

St. Matthew's

Early Education Center



Family Handbook
2025 - 2026

St. Matthew's

United Methodist Church

Early Education Center

14900 Annapolis Road
Bowie, MD 20715

www.stmatthewseec.org

Telephone Numbers

Main Office 301-464-1813

Administration

Director	Maria Calabrese	directoreec@gmail.com
Assistant Director	Melinda Lee	assistantdirectoreec@stmatthewseec.org
Business Manager	Lexi Hockenberry	eecbilling@gmail.com
Office Manager	Christie Ahearn	christie.ahearn@stmatthewseec.org

School Hours

Morning Classes	8:45 - 11:45
All Day Pre-K	9:00 - 2:30
Kindergarten	9:00 - 3:15
Child Care Hours	7:00 - 6:00

Like us on



at: St Matthews Early Education Center

Many thanks to our loyal families! Your dedication and support mean the world to us! It has been our pleasure to serve you!

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February 1, 2025

Dear Parents,

Welcome to **St. Matthew's Early Education Center!** We are honored to have you join the EEC family. Together we form a safe, loving, and supportive network for your children at home, in school, and in the community.

This parent handbook was written to help everyone understand our common routines and procedures. Our mission is to impact our student's lives educationally, socially, and emotionally to help provide them with a secure foundation for life-long learning. With this idea in mind: clear goals and expectations are key in developing strong and enriching partnerships between families and school. When these conditions exist, we work together to grow happy, confident children.

In this parent handbook, you will not only discover basic information and the history of the EEC, but also resources for your family. You will learn how to pay your bill and when to register for the coming school year. You will also find suggestions on how to participate in your child's classroom and what the policy is for celebrating your child's birthday in the classroom. You will discover who sits on the board that governs the EEC, and at the back of the handbook, you will find a list of community resources and contact information for state-wide child care networks.

We strive not only to provide a challenging academic program, but a safe and loving environment for all our students. Open communication is the companion piece to this handbook, so please do not hesitate to stop by my office or send me an email with your questions, concerns or compliments.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Maria Calabrese, Director

St. Matthew's UMC

Early Education Center

Leadership Board

The EEC Board is an oversight committee formed of church members, church staff, school parents and school staff. The board is responsible for overseeing the operation of the school and for setting general policies and teaching philosophy. On an annual basis, the school board evaluates the EEC Director and develops the annual budget, including tuition charges, salary scales and finances. Most importantly, the EEC Board advises the Director and supports the staff as they carry out the mission of the school charter.

Current Board Members 2025-2026

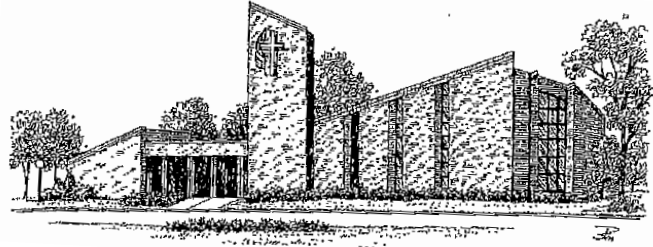
Christin Vare	EEC Board Chair
Michelle Balfe	EEC Parent
Leticia Gay	EEC Parent
Karen Hastings	Church Member
Deanna Lesche	Church Member
Diana Scatliffe	Church Member
Mary Jennings	Church Member
Gary Allen	Church Member
Jay McGonagal	Church Member
Angela Cockrell	Church Member
Ray Orocco	Church Member
JW Park	Pastor
Maria Calabrese	Director
Melinda Lee	Asst. Director
Lexi Hockenberry	Business Manager
Gigi DiViccario	EEC Teachers
Tiffany Smith	

- If you would be interested in serving on the EEC Board for a three-year term, please stop by the school office to find out more.

St. Matthew's Early Education Center

History

Since its inception in 1965, St. Matthew's United Methodist Nursery School and Kindergarten has been an important resource for young families in the Bowie area. Developed as a community outreach ministry, church members created a program to enrich the emotional, social, physical, and intellectual lives of young children. In the



Methodist tradition of *providing opportunities for spiritual and intellectual growth ...for people from all faiths and walks of life*, St. Matthew's EEC welcomes children, families, and staff of all races, religions, national and ethnic origins, sexual orientations and disabilities.

In 1989, in response to the changing demographics of our community, St. Matthew's added child care to its preschool classes and became St. Matthew's United Methodist Early Education Center. Today, our dedicated and caring staff have the great joy of serving 220 enthusiastic children and families. Together, we form a warm and welcoming community of learners.

Program Philosophy

Our program provides a happy, enriching, and productive first school experience for young children. It is our firm belief that positive habits formed in the crucial first years will continue throughout our students' lives, and that well-planned learning experiences in the early years will benefit not only the individual child, but the community and country as well.

The EEC's program is developmental in approach with emphasis placed on the child learning and achieving at an individually appropriate level. Within our predictable daily schedule, there is moderate structure, flexibility in attitudes and methods, and the belief that each child must be free to gain confidence in his/her abilities. There is a time for structured activities when the teacher can present an interactive lesson to a small group. There is order and routine as children clean up, get ready for different activities, follow directions, and recognize the needs and rights of others. There is also a time for "free play" when a wide variety of materials and experiences are available for children to make choices. In the words of James Hymes, "free play is thinking time for young children" but in the words of young children, "free play is fun!"

Program Goals

St. Matthew's Early Education Center has well-established goals that help children to:

- Develop a positive self-concept about themselves and their ability to learn.
- Develop confidence and competency through successful social, emotional, intellectual, and physical experiences.
- Develop skills and form concepts in areas of language, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, physical education, health, and safety.
- Develop thinking skills through opportunities to form conclusions based on reasoning and logical progression.
- Understand and cope with feelings and emotions.

