



REDEEMER

LUTHERAN SCHOOL

Honoring Christ through Excellence

PRESCHOOL HANDBOOK

www.rlspittsburgh.org

2024-2025

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REDEEMER LUTHERAN SCHOOL
Preschool Handbook

Welcome to Redeemer Lutheran School! We look forward to having your family become part of our family, the Family of Christ. We invite you to participate in any programs or special events that take place in our church. Sunday morning worship, Bible study, celebrations and dinners are part of the Christian fellowship that we share. Please consider joining us anytime. Our staff is here to serve you!

Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz.....	Pastor
Mrs. Gail Holzer.....	Administrator
Mrs. Jean Wilshire.....	Administrative Assistant
Mrs. Lori Pope.....	Preschool Director
Mrs. Diane Olmstead.....	Preschool Teacher
Mrs. Patricia Mullen.....	Preschool Teacher
Mrs. Jannis Powell.....	Preschool Teacher
Mrs. Helen Askin.....	Preschool Assistant
Mrs. Kim McMeekin.....	Preschool Assistant
Ms. Liz Shepler.....	Preschool Assistant, Office Assistant
Mrs. Nicole Roberts.....	Kindergarten Teacher
Mr. Zachary Neznik.....	Kindergarten Teacher
Mrs. Stormy Shafer.....	1 st Grade Teacher
Mrs. Nicole Drayer.....	2 nd Grade Teacher
Miss Grace Wilshire.....	3 rd Grade Teacher
Mrs. Sarah Bondy.....	4 th Grade Teacher
Mrs. Elaine MacMahon.....	5 th Grade Teacher
Miss Julie Kuehm.....	Middle School Teacher
Mrs. Sarah Wiefenbaugh.....	Middle School Teacher
Mr. John Driscoll.....	High School Teacher/Dean of Students
Mrs. Sarah Driscoll.....	High School Teacher, Online Coordinator, Advisor
Mrs. Anna Hahn.....	High School Teacher
Mrs. Erica Zajdel.....	High School Teacher
Mrs. Jaime Grace.....	Special Education Teacher
Ms. Summer Hill.....	Physical Education Teacher
Mrs. Laura Caruso.....	Art Teacher
Mrs. Jenny Larson.....	Music Teacher, Administrator
Mrs. Eureka Vanwyk.....	Business Manager
Mrs. Alison Jackson.....	Admissions Counselor
Mr. Paul Limbert.....	Building Manager
Mrs. Lori McKenzie.....	Office Assistant

WELCOME....We are glad you have joined the RLS Family

A new school year is upon us! Our Early Childhood classes are places where the love of Jesus is evident in word and action...places where parents share the precious gift of their child with teachers who love their Lord and dedicate their professional lives to our school. We are committed to making decisions as a faculty based on Scriptural principles, and we are honored that you chose us to assist you in raising your child in a Christ-centered academic environment.

Our theme this year is “**Endure.**” *Hebrews 12:1b-2a* “*Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.*”

INTRODUCTION

This handbook of Redeemer Lutheran School has been prepared to assist parents in becoming more familiar with the day-to-day operations of our school and its program of Christian education.

The intent of this handbook is to be informative; however, occasionally situations may arise which may not be addressed specifically. If such a case is found, please consult the school. You are always welcome.

Redeemer Lutheran School currently offers Christian education for children from preschool through high school. Our school is one of two in the Pittsburgh area and one of 2,068 schools operated by the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) nationwide. The number of schools, plus their enrollment of over 200,000 students, makes them the second largest parochial school system in the USA.

Maintained autonomously by a single congregation or an association of local congregations of the LCMS, these schools exhibit an increasing uniformity of standards, course offerings and policies. Synod-wide guidance and assistance toward such goals are offered through many advisory boards and offices. Continued evaluation and growth toward excellence in all areas have helped to make Lutheran schools readily accepted and respected in the educational community.

The staff of Redeemer Lutheran School consists of the administrator, the ECE director, the pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church, and teachers who have graduated with degrees in education from either a national accredited teachers' college of the LCMS or a college or university with LCMS training.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Redeemer Lutheran School is to provide a high-quality, Christ-centered, PreK-12 education rooted in the Holy Scriptures and in doing so, proclaim the Gospel of Christ to all.

