down" clothing. Proper consideration must be given to the mission of a Catholic school in the selection of clothing or particular lettering or logos. Inappropriate or immodest clothing cannot be tolerated (no spaghetti straps, please). Should questions arise, it will fall solely to the principal's discretion to determine what is acceptable and what is not. Casual for a Cause days typically fall on the 3rd Friday of the month. Students are asked to bring a donation on Casual for a cause days, which will be donated to a designated monthly charity.

LOST AND FOUND

Lost items are put in a "Lost and Found" box located at the school and may be reclaimed there. Such articles will be held for the semester and then given to a charitable organization. Children finding possessions of others are asked to turn them in at the office. Please label all clothing, especially tennis shoes, mittens, gloves, hats, and jackets.

TRAVEL TO AND FROM SCHOOL

To ensure their safety, students should arrive at school between 7:30 a.m. and 7:55 a.m. to begin school at 8:00 a.m. Students arriving earlier than 7:30a.m. are in an unsupervised situation. Personnel are not available to supervise students until 7:30a.m. School personnel are advised that their supervisory duties end 30 minutes after dismissal. The school cannot be held responsible for students during those unsupervised times.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

1. *Students must be on time at the designated bus stop. Buses cannot wait, as they are on a strict time schedule. Students should cross in front of the bus when crossing a road.*
2. *Written permission from the parent/guardian and verification by the principal are necessary in order for a child to leave the bus at another place other than his/her regular stop.*
3. *Parents wishing students to ride the bus to a bus stop other than the normal bus stop must send written notice to the office. Bus passes will be issued from there. Please be advised that TCAPS does not allow switching busses for convenience purposes. This service is for emergencies only, sports activities or going to a friend's house are not included in this service.*
4. *Student conduct on the buses reflects not only on the parents, but also on the school. Transportation "referrals" from the Traverse City Public School are reviewed by the principal before inclusion in the student's school record.*
5. *It is a privilege to ride the bus. Students must follow all directions of the driver and obey all bus rules. Discipline is handled jointly by the bus driver, principal, and TCAPS director of transportation. Final authority, however, for all bus related decisions, rests with the public-school director of transportation.*

DISMISSAL

In order for us to provide our students with a safe and orderly dismissal, we have established the following procedures that must be followed. **Dismissal is from 2:30-3:00 p.m. Any students who are not picked up by 3:00 will wait for their parent in the office. Please be mindful of the fact that we often have meetings at 3:10 p.m. and there is no supervision after that time.**

Drop-off and Pick-up

- The safety of your children is of the highest importance. We have a well-run and efficient car line, and the success of it is due to the partnership with our families. All families are encouraged to use the morning and afternoon carline where we have four staff members ready to welcome you.
- **Carline enters from 11th Street and runs alongside of the preschool building. After dropping off your child, you exit the parking lot onto Cass Street. Staff members will be there to assist with directing the flow and maps will be sent out and available at Conferences. To help us maintain good relationships with our neighbors, please do not block driveways, alleys, or drive through alleys.**
- **If not using the carline, please be sure to make contact with a staff member when picking up and dropping off. We ask for an adult hand to adult hand transition to ensure the children's safety.**

Important carline reminders:

- Carline runs from 7:35-7:55 am. The bells rings at 7:55 am and all students are expected to be in their classrooms at 8:00 am for morning announcements. Students who arrive after 7:55 need to be brought to the office by a parent/guardian.
- Refrain from cell phone usage once in the parking lot.
- Drive slowly through carline.
- Have your car in park when staff is loading or unloading students.
- In the afternoon, please have your carline tag in the driver's side window so that it can be seen by our staff. These will be given at conferences.
- Assist the staff with unbuckling your child. Staff are not allowed to buckle children at dismissal. Cars will need to pull to the left in front of the church if extra time is needed for buckling.
- Dismissal will begin at 2:30 pm. Carline will run the same as the morning.
- Preschool students who are half day will follow the morning car line routine and be picked up in front of the school at 11:00 am. Please remain in your car and wait for teachers to bring your children to you to keep the line moving.
- Be sure to wave and smile at staff members who work car line in rain, shine, sleet, or snow!