- Appreciate differences in others.
- Demonstrate independence in decision-making, self-care, and self-evaluation.
- Express themselves creatively and imaginatively in their use of ideas and emotions.
- Experience success and cope constructively with frustration.
- Feel secure and comfortable in a happy and relaxed atmosphere.

Positive Behavioral Practices

Studies have shown, and our experience confirms, that the most important factor in student growth and development is the RELATIONSHIP between the teacher and the student; simply put *young children thrive in an environment where they feel connection and comfort.*

Positive relationships take time and effort to develop, so EEC teachers work toward this goal in the following ways:

- Developing strong connections between home and school
- Establishing consistent and predictable routines
- Creating clear classroom rules and expectations
- Encouraging children to identify and express their emotions
- Explicitly teaching children how to navigate social and emotional situations with and without the help of an adult
- Modelling positive words and actions
- Acknowledging positive behavior and intervening before negative situations or behavior occur
- Redirecting behavior and identifying positive choices when negative behavior arises
- Providing opportunities within the daily schedule for children to make choices and take ownership for their learning
- Teaching respect for one another

Curriculum

St. Matthew’s Early Education Center chooses curricula from MSDE Early Childhood Curriculum Project State-Recommended Comprehensive Early Childhood Curricula for 2-, 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds. From this list we have chosen the best matches for each age group based on the needs of our students and the teaching styles of our teachers. As of August 2016, we are using Frog Street Toddler for our twos, Frog Street Threes with preschool, Let’s Begin with the Letter people and DIG with Pre-K, and Reading Wonders & My Math for Kindergarten.

In addition to these comprehensive curricula, we provide special instruction in music and physical education. Teachers also have access to a library of dramatic play and science prop boxes which are shared and rotated weekly to bring fresh ideas and experiences to our student’s play.

Teachers address student interests and additional needs (such as limited sight, language and vocabulary development, alternative family structures) through the targeted selection of picture/story/nonfiction books, posters, toys, games, puzzles, and creative outlets.

Materials are accessible to the children in a variety of ways. Books, toys and puzzles are accessible in centers in book corner and are rotated regularly to correspond to changes in curriculum content and play objectives. Picture labels allow children to participate in material selection and classroom maintenance.

Specials: Music & Physical Fitness

The EEC is dedicated to the idea that healthy children have both creative and physical outlets daily. Music, movement, drama, and art are important components of each day's activities and classroom lesson plans. Every half-day class has a 30-minute recess scheduled with other classes in the same age group. In the event of inclement weather, teachers bring their classes to Fellowship Hall for "indoor recess". Both Fellowship Hall and our playground provide opportunities for large and small motor activities, group play, individual play, and dramatic play.

Once a week, most classes receive explicit instruction in music and physical fitness. Our music curriculum is provided by Music Together - an internationally recognized, comprehensive music program. With magical research-based learning progressions, Music Together teachers nurture each child's music-making abilities. Music Together provides content to use in our classrooms and connects with families through take-home materials and recordings. We also host two interactive music-making nights per year for EEC families.

Our physical education program has been developed in-house and focuses on helping children live a healthy, active lifestyle. Each class includes activities to support physical fitness, motor skill improvement, group interactions and fun! Students move to music, play games that require cooperation and strategy, learn to follow directions, and practice how to move safely around their friends. All of these skills reinforce expectations children encounter in the classroom, in the community, and at home.

In addition to Music and PE school-wide, our Kindergarten and ADPK (All Day Pre-K) classes have weekly Spanish language instruction. A contracted Spanish instructor from "My Bilingual Child" focuses on creating a bilingual experience that provides a union between languages. Using fun and creative experiences through song, dance, and games the children quickly learn basic Spanish vocabulary and phrases.

Summer Session

Over the summer, we continue our child care program from 7 A.M. to 6 P.M for children ages 2 to 6. Using weekly themes as our inspiration, teachers plan special art projects, games, songs, books, snacks, activities and visiting entertainers. Our schedule is more flexible during the summer, but the underlying structure of the school day provides the continuity and security our children have come to expect.

Summer session is only open to students from St. Matthew's EEC. A student must have just finished the school year (2024-2025) with us or begin attending the upcoming school year (2025-2026) in the fall. Students that attended our Pre-Kindergarten program and then went on to attend Kindergarten at another school for the 2024-2025 school year are allowed to attend our Summer Session if there is still availability. This registration will fall later than Summer Registration for In-house Families and will be announced on the website.

Parents as Partners

Educating young children takes a village, so the daily involvement of our families is an essential factor in our success. Parents, grandparents, aunts & uncles, babysitters, nannies, and friends participate in a variety of **COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES**. We call on active members of our community to govern on our school board, to organize as room parents, and to assist us with fundraising. Parents share special talents such as photography, music, and art. Other parents provide special snacks and classroom items. We thrive on the energy and talents of those around us!

The EEC Community is also a part of **St. Matthew's United Methodist Church**. While we do not participate in worship services, our teachers, students, and families contribute to several church missions. In the last few years, EEC families have given food to the Bowie Interfaith Food Pantry, filled Christmas stockings for children whose parents are incarcerated, and purchased sweatshirts for disadvantaged children in Prince George's County. We are very proud of the generosity of our families!

St. Matthew's UMC also encourages EEC families to attend their functions throughout the year. EEC students love the church's Trunk-or-Treat Halloween Festival, Vacation Bible School, and Family Movie Nights. Likewise, church members support the school by participating in fundraisers like Claire's Gourmet and our monthly restaurant nights.

Together, St. Matthew's United Methodist Church and the Early Education Center have created an inclusive community of lifelong learners and doers!

