

Blessed Sacrament School's
Little Steps
Preschool
Parent Handbook
2025-2026 School Year



Table of Contents:

- The Little Steps Philosophy.....page 3
 - Catering to the Whole Child
 - Math and Science Through Play
 - Literacy Skills Through Play
 - Handwriting Through Play
- Requirements to Attend.....page 5
- Session Times.....page 5
- Program Fees.....page 5
- No School Days.....page 6
- Illnesses.....page 6
- Snack.....page 7
- Clothing.....page 7
- Messy Play.....page 7
- Conflict Management.....page 8
 - Time out is out
- Risk Taking.....page 9
- Toys from Home.....page 10
 - Treasures and Other Amazing Finds
- What Your Child Should Bring Daily.....page 10
- Conferences.....page 10
- Important Dates.....page 11

The Little Steps Philosophy:

At Little Steps Preschool, child-led play is recognized and honored as the foundation for all academics to build upon. At the forefront is EMPOWERING young children to have “I CAN!!!” confidence. Relationships and the environment at Little Steps are the key to providing young children the opportunities and security they need to lead their learning. We believe strongly that children learn the best by digging in and doing. This is a place where the proof of learning will be on a child’s hands, arms, feet and clothes and in their hearts and minds, rarely in a form that can be carried home in their hands.

Just as a kaleidoscope’s picture blends and emerges, learning and play blends and emerges at Little Steps Preschool.

Just as a kaleidoscope’s picture looks different with every twist, the way each child learns looks different every day. The children lead their learning with their natural, random whims and interests at Little Steps Preschool.

Just as each kaleidoscope picture is unique, so is every child. Little Steps Preschool provides an environment, both physical and emotional, that meets the needs of each individual child and values their uniqueness.

Catering to the Whole Child:

The idea of catering to the whole child means looking at all the ways your child is developing and growing and paying attention to all of them. We can’t focus on one area at the expense of the others.

Currently there is a lot of emphasis placed on making sure children are ready for kindergarten. That focus, however, misinterprets the cognitive development and overlooks the importance of empowering and fostering independence and developing the whole child. When we focus on the whole child, all aspects of development are held in high regard and recognized as a valuable part of kindergarten readiness. Focusing on the whole child also gives children opportunities for practicing life-long skills, skills they will need long after their kindergarten days are over.

Our goal is to assist your child in creating a strong foundation for all future academics to rest upon, not just preparing them for Kindergarten. By paying attention to the whole child, we are giving your child ample opportunity to engineer the strongest, sturdiest foundation possible. This foundation, where minds and bodies are ready, is what ultimately leads to long-term school success.

This strong foundation is not built upon meaningless rote learning, memorization, worksheets, flashcards and drills. A strong foundation is built upon relevant, meaningful and authentic

experiences. Those kinds of experiences are found in child-led play in an open-ended environment like Little Steps.

Can a child learn math and science through child-led play? - Yes!

Play is loaded with opportunities for counting, comparing and contrasting, patterning, measuring and deciphering.

Children are natural scientists. Anytime they discover something new, they will, if given the freedom of time, do it again...and again...and again. Just to see if the results are the same. Take a toddler for example. They are not dropping their cup of milk onto the floor just for fun. They are doing some serious work and testing of a theory. Will that cup drop all the way to the ground every single time they let go of it?

Can children learn literacy skills through child-led play? Of course.

The very base for literacy skills is a simple love of books. Story time is a special time at Little Steps Preschool, and can sometimes happen several times throughout our time together. It all depends on the interest and leadership of the children.

Children need real experiences to attach words to. This is why, at Little Steps, we do REAL. That interest in words will grow, and soon, they will be asking how to “make” that word. From there the interest in letters will be born. A natural, meaningful progression.

We incorporate “mystery words” into our time together. We pick out a word that is of interest to the children, We write that word on an index card and stick it on the wall. We then hide the letters that create that word, and patiently wait. The children are empowered when they find a letter, and even more so when they figure out where that letter goes as they copy the word on the card in order to re-build it.