Important reminders for parents walking their children to school:

- If you are walking your children to the school door, please park in the preschool parking lot in the middle of the lot. (Not along building or fence)
- Use cross walk by fence.
- Preschool students need to be walked to the door by a staff member, parent, or other adult.
- Be careful to not block driveways of neighbors.
- Avoid walking on the grass or through yards.
- Be sure to make contact with a staff member and make a hand-to-hand transition to ensure the child's safety.

After school care - ST. JOSEPH CLUB (SJC)

SJC is modeled after Jesus' father, who cared for Jesus as if he were his own child. After school care begins from dismissal at 2:30 p.m. (11:00 on half days) until 5:00 p.m. All children will be supervised by staff from the time of their arrival until they are dismissed to either the parent or person approved on the child's information card. Care is not available on Snow days, Holidays, Professional Development Days. (See SJC Calendar) **CONTACT** St. Joseph Club via email at jwinkler@gtacs.org

ATTENDANCE

ABSENCES

As a safety measure and as a courtesy to the school staff, parents/guardians are requested to call the school office on the first day of a particular illness. All absences must be reported to the school office by the parent or guardian. Please call by 8:30 a.m. School secretaries begin calling parents of any students marked absent at 8:30 a.m. If parent or guardian cannot be reached within a reasonable amount of time, the students will be marked unexcused. Excessive tardiness and absences may be referred to the Grand Traverse County Truancy Intervention Program.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Absences will be excused on the basis of verified contact with the parent or guardian, as well as by a written explanation for the following reasons:

1. *Personal illness of the student.*
2. *Medical and dental examination and /or treatment of the student when such appointments cannot be scheduled other than during the school hours.*
3. *Student participation in school sponsored activities taking place during school hours.*
4. *Death in the immediate family.*

5. *Reasons of extenuating circumstances to be judged by the principal.*

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Absences other than those mentioned above, or any absence without a written explanation from parents/guardians, will be considered unexcused. In case of an unexcused absence, the teacher is not required to instruct again, give credit for work missed, or provide make-up tests. If a student has been absent for twenty five percent (25%) or more of the grading period, the teacher may choose to withhold grades for that period.

APPOINTMENTS

Should you find it absolutely necessary to schedule appointments during class hours, please notify the school by note. Appointments will be judged excused or unexcused according to the criteria listed above. Parents or guardians coming to school for dismissal of a student are to go to the office to sign the student out of the building. Please do not go to the classroom. Students will be called to the office through the public address system. Likewise, when dropping a student off after an appointment, parents/guardians should report to the office and sign the student into school.

TARDY STUDENTS

Students are marked tardy if they arrive after 7:50. Tardy students must report to the office. When buses are late, students are not marked tardy.

TRUANCY

Regular and consistent attendance is not only a vital part of a student's success; it is necessary for compliance with the Michigan Compulsory Attendance Law, and the Michigan School Code. (We recognize that there are those occasions when students are not able to attend school because of illness, accidents, family obligations, etc.)

To follow the Michigan Compulsory Attendance Laws, we use these guidelines:

- *At 10 absences or tardies of any kind per semester, we notify the parent/guardian.*
- *At fifteen absences or tardies per semester, we again notify the parent/guardian of our concerns.*
- *At twenty absences or tardies or ten consecutive tardies per semester, we file a report with the Truancy Intervention Coordinator, who may review the file.*

We thank you for your attention to this policy and appreciate your cooperation in curbing unnecessary tardiness and absences demonstrating good work ethic.

VACATIONS

Vacations during regular school days are discouraged. If we value education, then we must value time spent in school. Various vacation times are provided throughout the school year (Thanksgiving, Christmas, an occasional Mid-Winter break, and spring) for vacations. Spring break in our district has been aligned so that it will always be in conjunction with the Traverse City Public School System. Family vacations should be taken at those times. Teachers are not required to give work in advance of vacation times. There is no replacement for time spent in school with the classroom teacher.