Supporting Your Child's Independence

- Let your child know that school is an opportunity for more people to love them!
- Practice spending time away from your child. Let your child adjust to your church nursery, your gym daycare, or a neighbor's house.
- Encourage your child to feed himself, dress himself, tie his shoes, and button his buttons. Success with self-care tasks leads to self-confidence and independence!
- Encourage your child to speak distinctly and correctly. Practice asking questions like, "Would you take me to the potty?" "Can you help me with my shoes?" "Please and Thank you!"
- Let your child know that you are interested in what he is doing in school. When they bring home a drawing, let them tell you about it. Encourage them with statements such as, "Tell me about your picture - I really like the colors you used. I can tell you had fun doing it."
- Read to your child daily and let them see you read for your own enjoyment.
- Let your child play outside and get dirty. Learning is a messy process and they will come home covered in dirt, wood chips or glitter!
- Establish a schedule that can be consistent and predictable. Predictability creates safety and security in the mind of a preschooler!

School Life

St. Matthew's Early Education Center is mandated by the Maryland State Department of Education to provide 170 days of school for our kindergarten class. Our school calendar provides 4 additional days for unpredictable emergencies such as weather-related closings. Should closings cause the number of school days to fall below 170, we will add days to the kindergarten school year only. We are not mandated to meet a specific number of days for other age groups.

School & Child Care Hours

Child Care: 7 AM to 6 PM

AM School: 8:45 AM to 11:45 AM

All Day Pre-K: 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM or 8:45 AM to 2:15 PM

Kindergarten: 9:00 AM to 3:15 PM

Child Care

Child care is available for our current students as an addition to their school day. Before-care begins at 7 AM and after-care is available until 6 PM. Child care teachers supplement our school programs through planned activities and routines that reinforce academic, social, emotional, and physical growth and development. St. Matthew's EEC provides two snacks daily, one in the morning and the other in mid-afternoon. Parents provide lunch. Child care is open during many holidays and vacations.

Drop-off and Pick-up

Drop-off and Pick-up take place in the classroom. Please accompany your child to his/her classroom door where the teacher will greet you. At the end of the session, please return to the classroom and wait for your child to be dismissed. Please sign your child in/out daily.

If someone other than yourself is to pick up your child, the teacher must be notified prior to that specific "pick-up". The person designated to pick-up your child will need to provide the school with identification, preferably a driver's license.

Children enrolled in our child care program may be dropped off in the morning child care room any time after 7 AM. Anyone regularly picking up a child must be noted on that child's emergency card. No one under the age of 16 will be permitted to drop-off/pick-up a St. Matthew's student.

Attendance

When your child is unable to attend school, please notify the office and lead teacher by phone or email. If your child is out sick, it is helpful to share symptoms with us so we may track illnesses and address any localized issues with additional cleaning/disinfecting. Absences of three, or more, days due to illness will require a doctor's note. When a particularly contagious illness is identified in a classroom or across the building, parents will be notified by the director.

Snack and Lunch

Our child care and all-day students eat lunch that is brought from home, or delivered through our Main & Market Catering partnership. We provide a morning and an afternoon snack following a published monthly menu. Children are encouraged to participate in snack and lunch, but never forced or made to feel bad. Likewise, hungry children are provided with additional food. Water and milk are provided at each meal, and seconds are available.

We limit fat, sugar and salt in food served by the program; and monitor meals provided from home and supplement them, as necessary, to ensure that children are receiving nutritious, balanced meals and snacks.

When planning our monthly menu, the EEC is mindful **that good nutrition helps children develop strong bodies and brains**. Good nutrition gives children the energy to participate enthusiastically in our program, and helps children stay focused during activities. To support this effort, our menu includes foods that are sensitive to the allergy needs of current students, provides fresh fruits and vegetables, and whole grains four times a week, and includes snacks that limit fat, sugar, and salt intake.

Since some students eat lunch that is brought from home, we encourage you to talk to your child, no matter how young, about what you are packing. Select something healthy for the main course that you know your child will eat, and encourage them to eat that first. Fresh food like fruit and vegetables or leftovers from dinner are signs of *home* at lunchtime. Ask your child for input on a special treat and think about portion control. Most importantly, we want lunches to be safe, so *please include a cold pack in your child's insulated lunchbox to keep food fresh. We cannot heat or refrigerate food.*

Naptime Routines

Our Playschool and Preschool child care classrooms nap from 12:30 to 2:30 each day. ADPK (All Day Pre-K) classes do not nap, however our half-day Pre-K children begin with a two-hour nap which gets shortened over the year to prepare them for all-day kindergarten.

If your child is in a napping room, please send in a SMALL blanket that can easily fit into a 3-gallon zip-lock bag. We will send home all napping materials on Fridays for you to launder. You may purchase a cot sheet in the office for \$10.

Child Development Tools & Resources

All families will receive a developmental screening packet in September called the ASQ. The Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ®) provides reliable, accurate developmental and social-emotional screening for children between birth and age 6. This MSDE recommended tool screens and assesses the developmental performance of children in the areas of communication, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, problem solving, and personal-social skills. It is used to provide a baseline for all of our incoming students, but also helps identify children that would benefit from additional support or further in-depth evaluation in specific areas.

Claire Lerner is a contracted child development specialist. Her role as a Child Development Specialist (CDS) is to support our school staff in understanding and addressing the challenges that arise with children in the classroom, and to work collaboratively with families when issues emerge. She goes into our classrooms monthly to observe. If she makes any concerning observations, she will reach out to set up a meeting with the parents.

- Provides guidance to teachers around concerns regarding children in their classroom
- Consults with teachers around communicating effectively with parents about challenging issues
- Facilitates meetings with parents and school staff to address identified concerns

- Refers parents and children to additional resources beyond the school when necessary
- Coordinates with outside specialists to ensure continuity of care
- Offers several teacher trainings/workshops throughout the year
- Leads quarterly parent workshops
- Can see parents privately to address concerns beyond the classroom

If at any point during the school year Claire and the director deem an evaluation to be necessary for the support of your student, it will be required to get one in order to maintain enrollment at St. Matthew's EEC.