THE BASIS OF AUTHORITY

Authority in Redeemer Lutheran School is based in the Holy Scriptures as understood in the Law and the Gospel. It is the Gospel which is the motivating force. The Law will show Christians their shortcomings, give them a goal to strive for, and show them direction.

ADMISSIONS

Enrollment Requirements

To enroll a student at Redeemer Lutheran School the following requirements must be met:

- **Children must reach the following ages by December 31:**
 - 3 years: 3 Year Old Program
 - 4 years: 4 Year Old Program

- **Children must reach the following age by September 1:**
 - 3 or 4 years: PreK Counts
 - 3, 4, or 5 years: Full-Day Classroom
 - 5 years: Kindergarten Program

Children enrolled at Redeemer Lutheran must be potty trained before attending preschool. We do not have the facilities, staff, and supplies required to change children in these classrooms. Children attending preschool are expected to be potty trained and wear cloth or disposable underwear.

CURRICULUM

Preschool Assessments

Preschool assessments are completed three times a year. Teachers evaluate each child individually as to their progress in specific areas of development. At the last conference the teacher will meet with parents to discuss their child's progress and determine whether he/she is socially, emotionally, and academically ready to move on to the next level of learning. Some children may need extra time to develop in a certain area, and we will do what we can to accommodate them.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/teacher conferences are held twice a year for all PreK students. Conferences are held in November and late January. A third conference may be scheduled in April or May at the family's request. Parents will be asked to attend the conferences at a time convenient to them and the teacher to discuss their child's progress.

CONFIDENTIALITY

To respect the privacy of the student and family, teachers will not discuss a student or family with anyone other than the staff and principal. A student's progress and behavior is to be discussed with **legal parents and guardians** only unless written permission is obtained from the parents or guardians. In the case of parent separation, permission must be granted by both parents.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Policy

When possible, written notification to school is required when someone other than the designated parent, caregiver, or bus company will pick up your child. (We realize it is not always possible to give written permission, and in those instances a phone call from the parent is accepted.) Students will not be released to unauthorized neighbors, relatives, or others. If someone new is picking up your child, please make sure their ID is ready and available to check with staff.

Parent Transportation

Parents or caregivers who transport children to and/or from school should keep the following in mind:

- **Parents must escort their child into the building and place them in the care of an RLS staff member.**
- Parents are to park their car in the parking lot when entering or exiting the building with their children. **Do not leave your car engine running while you are escorting your child into the building.** Parents are reminded that our parking lot has many children coming in and out, please drive slowly.
- If no one is there to pick up your child within 15 minutes of dismissal time, the person on the student's emergency form will be called.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is a factor in the successful progress of any student. Poor attendance has an effect on the student's ability to learn and grasp new ideas and concepts as provided by the teacher. Regular attendance is required in our PreK Counts classrooms. The following is our policy on excused absences according to the regulations of the State Board of Education of Pennsylvania. Students who do not follow the attendance policy are at risk for disenrollment from the PreK Counts classroom.

Excused Absences

In accordance with the state laws, all students are held to regular and punctual attendance. According to the regulations of the State Board of Education of Pennsylvania, the following reasons constitute a legal **excused absence** for a student:

- Observance of bona-fide religious holidays by particular religious groups in accordance with policies of the district's school board (or the RLS BOD)

- A student may be excused during school hours to obtain non-school professional health care if:
 - The health services are rendered by state licensed practitioners.
 - There has been established reasonable cooperation between school authorities and the practitioners in providing services to school children outside school hours.
 - The time of necessary absence from school involves a minimum of interference with school work.
- When there is a temporary period of illness, upon receipt of satisfactory evidence of mental, physical, or other urgent reason
- With written parental request, students may be excused from school attendance to participate in an educational tour or trip at the expense of parents. Merely accompanying parents on a vacation does not qualify as an excused absence.
- Death in the immediate family
- Other exceptional and urgent reasons

Written excuses are to be submitted following absences, and are to include the following information:

- 1) Student's name
- 2) Date of absence(s)
- 3) Reason for absence(s)
- 4) Parent's signature

CHAPEL

I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Psalm 122:1

School chapel services are held each week for K - 12 grades and once a month for preschool classes. These worship services are designed to give the students training in Christian worship as well as to provide an opportunity to worship together as a school family. Through these worship experiences students are drawn closer to Jesus, thus strengthening their faith in Him as their only hope of salvation. Weekday worship in Chapel also demonstrates that worship is not just a Sunday experience, but worship can take place at any time and is part of daily living for all Christians.