WEATHER CLOSINGS/DELAYS

We follow Traverse City Public School's decisions on CLOSING OR DELAYING for inclement weather. When the public school is closed, we are closed. Listen to radio stations or TV stations for announcements or visit GTACS.org or GTACS Facebook page for postings. Text alerts are also sent to parents who have opted in for text alerts.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Our Student Assistance Program (S.A.P.) is available to help students who are having difficulty succeeding in the everyday classroom/school environment. Working together, a team of teachers, including the school social worker, and principal, designs an intervention plan aimed at promoting success in school. Reasons for referral include but are not limited to the need for academic individualization, difficulty interacting with other students or adults, problems with appropriate conduct, medical reasons, or a suspected learning disability. Students may be referred to S.A.P. by either staff or parents, and extreme care is taken to ensure the privacy of the individuals involved.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

SCHOOL SAFETY

School safety is of utmost priority. To ensure safety at all times, the following items are addressed throughout the school year:

1. All parents/visitors are to check in at the Preschool office.
2. All outer doors will be kept locked during school hours.
3. Students participate in six (6) fire drills, two (2) tornado drills and three (3) lockdown drills during the school year.
4. A teacher or assistant will remain with children at all times.
5. Staff may ask for identification or driver's license if a different person is picking your child up.

REUNIFICATION IN EMERGENCYS

In the event of a true emergency requiring the evacuation of school premises, teachers will take emergency backpacks and binders and escort students to Saint Francis Church, 1025 S. Union St. Traverse City, MI 49684. Parents will be notified and reunified from this location.

ANIMALS ON SCHOOL PREMISES

Persons must receive prior permission from the building principal before bringing animals into the school. Animals may not be transported on school buses. Domesticated felines, canines, and ferrets must be inoculated against rabies before the student may bring such animals to the school. The teacher or principal may request verification of inoculation before the animal may be brought to school. Caged domesticated mammals such as hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, rats, mice, rabbits, and chinchilla may be brought to school when permission has been granted. Live mammals obtained from the wild are not to be brought to school except as part of a professional wildlife presentation. Staff and students should be aware that turtles, foxes, skunks, raccoons, and bats may pose serious health risks to humans through transmission of rabies, parasites, and disease. Teachers must assume primary responsibility for the humane treatment of any animal in the classroom. Animals must be appropriately housed, humanely cared for, and properly handled. Animals should not be placed in the care of students without proper direction on their care and handling.

HEALTH POLICY

- Your child's health is a matter of importance to all of us. Parents will be contacted regarding:
 1. Any changes in their children's health
 2. Accidents
 3. Injuries
 4. Incidents
 5. At any time a child is too ill to remain in the group
- Parents will be notified immediately of the above-mentioned health changes using contact information provided by parents.
- A parent/guardian is responsible for transportation home of a sick child.
- If your child has contracted or been exposed to a communicable disease, the parent is required to notify the school of that disease and its symptoms so that we may inform parents. Children under a doctor's care may return to school when the doctor believes the child is well enough.
- Any child, staff or volunteers that exhibit any of the following symptoms, we encourage you to stay at home:
 1. Fever (any temperature of 100 degrees or less if the child is not feeling well. The child, staff or volunteer should be 'fever free' for 24 hours before returning.
 2. Severe sore throat
 3. Runny nose that is thick, cloudy, green, or yellow in discharge
 4. Earache – until the cause is determined
 5. Severe chest cough
 6. If they have vomited in the last 12 hours
 7. Any draining sore – until drainage stops or it can be properly treated/covered

ILLNESS POLICY

1. FEVER OR ILLNESS Please do not send your child to school if he/she is running a temperature or has had a temperature recently. In most cases, if a child is too ill to go outside for recess, they are too ill for school. If a child needs to miss recess for more than two (2) days in a row, a note from a physician or nurse practitioner is required. Children should be fever/vomit free for 24 hours without medication prior to returning to school.

2. IMMUNIZATIONS All students at St. Francis Preschool must follow the Michigan Public Health Code (P.A. 368) regarding immunizations. Parents/guardians will be required to show proof of immunization for their children.

3. EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL Students contracting head lice (For the protection of all students, families, and staff, GTACS holds a "no nit" head lice policy), impetigo, pink eye or ringworm, and other such highly contagious diseases will be excluded from school attendance. If the child is exhibiting symptoms at school, he/she will be removed from the classroom, if possible, and parents will be notified.