Supplies

We do not charge families an additional fee for supplies. However, teachers will occasionally request additional supplies for a classroom project or special celebration. This is generally a volunteer opportunity and not a mandatory requirement.

For Playschool children who are not potty-trained, parents are asked to provide diapers and wipes. All other children should be potty-trained.

Parking Procedures

The parking lot at St. Matthew's is a very busy place. Please be conscientious as you drive through the parking lot because children and church members are present and can be unpredictable. The following guidelines are designed to keep you and your children safe.

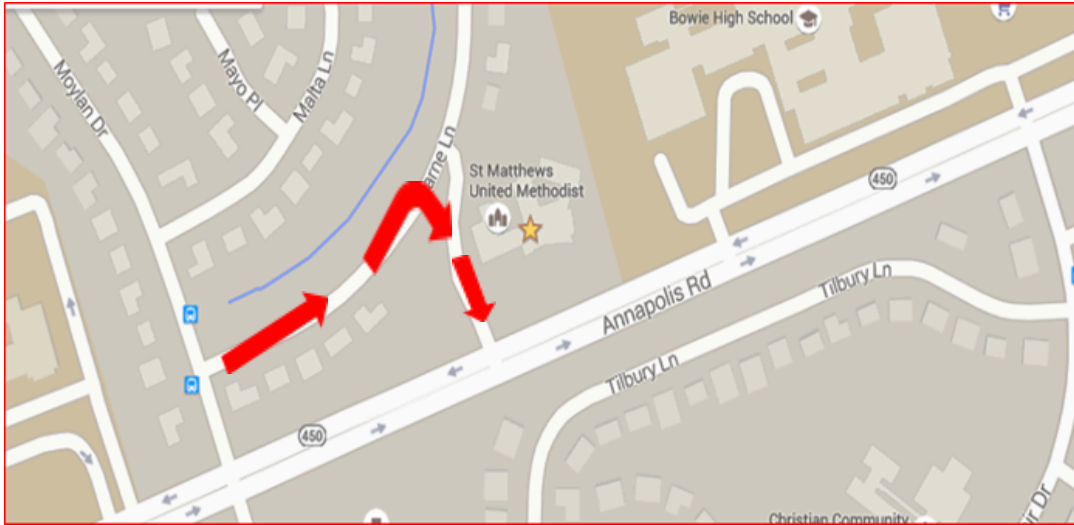
- Park only in designated spots. Parking along curbs is strictly prohibited and is a ticketable offense.
- Do not park in spots marked for the handicapped.
- If you arrive and there are no parking spots available, please be patient. One will open up shortly.
- It is illegal to leave children in the car unattended.
- You must use the appropriate child safety seat. It's the law.
- On days when the church has a special event, you will be told ahead of time and provided with an alternative drop-off or pick-up procedure.

Patience is a virtue - particularly in our parking lot!

Alternative Pick-Up Plan

On days when the church has a special event and parking is limited, we will ask you to use "The Alternative Pick-Up Plan". Instead of parking in the parking lot, you will line up on the right side of Marne Lane and enter the parking lot through the back entrance. Pull up along the sidewalk next to the playground and your child's teacher will deliver your child to you. Please do not park in line and get out to find your child. If everyone follows the same pattern, this process works well.

This map (below) shows the movement of cars.



Policies & Procedures

Communication

The EEC believes that strong communication between parents, teachers, and the EEC community is the key to providing a smooth and enriching experience for your child. Quick greetings and warm wishes at the classroom door, emails, notes, newsletters, reading the daily notes outside the classroom, and volunteering are the best ways to stay informed and become involved. The Director also welcomes any questions or concerns you may have. You may reach her in the office, by phone, or by email. You may also place suggestions in the box on the wall outside of the office.

Registration and Admissions

St. Matthew's Early Education Center encourages your admissions inquiries throughout the year. Please call the school with questions or to make an appointment to tour our facility. We begin enrollment for the next school year in February. At the time of registration, a non-refundable fee will be required to officially enroll a student. As classes fill, a waiting list will be maintained in chronological order so that as vacancies arise, spaces may be filled in an orderly and equitable manner. The enrollment fee will be due when the child is officially placed in a class.

St. Matthew's EEC is an inclusive community. We accept children of all abilities and work closely with parents and PGCPs special educators to meet each child's needs. We also strongly believe in early intervention. If your child would benefit from additional services, we will refer you to PGCPs Child Find which evaluates children placed in private or parochial early childhood settings. Additionally, our child development specialist on staff is available for student observations, classroom support, and parent consults. Through a collaborative process we strive to support the needs of every child in our school community.

St. Matthew's EEC knows that children thrive when teachers, parents, and special educators communicate openly and often. We welcome therapists and special educators into the life of our classrooms and we value their expertise - the whole class benefits from their advice. If your child has a diagnosed special need, **please share this information immediately** so that we can design the most well-informed learning environment for your child.

"It is the policy of the State of Maryland that all public and publicly funded schools and school programs operate in compliance with:

- (1) Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964; and
- (2) Title 26, Subtitle 7 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code, which states that public and publicly funded schools and programs may not:

- i. Discriminate against a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability;
- ii. Refuse enrollment of a prospective student, expel a current student, or withhold privileges from a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student because of an individual's race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability; or
- iii. Discipline, invoke a penalty against, or take any other retaliatory action against a student or parent or guardian of a student who files a complaint alleging that the program or school discriminated against the student, regardless of the outcome of the complaint."