Offerings collected at these services will be used for various mission projects throughout the year and noted on the monthly calendar. Chapel offerings provide an excellent opportunity for students to learn the importance of mission work in the world and to develop God-pleasing stewardship habits.

Parents and friends of Redeemer are invited and encouraged to attend chapel whenever possible.

MEDICAL

Communicable Disease Control

Children with communicable diseases are not permitted to attend school for the following specified intervals according to the rules and regulations mandated by state law:

Disease	Return to School
Chicken Pox	Six days from the last crop of vesicles (scabs must be dry and temperature normal for 24 hours)
Conjunctivitis, Acute Contagious (pink eye)	24 hours from institution of appropriate therapy
COVID-19	As determined by CDC guidelines and health department requirements
Diphtheria	Two weeks from onset or until appropriate negative culture tests
Impetigo, Contagious	Until judged noninfectious by the school nurse or child's physician
Measles	Four days from onset of rash
Mumps	Nine days from onset or until subsidence of swelling
Pediculosis Capitis (head lice)	Until judged noninfectious by the school nurse or child's physician
Pediculosis Corpora (body lice)	Until judged noninfectious by the school nurse or child's physician
Pertussis	Four weeks from the onset or seven days from institution of appropriate antimicrobial therapy
Ringworm - All types	Until judged noninfectious by the school nurse or child's physician
Rubella	Four days from the onset of rash
Scabies	Until judged noninfectious by the school nurse or child's physician
Streptococcal infections (Including Respiratory and Scarlet Fever)	Not less than seven days from the onset (if no physician is in attendance) or 24 hours from institution of appropriate antimicrobial therapy
Tonsillitis	24 hours from institution of appropriate therapy
Trachoma	24 hours from institution of appropriate therapy

In cases of communicable disease, a doctor's certificate must be returned as proof of the child's physical fitness for school.

In cases of a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea, students should remain home until they are free of these symptoms for at least 24 hours.

Medications (reviewed 2024)

No staff member shall be permitted to administer medication to any student without written parental authorization. This authorization includes a completed and signed Medication Authorization form, available in the school office, for any prescription medication. Medication which needs to be taken by a child during school hours must be in its original container and given to the teacher. Containers must clearly state the student's name, the type of medication, and the proper dosage procedures. Commonly used medications, such as cough drops, cough syrup, lozenges, Tylenol, etc. must first be given to the teacher accompanied by written permission from a parent, who will then send the medication to the office to be administered by office personnel according to the documentation/prescription. In case of an emergency, permission may be given by phone, with a follow-up email. No medications are to be kept in the student's bin or backpack.

POLICIES TO PROTECT

In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry. Ephesians 4:26

Speak up for those that cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Proverb 31:8

Child Abuse Policy

As required by law, every teacher and teacher assistant will be required to secure an official clearance from the FBI, Department of Public Welfare - Act 34 clearance, and the PA State Police Criminal Background clearance. Parent volunteers will also be required to have all appropriate clearances.

As required by God and the law of the state of Pennsylvania, Redeemer Lutheran School will not tolerate the abuse of children. School employees are mandated reporters. A school staff member that has reasonable cause to suspect a student is a victim of serious physical or mental injury will report the concern according to the procedures defined by state law.

CONFLICTS AND RESOLUTIONS

With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:2,3

It is our hope that all persons involved in our school family would abide by this teaching of God's Word. God commands us to be patient with each other and work diligently to seek peace.

Conflict and Resolution Policy

It is the policy of Redeemer Lutheran School to follow the principle outlined in Matthew 18:15-17 to promote reconciliation and forgiveness within our school family.