PARENT NOTIFICATION PLAN AND HEALTH POLICY

- Your child's health is a matter of importance. Parents will be notified accordingly:
 1. Any changes in their children's health or too ill to remain in the group – Immediate phone call to parent
 2. Accidents/Injuries/Incidents – MINOR – First aid provided by teacher or office staff – Parent notified via email or at pick up time
 3. Accidents/Injuries/Incidents – MAJOR – Immediate phone call to parent
- Parents will be notified using contact information provided by parents in online SIS – FACTS
- If unable to reach parents, the emergency contact person will be called immediately for major, accidents/injuries/incidents, or a child needing to be picked up due to illness.
- If your child has contracted or been exposed to a communicable disease, the parent is required to notify the school of that disease and its symptoms so that we may inform parents. Children under a doctor's care may return to school when the doctor believes the child is well enough.
- Any child, staff or volunteer that exhibits any of the following symptoms are asked to stay at home:
 1. Fever (any temperature of 100 degrees or less if the child is not feeling well. The child, staff or volunteer should be 'fever free' for 24 hours before returning.
 2. Severe sore throat
 3. Runny nose that is thick, cloudy, green, or yellow in discharge
 4. Earache – until the cause is determined
 5. Severe chest cough
 6. If they have vomited in the last 12 hours
 7. Any draining sore – until drainage stops or it can be properly treated/covered

MEDICATIONS

Any medication (prescription or over the counter, including Tylenol and throat lozenges) dispensed at the school will require written permission and direction from the parents or guardian. All prescription medication will be sent to school in the container issued by the pharmacy with originally pharmacy instruction label. All medications will be kept in the office and will be dispensed from there by school personnel. No student may keep any medication in his/her possession or administer his/her own medication.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

If your child has contracted or been exposed to a communicable disease, the parent is required to notify the school as we are required to report it to the local Health Department as well as families in the child's classroom. Children under a doctor's care may return to school when the doctor believes the child is well enough.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL FORM

This form must be updated each year for each student in school through the registration process online via FACTS. This form contains emergency numbers where parents/guardians or responsible parties may be contacted in case of emergency. It also contains vital information regarding allergies or other information invaluable to medical personnel. These forms travel with children during field trips and are authorization for emergency medical treatment.

BLOOD BORNE PATHOGENS

As a precautionary measure concerning blood borne pathogens, we may notify parents to bring in a change of clothing in the event of exposure to body fluids (blood, urine, vomit, etc.) in which we are unable to supply an appropriate change of clothing.

PESTICIDES

The Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools utilizes North Shore Services Inc. to facilitate its integrated Pest Management Program (IPM) at all school buildings for the control of unwanted pests and organisms. IPM is a system that utilizes various methods and techniques in a total pest management program with the intent of preventing pests from reaching unacceptable levels or to reduce an existing population to an acceptable level. A few of the techniques include pest exclusion, sanitation, and biological controls. However, as with most pest control programs, chemical controls may also be utilized periodically. You have the right to be informed prior to any liquid spray or dust application of an insecticide, fungicide or herbicide made to school grounds or buildings during this year. In certain emergencies, such as an infestation of stinging insects, pesticides may be applied without prior notice to prevent injury to students; however, you will be notified following any such application that takes place during the school day. If you need prior notification, please contact your building principal to fill out a Prior Notification Request Form that will be submitted to the Director of Operations.

ASBESTOS

In accordance with the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act that was passed by Congress in 1986, we have inspected all Grand Traverse Area Catholic School buildings and have identified all sources of asbestos in various locations. It is our paramount concern to limit the release of any asbestos fibers. Therefore, we have developed a plan for controlling asbestos containing materials. This plan has been submitted to the State of Michigan and a copy for public inspection is on file with the GTACS Director of Buildings and Grounds as well as at the Diocese of Gaylord. Additionally, if you would like a copy of the management plan for personal review, you may make a request in person to purchase one from either GTACS or directly from the Diocese of Gaylord.

WELLNESS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

In the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, the U.S. Congress established a requirement that all school districts with a federally funded school meal program form a Wellness Committee to draft a Wellness Policy by the start of the 2006-2007 school year.