Grievances

Open and honest communication between families and our staff is an essential component of a high-quality early childhood program. We want you to be confident that your child is being well cared for and is having a quality experience. If there is ever a time you have a concern regarding your child, we want to encourage you to communicate your concern with the child's lead teacher, first, to attempt to resolve the grievance or to clarify center policy/procedure. If additional help is required, either party can request assistance from the director or assistant director and a meeting will be scheduled to discuss the concern and seek a resolution that can be incorporated into your child's day. Our director and assistant director are available any time by email, phone or in person, if a parent or staff member has a concern regarding some aspect of the program or a policy. If a parent or staff member remains dissatisfied, the EEC Board Chair may be contacted. As part of our program assessment, in the spring of each year, we provide each family the opportunity to complete a family questionnaire as a program evaluation. This information helps us assess how the program is meeting the needs of families and children, as well as to identify program strengths and weaknesses.

Requisite Paperwork

Prior to the first day of school, parents or guardians must provide us with the following MSDE paperwork:

1. Health Inventory Part 1 and 2 (revised 2023) signed by a physician or nurse practitioner.
2. Health Immunization Certificate (revised 5/21)
3. Blood-Lead Testing Certificate (revised 7/23)
4. An Emergency Contact form (revised 01/2022)
5. Birth Certificate or Passport

We ask that all forms be sent to eecregistration@stmatthewseec.org. If need be, they can be sent directly from the pediatrician. These must be submitted before the child's first day of school or summer care. These forms can be found on stmatthewseec.org or MSDE's Licensing Forms website.

Tuition

An enrollment fee is collected at the time of registration. A 10% tuition payment (#1 of 10) is due on June 1. BOTH THE ENROLLMENT FEE AND PAYMENT #1 ARE NONREFUNDABLE. Tuition is paid monthly beginning August 1 and ending April 1. For anyone registering after June 1, the enrollment fee & payment #1 will be due upon signing. Tuition may be paid by check or credit card in the office or online. You may also register for automated payments through the business office. Checks should be made payable to ST. MATTHEW'S EEC. Please write your child's name on the memo line of your check to prevent confusion and bring checks to the school office.

ALL PREPAID TUITION IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

Late Fees for Tuition

1. If tuition is not paid by the 5th of the month, a late fee of \$15 will be assessed on the 6th and an additional \$15 for every day thereafter.
2. If payment is not received by the 15th of the month, your child will not be able to attend until payment is made.
3. There is a returned check fee of \$25.00. If a check is returned for a second time, payment must be made by certified check or credit card.

If you are experiencing temporary financial difficulties, please see the Director or Business Manager before tuition is due and we will attempt to work out a solution in confidence.

Fees for Late Pick-up at School & Child Care

A late pick-up fee of \$15.00 per child will be charged for the first 15 minutes parents are late to pick up from school or child care. This fee increases to \$20.00 per 15 minutes after 6:15 pm. This fee will be charged to your account and must be paid with the next tuition payment.

Withdrawal Procedure

Should your family need to withdraw from our program, please provide at least a two-week notice in writing by sending an email to the director and the business manager. Keep in mind that ALL PREPAID TUITION is NON-REFUNDABLE.

Pupil Records

The EEC protects the right to privacy for pupils and their parents. Therefore, no one other than the teacher, administrative staff, and the director shall have access to the records of individual students. Parents and legal guardians may have access to their child's records at any time under the supervision of a school employee. Anyone other than parents wishing to investigate individual files may do so only if the school has received written permission from the parent(s) prior to the visit.

Report Cards and Child Assessment

Parents will receive periodic reports on their child's progress over the course of the school year. Prior to Parent Conferences in October teachers will send home a brief "Progress Report" focusing on each child's adjustment to the new school year. October conferences provide parents with the opportunity to share insights into their child's learning styles and to share concerns and expectations.

At the end of January and at the end of the school year, teachers will send home a more formal evaluation of each child's progress. Assessments are conducted throughout the school year to identify strengths and weaknesses across learning domains. Teachers will use these assessments to choose developmentally appropriate activities for the class and to differentiate their daily lessons for each child. A second parent conference takes place in early February. Meetings with teachers can also be arranged upon request.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Conferences are scheduled twice a year. The first round is in October, about 10 weeks into the school year. At this point, your child has adjusted to the school environment and teachers are ready to provide insights into your child's classroom demeanor. They are also anxious to hear from you: what are your hopes, your concerns, your secret tricks.

In late January/early February, we will hold a second round of conferences where teachers will share results of developmental assessments. This is also a good time to discuss placement for the following year as registration begins in early February.

Recommendations

If you are interested in applying to another private or parochial school for your child, we are more than willing to complete recommendations for you. Please ask the teacher to complete the paperwork for you and provide her with the recommendation form AND an addressed, stamped envelope. Recommendations are confidential and will be forwarded directly to the other school.

Requests for school records from other schools will only be granted when a Release of Information Consent Form is signed by the parent(s) and all tuition payments are current at the time of the request. Please allow 48 hours to complete this process.

Dismissal

The school retains the right to dismiss a child if the child's or the parent's behavior is unacceptable. This could take place after conferences with parents and/or a trial period that would allow time for improvement. If after a fair trial period the school chooses to dismiss the child, the *current month's* tuition will be refunded. There will be no tuition refunds after May 1 for the school year or after August 1 for the Summer Session. If a child's or parent's behavior is a threat to the safety of the community, dismissal can be immediate.

Bullying

Bullying will not be tolerated in our classrooms. Physical aggression, social exclusion, and verbal assault conducted in a deliberate and systematic manner constitute bullying behavior. While some of this behavior is a natural part of a young child's development, bullying has a detrimental impact on the victim, the bully, and classroom dynamics. Teachers have learned to distinguish this behavior from others, act quickly to set clear expectations, and teach new reactions to trigger situations. Parents are encouraged to bring concerns to the teachers' attention. Teachers bring concerns to the Director immediately. If bullying behavior is determined by the Director to be irremediable, the student could be dismissed.