DRESS CODE

Specific standards for preschool:

- Dress your child in comfortable clothes that are washable.
- Clothing should be easy for children to manage at bathroom time.
- Each child should have a complete set of clothes in a zip lock bag marked with their name for emergency purposes.
- For safety reasons, flip flops are not allowed.
- Closed-toed shoes with a back strap are required for the playground.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Our Christian Day School has expenses that must be met on a specific time schedule. Therefore, we rely on the faithfulness of parents for the financial commitment they have made to the school. Tuition only meets a part of the budget requirements with additional support coming from Redeemer Lutheran Church and activities sponsored by the church and school. Gifts and memorials are gladly accepted and appreciated from any school family or friend.

PreK Counts students have no financial obligation to Redeemer Lutheran School. The PA Department of Education covers all costs related to the instruction of the students. However, students are required to attend all classes and participate in all preschool programs and activities.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Field Trips

Redeemer's school children (with the exception of the Three Year Class) occasionally go on field trips to various places in the Pittsburgh area during the school year. The teachers do their best to make sure that the trips are educational and age-appropriate. Details regarding field trips will be communicated to parents prior to the trip.

We will need parents to chaperone field trips, and the number of chaperones needed will be determined by the teacher/teachers leading the field trip. Chaperones must have clearances and agree to follow all procedures and guidelines for each field trip. In most cases, siblings will not be permitted to attend field trips. This will be up to the teacher's discretion.

On most occasions, we contract a bus to transport students. However, at other times our only source of transportation for these outings is parent volunteers. When transporting by car, we will need you to provide a car seat labeled with your child's name on the day of the trip.

If you have the time and resources, please consider joining us. All persons transporting children, other than their own, to any school -related activity, must meet all of the following criteria each time they volunteer:

- Be a parent or guardian of a Redeemer Lutheran School student or a member of the congregation
- Have all clearances: Act 34 – Child Abuse Clearance, the PA State Police Criminal Clearance, and FBI (if needed)
- Agree to follow field trip procedures and guidelines as outlined by the teacher and the activity coordinator
- Adhere to all school policies, including the ‘No Smoking Policy’

School Parties and Celebrations

Each class may have two parties during the school year, one for Jesus’ birthday and one for Valentine’s Day. There will also be a Preschool/Kindergarten Picnic in the spring. Parents can volunteer to help with the parties and celebrations by completing the online volunteer form. Parties should be Christ-centered, and all activities should be coordinated with the classroom teacher.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

It will be the administrator’s responsibility to close school due to inclement weather. He/she will base the decision on other school closings, road conditions, and temperature.

Families will be contacted through FACTS with a text and voice message to their phones. In addition listen to the radio, watch the TV for closing announcements or check our website: www.rlspittsburgh.org. You can also sign-up for automatic email notifications through WTAE: www.thepittsburghchannel.com. Please do not call the teachers, secretary, pastor, principal, radio stations, or bus companies.

When listening for announcements, listen for: **Redeemer Lutheran School**

- If you do not hear anything about *Redeemer Lutheran School*, then everything at Redeemer is normal, on time, and in session.
- If you hear *Redeemer Lutheran School* **closed**, you know that our school is **closed**. No one should report.
- If there is a delay, follow this schedule:
 - A 2-hour delay will mean a **10AM** start for preschool classes.
 - Full day classes will dismiss at their normal time.
 - Half-day classes will dismiss at 12 Noon.

The following radio stations carry our school’s information.

- WTAE 1250 AM
- KDKA 1020

The television stations KDKA, WTAE, and WPXI will also carry this information.

When necessary, the announcements may include that Redeemer Lutheran School is having a Flexible Instruction day. We have received permission from the PA Department of Education to have a **Flexible Instructional Plan (FIP)**. Flexible Instruction may be used for the following pre-defined circumstances: inclement weather closings; for emergency-related building closures

(flooding, sewer, building damage making attendance in building unsafe, loss of power or heat and any health-related cleaning); and closures made by local, state, or federal authorities. There will be a 30-minute minimum required participation in non-virtual learning. However, children may participate in any activity assigned by the teacher as long as they desire. Families must submit a log of their child's participation to be counted as present for the FIP day. Families will receive instructions and materials to be used, as well as an activity log. Teachers will be available to answer any questions.