The law requires that these policies must, at a minimum:

1. *Include goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that promote student wellness.*
2. *Establish nutrition guidelines for all foods available on campus during the school day with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity.*
3. *Provide assurance that guidelines for reimbursable school meals shall not be less restrictive than regulations and guidance issued by the Secretary of Agriculture.*
4. *Establish a plan for measuring the impact and implementation of the local wellness policy.*
5. *Involve parents, students, and representatives of the school authority, school board, school administrators, and the public, in development of the local Wellness Policy.*

There are several basic principles that served as a guide for this Wellness Policy:

- *Healthy children are the foundation of a healthy society.*
- *Healthy, well-nourished children are better able to learn.*
- *All children deserve nutritious, safe, and deliciously prepared food.*
- *Eating habits developed in childhood will affect health throughout life.*
- *Knowledge of food—how it is grown, who grows it, how it is prepared, its connection to tradition, and its influence in shaping the future of society—is integral to a healthy education.*

CODE OF CONDUCT - GENERAL

Our schools are committed to providing a safe and orderly learning environment. The school has an obligation to expect an attitude of respect and cooperation from their students. Discipline is fundamental in education and a respectful atmosphere is essential for academic, social, and spiritual growth. To establish and promote an atmosphere of Christ-like living in the school community, the following standards of conduct are expected:

- **Respect for self, students, teachers, staff, and guests.**
- **Respect for personal and communal property.**
- **Respect for rules and regulations.**

Self-discipline is an expectation we place on our students. Helping students learn self-discipline is a shared responsibility of the school and parents/guardians. Rules and regulations are devised by the administration to help the school community function smoothly. Students are expected to follow the rules and regulations. By enrolling at GTACS, parents and students have accepted the conditions expressed.

COUNSELING

In keeping with the Mission Statement of our school, we are privileged to have a counseling department that provides periodic instruction and guidance in life-long skills. Our counselor will be available at both St. Francis Preschool and Immaculate Conception Elementary campuses.

GENERAL CONDUCT AND EXPECTATIONS

The following activities are not permissible anywhere on school or Parish property:

1. *Cursing or obscenity (words, pictures, or gestures).*
2. *Fighting.*
3. *Killing statements, put-downs, and threatening statements.*
4. *Throwing of any object not meant to be thrown, taking hats or belongings of others, etc.*
5. *Disregard of safety rules.*
6. *Disrespect of others (children or adults).*
7. *Aggressive behavior/putting your hands or feet on another student or "play fighting".*
8. *Gum is not permitted anywhere on parish or school grounds.*

CODE OF CONDUCT - PLAYGROUND

During recreation and play, it is expected that students show respect to each other and adults by:

1. *Giving all students the opportunity to participate in games.*
 2. *Taking time to apologize and make amends if someone is hurt; and*
 3. *Taking the corrections of adults positively and with a cooperative attitude.*
- At our schools, we don't say, "You can't play."**

OUTDOOR RECESS CONDUCT

1. *Play on designated playground areas within sight of supervisors.*
2. *Respect the rights and feelings of others (No pushing, fighting, teasing, or foul language.)*
3. *Obey the supervisors, the first time a direction is given.*
4. *Rough play of any kind is not permitted, i.e., "chicken", red rover, tackle football, wrestling, martial arts fighting, etc.*
5. *Use the play equipment properly.*
6. *NO food, drinks, candy, or gum are allowed on the playground except on special occasions.*
7. *Snow pants and boots are required attire to play in the snow.*
8. *In the winter, students may only climb on the snow hill when properly supervised by a team of teachers/playground helpers. There will be times when the snow hill will be closed due to icy conditions. Sliding on ice is also not permitted.*
9. *Students are not to re-enter the building until the bell rings, unless permitted by a playground supervisor. When the bell rings, playtime is over. Students should line up quickly and quietly.*

CODE OF CONDUCT – ANTI-HARASSMENT

DIOCESAN POLICY

It is the policy of the Diocese of Gaylord and GTACS to make every effort to provide an educational environment that is free from all types of harassment. This policy applies to the actions of all faculty, staff, and students at GTACS, as well as others who may be in a working relationship with the school. The Diocese of Gaylord and GTACS School are open to, and respect any/all complaints brought under this policy. At GTACS, every individual should be treated with dignity and respect. Faculty, students, staff members, and anyone else who works and/or visits the school are entitled to work/attend school in an environment free from discriminatory practices, including sexual and other forms of harassment. All will be held by standards of conduct that ensure that the school is free from sexual and other forms of harassment. Students are expected to treat all persons with respect and dignity. Thus, inappropriate sexual behavior or comments, which are directed at faculty, students, or other staff members, will not be tolerated. The school will investigate all complaints of harassment in a confidential, professional manner. Appropriate action will be taken when warranted. Individuals involved in any allegations will be given due process. However, it should be noted that individuals who are found in violation of this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including suspension and/or expulsion. A complete copy of the Diocese of Gaylord Sexual Harassment Policy is on file at the school office and is available for review.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