Babysitting

Staff members at St. Matthew's Early Education Center are not allowed to babysit for families with students currently enrolled in our school. While it is natural to turn to our trusted employees for this service, such relationships often lead to a conflict of interest, breaches of confidentiality and the perception of privilege. Please do not place our staff in the position of having to reject such an offer.

Birthday Celebrations

We like to help children celebrate their birthdays in school, and sometimes parents wish to send a treat for the class. You may provide a simple treat and napkins for the class. Appropriate treats include cookies, small cupcakes, or individual ice cream treats. Please, no cake, party favors, candles, or clowns.

Parents who wish to invite their child's classmates to parties and special functions are encouraged to mail invitations. Please do not ask our staff to distribute notices and invitations, or share contact information. This request is out of sensitivity to those children not invited and who could easily have their feelings hurt.

Clothing

Your child's clothing should be loose and comfortable, preferably the kind they can manage themselves. Please put names on all clothing and be sure to dress your child for the weather. All children go outside to play daily, weather permitting. In most cases, if a child is too ill to go outside, he is too ill to be in school.

All children must bring in an extra complete set of clothing (underwear, socks, shirt, and pants) bearing your child's name. These should be in a labeled, Ziploc bag. If your child attends school *and* child care, you will need a bag for both rooms. Please remember to provide seasonally appropriate clothes.

Drop-in Child Care

Child care is available on a drop-in basis IF we have room in the appropriately aged classroom. It is only available to current students. Please check with the office for availability and to discuss payment. Fees are \$20 per hour up to \$80 for the day and are due upon pick-up.

Field Trips

Private cars are often used to transport children on field trips. Parents will be notified in writing, prior to each field trip. The notice will include the date, time, place and means of transportation. Parents (and guardians) must give their permission for transporting their child on field trips and outings by way of private vehicles and/or mass transit.

To reduce the cost to parents, we rely on parent volunteers to transport children to and from field trips. Transporting other people's children is an important responsibility. If you agree to do so, please understand and abide by the following guidelines.

1. Siblings are not allowed on field trips even if parents are transporting them themselves.
2. Each child must be belted in approved safety seats.
3. No smoking.
4. You must follow the route provided by the teacher.
5. Additional stops are not acceptable.
6. Remember that children in your care could have food allergies. Please only serve snacks provided by the school.
7. You are responsible for the safety and behavior of the children in your group. Please do not allow your cell phone to become a distraction while performing this important task.
8. If, on the morning of the field trip, we do not have enough drivers and car seats for each child in the class, we will cancel the field trip and parents will lose their money.

FUNDRAISERS

While tuition covers the majority of our yearly budget, we often have a gap that needs to be filled. This is where our fundraisers become essential. While some schools have mandatory volunteer hours, supply fees, or fundraising quotas, we prefer to provide a variety of opportunities for families to become involved in raising money for our school. We understand that while one family may be able to contribute money, another family might only feel comfortable donating time or talent. We support your need to make those decisions for yourself.

Health & Safety

A complete physical examination, lead screening and record of all immunizations for each child shall be turned in to the school office prior to the first day of school. Please submit them virtually to eecregistration@stmatthewseec.org. The immunization record at school should be updated yearly.

State requirements on this topic have changed and are quite stringent. If a parent does not submit the Health Inventory (OCC 1215) AND appropriate evidence of lead screening and immunizations WITHIN 20 DAYS of the child's admission to school, we cannot allow the child to remain in our care. The EEC may provide "Temporary Admission to Care" but only if the child is homeless or if the parent provides evidence of the child's appointment with a health care provider to receive the proper medical evaluation. The appointment MAY NOT BE ANY LATER THAN 20 DAYS after the child is temporarily admitted to care. Lastly, the EEC must EXCLUDE a child whose parent fails to provide evidence of the required health-related information within the required time frame.



EMERGENCY AND MEDICAL PROCEDURES

1. If your child has a medical condition such as allergies, asthma, or seizures, you will be asked to fill out a health action plan. If this condition requires that an emergency medication be administered or kept at school, parents must have a Medication Authorization Form filled out by the child's pediatrician. *See explanation below*
2. In case of illness or injury, the parent will be called and must pick up the child within a reasonably short time. (This is a licensing requirement.)
3. In case of simple injury: (abrasions, skinned knees, splinters) the staff will perform routine hygienic measures of washing with soap and water and applying adhesive strips. Ice will be applied to bumps. No topical medication, ointments, etc. may be used (according to licensing guidelines).
4. When a simple injury occurs at the school, the parent will be informed and asked to sign a form acknowledging that (s)he has been notified of school accidents/incidents.
5. In case of a medical emergency, parents will be called immediately. If circumstances require, emergency medical services will be called. The school staff will respond as necessary until rescue arrives. There is a first aid trained staff member on site at all times. In the event that hospitalization is required (Emergency Room Services), the child will be taken to the closest hospital unless the child's emergency card indicates otherwise. Parents assume financial responsibility for such services.

When is a child too ill to be at school?

1. When the child has a severe cold or cough.
2. When the child has had a fever within 24 hours.
3. When the child has diarrhea or has vomited within the last 24hrs.

Please keep children at home when they exhibit symptoms of illness. If your child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease or virus, please notify the school immediately. The school is required to follow applicable regulations and will notify other parents as needed. A child will be sent home by the school if signs of illness are detected and a doctor's note may be required to return. **If a child has missed three consecutive days of school due to illness, a doctor's note will be required to return.** Do not send a child to school unless he may participate in all activities. If you feel that an exception should be made, consult with the Director.