VOLUNTEERS

Redeemer Lutheran School stresses the 'parents as partners' idea by providing numerous opportunities for parents to volunteer their time and service to enrich and enhance our school program. Our goal is to have every family involved in at least one volunteer area. Parents who are interested in volunteering some time or service are encouraged to contact the administrator or classroom teacher. Positions and descriptions are on our online volunteer survey. All families should find some way to volunteer their time and use their talents and gifts to benefit the school.

Volunteers must always place the well-being of all students as a high priority.

LITTLE LAMB – “PEN PAL” PROGRAM

Each year members of our church choose a preschooler to be their “Little Lamb.” Your child’s “pen pal” will pray for them throughout the school year and may send them cards, letters, and gifts as well. Please complete the form giving permission for your child to participate. There will be several events throughout the school year that will provide opportunities for the children to meet their pen pals. School families are always invited and encouraged to attend church fellowship activities and worship. On Preschool Sunday, children will participate in a worship service and meet their pen pal at a special luncheon afterward.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Our daily schedule is flexible, but will include:

- Free Play/Art Activity
- Story Time
- Snack Time
- Small Group Learning Time
- Lunch Time
- Exercise Time
- Centers (Planned Learning Activity)
- Bible Time
- Goodbye Time

Arrival Procedures

Plan on arriving at school on time. Please park and enter through the assigned preschool student entrance of the school.

When you enter the classroom, please do the following:

- Tell the teacher anything about your child that might affect his or her behavior in school (changes at home, death of a loved one, lack of sleep, etc).
- Place coats, hats, and backpacks on your child's hook in the classroom.
- Notify the teacher if someone other than a parent or regular caregiver will be picking up your child at dismissal.

Clothing

Paints and markers as well as other messy materials will be available to your child each day. Please dress your child accordingly.

We realize that bathroom "accidents" will happen. "Accidents" by definition are unusual incidents and should happen infrequently. Please provide a seasonally appropriate change of clothes (pants, shirt, underwear, socks) in a Ziploc bag marked with your child's name. If there is a wet accident, the student will be given their change of clothes and any supplies necessary to clean himself/herself. Wet clothes will be sent home at the end of the day. If there is more than a wet accident that requires cleaning beyond a change of clothes, parents will be notified and will be expected to come to school and take care of their child.

Dismissal Procedures

Please be prompt when returning to pick up your child. Preschoolers tend to get anxious when mom or dad is late. The Oakmont classes will dismiss from the main entrance of the building, and Penn Hills classes will dismiss from the side exit of the building. Parents should park, and students will be brought to the door for dismissal. The teacher will dismiss the class one child at a time. Please walk down the sidewalk and to the door to meet your child. Please remember to notify the office or your child's teacher if there is a new person coming to pick up your child.

Things to Remember...

- Monthly calendars are an important communication tool. Field trips, things needed for class, chapel dates, time changes, and many other important things are all found on the calendar. Please post it at home and refer to it weekly.
- Visit our website (www.rlspittsburgh.org) for information about your child's class and other school events.
- Your child will need a tote or full sized backpack of some kind to carry school items home. Please be sure that it is big enough to hold artwork.
- Be sure to check your child's backpack each day for notes and daily learning activities.
- Each child will need a full change of clothes placed in a large zip lock bag with their name printed on the outside.
- Snacks and lunch for each student in the PreK Counts program is provided. Any special dietary requirements must be submitted in writing to the school office.

- All other students attending the full-day program will need to bring their own snack and lunch. Students in the half-day program will need to bring their own snack. Milk will be purchased through the school.
- All students should bring their own water bottle with a spill-proof lid.

It is important to have a close working relationship between parents and teachers. We are here to serve your family in any way that we can. Our Pastor is also available to meet any spiritual needs that you may have.

This handbook includes all of the necessary information and policies we believe parents of our preschoolers need to have. For a complete list of school policies and explanations, please review the school handbook on our website (www.rlspittsburgh.org) or ask the school office for a printed copy.

We are looking forward to serving our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, by serving you.

Welcome, In His Name,

Gail Holzer	Executive Director, Administrator
Lori Pope	Director
Diane Olmstead	Preschool Oakmont
Patricia Mullen	Threes/Fours Oakmont
Jannis Powell	PreK Cts./Full Day Preschool Penn Hills
Helen Askin	Assistant
Kim McMeekin	Assistant
Liz Shepler	Assistant