- Our philosophy is based on the belief that each child is special and unique. One of our goals for our children is to foster a strong, positive self-concept.
- We believe in firm, but loving discipline. We continually strive to provide affection, order, security, an interesting and developmentally appropriate program, and an unconditional positive regard for each child.
- Children need to have their boundaries defined to foster a sense of security. Within the limits, they need freedom to make the decisions. We have simple and direct rules. Children will respect themselves, respect others, and respect program materials and supplies. These rules are applied through positive reinforcement and emphasizing the desired behavior.
- In extreme cases such as a tantrum, children are removed from the situation in a developmentally appropriate and caring manner. Children in our program are never physically disciplined, restrained, confined, shamed, deprived, or excluded. We believe in positive discipline, which helps build self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-control.
- Appropriate discipline would be handled by Teachers, Aides, Program Director and/or Caregivers and could include:
 - a. Verbal direction and redirection
 - b. Time-outs
 - c. Apologizing
 - d. Time-out from certain play equipment, as necessary, due to miss-use
 - e. Speaking with parents
 - f. Suspension from the program for a period of time
 - g. Out of school suspension and expulsion are permissible, but hopefully, infrequent.

FIRE DRILLS/TORNADO ALERT/EVACUATION/LOCKDOWN

Fire and tornado drills are conducted regularly throughout the school year in compliance with the State School Code. As part of our accreditation with the Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools, we are required to conduct six fire drills, two tornado drills, and two lock-down drills per year.

SCREENING POLICY

Staff Screening Policy:

- Fingerprinting- Cleared through the State of Michigan Childcare Background Check-Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs.
- Self-Certification Statement (For those living outside MI within the past 10yrs.)
- Childcare Center Caregiver Certification
- Assistant Caregiver Certifications.
- A staff member shall never be present in the school if convicted of any of the following: child abuse or neglect or listed on the sex offender's registration.

Volunteer Screening Policy:

- All volunteers will be supervised by the Program Director and/or Caregiver.
- Volunteers will never have unsupervised contact with children.
- Childcare Center Volunteer Certification-mandated reporter statement.
- All Volunteers including parents must undergo a public sec offender check and if listed are prohibited from having contact with any child in care.

Parent Screening Policy:

- Diocesan Volunteer criminal background check is required.
- All parent volunteers will be supervised by the On-Site Administrator, Program Director and/or Caregiver.
- Parent volunteers will never have unsupervised contact with children.

Diocesan Criminal Background Check Policy

Effective October 1, 2003. Church personnel (clergy, religious and lay) who have regular contact with minors must have a criminal history background check. The background check shall commence prior to employment or service with the diocese, parish or school and may be repeated at the discretion of the Diocese. Individual currently employed by the diocese, parish or school must also comply with the requirement. Failure to do so will result in the loss of employment or volunteer position.

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

All staff members are required to obtain at least 16 hours of ongoing professional development within the calendar year. We will hold staff meeting throughout the year and find other professional development opportunities to offer our employees. We will check in throughout the year to ensure hours are being met.

PRIMARY CAREGIVER ASSIGNMENTS

Primary caregivers (Lead Teacher) oversee the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the classroom program and child assessment. Lead (primary) caregivers oversee caregiving staff of a specific group of children and overall care and supervision of children.

LICENSING NOTEBOOK AVAILABILITY

Childcare centers must maintain a licensing notebook which includes all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans (CAP).

- The licensing notebook is available to parents during regular business hours.
- Licensing inspection and special investigation reports from at least the past 3 years are available on the childcare licensing website at www.michigan.gov/michildcare.
- The licensing notebook contains all the licensing inspection and special investigation reports and related corrective action plans and retains them in the notebook for 5 years.

Handbook can also be found at: www.gtacs.org