Medication Authorization

St. Matthew's EEC does not have a certified nurse on staff. In order to administer medication to your child, you are required to fill out the MSDE Medication Authorization form (OCC 1216). If your child needs a prescription medication, you must have this form signed by the prescriber and you must provide the medication in a container labeled by the pharmacist or prescriber. If your child needs a non-prescription medication, you must fill out this form AND provide the medicine in its original packaging with dosing directions and dosage cup/spoon. Please bring the form and medicine to the office; we will then distribute it to the teacher. **ALL FORMS MUST BE SIGNED BY THE PRESCRIBER.**

Child Safety Seats

Effective October 1, 2013, Maryland's child safety seat law requires that *all children younger than eight years of age be secured in a federally approved child safety seat according to the safety seat and vehicle manufacturers' instructions, unless the child is 4 feet, 9 inches or taller. The child restraint must be right for the child's size, age, and weight.* If you cannot accompany your child on a field trip, you must provide a child safety seat to be used in another vehicle.

Please Note: Child care providers and teachers are considered "mandated reporters". This means that if we see young children left unattended in cars at pick-up or drop-off, or children coming/going without car seats, or if we suspect abuse and neglect, it is our PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATION to report the incident to child protective services.

CHILD ABUSE and NEGLECT

St. Matthew's Early Education Center believes child safety and security is its number one priority. As trusted caretakers, we are alert to the impact that adults can have on children, both in school and out. We are trained in the signs of abuse and neglect and take seriously our pledge to report our suspicions.

According to Article 27, Section 35 A, Annotated Code of Maryland, regarding child abuse, *it is the responsibility of each staff member to report to the Director any suspected case of child abuse.* Any such case shall be reported both orally and in writing to the Department of Social Services, Prince George's County, by the Director of St. Matthew's United Methodist Early Education Center. The written report shall be made within 48 hours of the contact. The oral report shall be made by telephone to the Dept. of Social Services. Both reports will contain the information required under (d) Form and Contents of Report, Article 27, Section 35 A, pg.2.

INCLEMENT WEATHER & EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

It is impossible to cover all potential problems and emergencies, so the following is a general policy reflecting our decision-making process. We must deal with any incident on a case-by-case basis and of course this may change as events unfold. ***In any situation, it is ALWAYS the parent's right to decide what is best for the child.***



1. In the case of an emergency or inclement weather, we will notify parents through the Parent Engagement app. We will send a “newsletter” that comes as an email, as well as a short message that is also sent through the app.
2. The EEC follows Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) policy for closing **SCHOOL AND CHILD CARE** due to inclement weather. In the event of extended county closures, the status of the EEC will be considered by the director.
3. If schools are delayed, we will open **CHILD CARE and SCHOOL** late at **9 am**.
4. If county schools close early, Kindergarten and ADPK will dismiss as soon as possible. Child care operations will be determined by the director.
5. If PGCPS closes for any reason other than inclement weather, the EEC program will operate normally as long as we are not impacted by this problem. (i.e.: bomb threats, localized issues)
6. If outdoor safety is ever in question, all outside activities will be canceled, including field trips. All outside doors will remain closed and locked. People will be allowed in on a case-by-case basis. If the EEC needs to be in a full Lock-Down, no one will be allowed to exit or enter the building. This would include drop off and pick up. Families would be notified immediately.
7. As is our policy at all times, children will only be released to adults listed on the emergency information card, unless we receive a telephone call from the parent stating otherwise. If we do, a picture ID will be required.
8. If necessary, we will take direction from our local civil authority if any unusual situation arises.

Whether the EEC is open or not, parents must evaluate all situations and make the best decision for their family. We will certainly do our best to provide a safe environment for all children.

Payment for Snow/Emergency Days

Tuition payments do not change based on inclement weather and school closing. No refund in tuition will be given.

Faculty and Staff

Our faculty and staff are the reason our school is so successful and our students are so happy. Currently, our faculty and staff have been with St. Matthew's for an average of seven years. They are certified through the Office of Child Care and background checks are processed through the FBI and Maryland's Criminal Justice Information System. Lead teachers in the nursery school and kindergarten classes have at least a bachelor's degree, while teaching assistants have at least their 90-Hour Preschool certification, and many of our child care aides are senior staff qualified by the Office of Child Care and the Maryland State Department of Education. In addition, teachers and aides are certified in First Aid and CPR and complete professional development classes each year. St. Matthew's EEC program is highly respected because our staff is experienced, well-educated and devoted to their students.

<p>Carrie Ahearn, Lead Teacher & K Art Since 2011 B.A., Bowie State University A.A., Anne Arundel Community College Credential: Level 6</p>	<p>Tricia Fasusi, Lead Teacher Since 2022 B.A, Central Bible College Credential: Level 3</p>
<p>Christie Ahearn, Office Manager Since 2021 B.A., Coker University</p>	<p>Lisa Fitzgerald, Aide Since 2005 High Point HS Credential: Level 4</p>
<p>Melanie Alcala, Lead Teacher Since 2007 B.S., Bowie State University Credential: Level 6</p>	<p>Alisha Flachs, Aide Since 2024 B.A., St. Mary's University</p>
<p>Karae Anderson, Aide Since 2024 Parkdale High School</p>	<p>Brenda Galvan Ramirez, Lead Teacher Since 2011 A.A., PGCC Attending PGCC Credential: Level 4+</p>
<p>Christine Armwood, Assistant Teacher Since 2021 90 Hour Credential: Level 3</p>	<p>Laura Goggin, Lead Teacher Since 2018 B.S., University of Maryland Credential: Level 3</p>
<p>Destiny Byndloss-Wong, Aide Since 2024 B.S., Bowie State University</p>	<p>Diamond Graves, Assistant Teacher Since 2016 Attending PGCC Credential: Level 3</p>
<p>Maria Calabrese, Director Since 2013 B.S., Frostburg State University Credential: Level 3</p>	<p>Sheree Hagger, Assistant Teacher Since 2005 B.A., Michigan State University Credential: Level 6</p>
<p>Andrea Christiansen, P.E. Teacher Since 2014 B.A., Boston College Credential: Level 3</p>	<p>Ashley Hall, Aide Since 2022 90 Hour</p>
<p>Sarah Cloud, Aide Since 2024 M.Ed., Loyola University Maryland B.S., East Carolina University</p>	<p>Beth Harder, Lead Teacher Since 2021 B.A., The College of William & Mary Credential: Level 3</p>
<p>Jenna Dunbar, Lead Teacher Since 2021 B.A, Holy Family University Credential: Level 3</p>	<p>Lexi Hockenberry, Business Manager Since 2023 B.S., Penn State</p>

<p>Monay Hubbard, Lead Teacher Since 2022 CDA Credential Credential: Level 2</p>	<p>Tiffany Smith, Lead Teacher & Afternoon Supervisor Since 2016 CDA Credential Credential: Level 4</p>
<p>Esther Hullum, Assistant Teacher Since 2019 University of Abuja CDA Credential Credential: Administrator Level 2</p>	<p>Alyssa Snellings, Assistant Teacher Since 2019 B.A. Franciscan Univ. of Steubenville Credential: Level 1</p>
<p>Tricia Hunte, Aide Since 2022 90 Hour Sheepshead Bay High School</p>	<p>Kristie Sterling, Lead Teacher Since 2019 B.S., Slippery Rock Univ. of Pennsylvania M.S., Wilmington University Credential: Level 6</p>
<p>Leah Jamison, Aide Since 2023 90 Hour</p>	<p>Sarah Truitt, Assistant Teacher Since 2001 A.A., PGCC Credential: Level 4</p>
<p>Claudia Lee, Aide Since 2023 Bowie High School</p>	<p>Laura Vasquez, Assistant Teacher Since 2008 Bowie HS Credential: Level 4</p>
<p>Melinda Lee, Assistant Director Since 2023 M.S., Bowie University</p>	<p>Daja Warren, Aide Since 2024 M.S., Bowie University</p>
<p>Saba Peltier, Lead Teacher Since 2021 CDA Credential Credential: Administrator Level 1</p>	<p>Holly Wilson, Lead Teacher Since 2021 B.A., Towson State Credential: Level 3</p>
<p>Angie Ramirez-Gonzalez, Aide Since 2024 Bowie HS Credential: Level 4</p>	<p>Daria Wolcott, Assistant Teacher Since 2023 90 Hour</p>
<p>Kim Simon, Assistant Teacher Since 2018 Bowie HS Credential: Level 4</p>	<p>Allison Woodard, Assistant Teacher Since 2023 B.S., University of Maryland</p>
<p>Miracle Simon, Assistant Teacher Since 2017 90 Hour Credential: Level 4</p>	<p>Jazmyn Simmons, Aide Since 2023</p>
<p>Laverne Simmons, Assistant Teacher Since 2017 90 Hour</p>	
<p>Colleen Simpson, Lead Teacher Since 2013 M.S., Western Maryland B.S., North Adams State College Credential: Level 6</p>	
<p>Nevaeh Smith, Assistant Teacher Since 2021 Bowie High School Credential: Level 3</p>	

<p>Association of Independent Maryland Schools http://www.aimsmddc.org/ Listing of reliable and accredited private schools</p>	<p>Pointer Ridge Elementary Bowie, MD Phone: 301-390-0220 Fax: 301-390-0281</p>
<p>Bowie Boys and Girls Club Bowie, MD Phone: 301-262-6113</p>	<p>Prince George's County Department of Family Services Camp Springs, MD 20748 Phone: 301-262-8401</p>
<p>Bowie Center for the Performing Arts Bowie, MD Phone: 301-805-6880</p>	
<p>Bowie Community Center Bowie, MD Phone: 301-464-1737</p>	<p>Prince George's County Public Schools Upper Marlboro, MD Phone: 301-952-6000</p>
<p>Bowie Interfaith Food Pantry and Emergency Aid Fund Bowie, MD 20715 301-262-6765</p>	<p>Rockledge Elementary Bowie, MD Phone: 301-805-2720 Fax: 301-805-2718</p>
<p>Chapel Forge Special Education Center Bowie, MD Phone: 301-805-2740</p>	<p>South Bowie Boys and Girls Club Bowie, MD Phone: 301-249-5070</p>
<p>Grace Christian School Bowie, MD Phone: 301-262-0158</p>	<p>South Bowie Community Center Bowie, MD Phone: 301-249-1622</p>
<p>Heather Hills Elementary Bowie, MD Phone: 301-805-2730</p>	<p>Tulip Grove Elementary Bowie, MD Phone: 301-805-2680 Fax: 301-805-6689</p>
<p>High Bridge Elementary Bowie, MD Phone: 301-805-2690 Fax: 301-805-2693</p>	<p>Whitehall Elementary Bowie, MD Phone: 301-805-1000 Fax: 301-805-1006</p>
<p>Holy Trinity Episcopal Day School Bowie, MD Phone: 301-262-5355</p>	<p>Yorktown Elementary Bowie, MD Phone: 301-805-6610 Fax: 301-805-6626</p>
<p>Kenilworth Elementary Bowie, MD Phone: 301-805-6600</p>	<p>PGCPS Child Find Process 301-925-6600 Infants & Toddlers Family Support Contact julia.cowdery@pgcps.org</p>

**LISTING OF
LOCAL SCHOOL AND ACTIVITY
RESOURCES**



St. Matthew's
Early Education Center
14900 Annapolis Road, Bowie, MD 20715
www.stmatthewseec.org