Children need visual-tracking skills in order to be successful readers SOME DAY. At Little Steps, children have a plethora of opportunities, from pendulum play, to clip line and swinging to help develop those skills.

Can children learn how to write through child-led play?

Most definitely.

We could go on and on about all the ways your child is preparing for writing as they play, but we will sum it up briefly for you. A child begins preparing for writing when they are an infant. When they are able to roll over, they are using their core muscles. Core muscles are...well, for lack of a better word, at the core of handwriting. Our bodies develop from the inside out. So, first the core muscles must be strong and coordinated, then the shoulders and back, then the biceps, then the forearms and then, and only then, can we expect a child to be strong and coordinated with a crayon in hand. Handwriting does NOT begin when we place a writing tool in a child's hand. It begins at infancy.

Prewriting at Little Steps looks like "just" play: with every single movement a child makes: playing with the parachute, climbing up the slide and ladders, standing on hands, pulling/pushing heavy bags or boxes, playing with shaving cream, dumping and pouring, scooping, squeezing and shoveling, running and jumping, painting and yes...writing your child is preparing their bodies for writing. Writing requires strength, coordination and communication from their core all the way out to their fingertips....all of these areas are developed authentically THROUGH MOVEMENT. Children write here when they are intrinsically motivated to do so. That motivation typically comes AFTER their bodies are READY, making the task JOYFUL.

We hold you and your child in the upmost regard. We want nothing but the best for all of the children who share their childhood years with us. That is why we insist on paying attention to the whole child, the whole package...not just certain parts.

We are honored to have you be a part of Little Steps Preschool. We see it as an absolute privilege to be chosen as your child's play school program.

Requirements to Attend:

Little Steps Preschool is a program for children age 3 (by September 1), and children age 4 (by September 1).

Session Time:

Morning classes will run from 9:00-11:30 and afternoon classes from 12:30-3:00. The doors will open at 8:50 and 12:30.

Program Fee:

At the time of registration, we require a \$30.00 registration fee. This fee assures you that your spot is not given away. This fee is non-refundable.

Payment for Little Steps will be set up in one of the following 2 options for the year.

1. Full payment in September for the Year (Cash or Cheque or Online)
2. Monthly Online Payment Set up (Payment from Credit Card or ECheck on the first of every month) (ONLINE ONLY)

Fees

\$78/month for the full 3 Year Old Program

\$120/month for the full 4 Year Old Program

The Affordability Grant provided by the government will pay \$100/month for the 4 year old program leaving parents a fee of \$20.00 per month.

The grant will cover the cost for the 3 year old program. Parents will not have to pay at all for the year.

We DO NOT do any fundraising.

****All fees are subject to change****

No School Days:

Little Steps Preschool follows the Blessed Sacrament School Calendar for holidays and days off school. Holiday Monday classes will be made up on that week's Friday.

Illnesses:

Your child may not attend Little Steps Preschool if he/she has had any of the following symptoms in the past 12 hours:

- 1) a temperature of 100 or higher
- 2) diarrhea
- 3) vomiting
- 4) any sign of chicken pox
- 5) HEAD LICE – a child who has head lice will not be allowed to return without a signed note from a doctor stating ALL NITS ARE GONE.

Extreme caution is advised during the Influenza season or anytime a known illness is spreading around. We encourage parents to error on the side of caution. We take great pride in running a healthy environment for young children to thrive.

No refunds will be given for children who are unable to attend Little Steps Preschool due to illness.

Snack:

Due to the wide variety of dietary preferences and food allergies affecting food choices, parents are responsible for their own child's snack. Please send your child's snack in an easy-to-identify container.

****Please include a water bottle. Empowering your children is the first and foremost goal we have for them. Being able to get one's own drink of water is hugely empowering, vs always waiting on an adult to do it for them.

Clothing:

We highly encourage parents to allow their children the freedom of choosing their clothing, and dressing themselves for their time at Little Steps Preschool. Please provide clothing choices for your child that can get messy without concern, and allow for easy, non-restrictive movement.

This is not the time for skinny jeans and a cute little blazer. 😊 NOTE: pajamas are always welcome...so are costumes! Power to your child!

Messy Play:

Your child will get messy while at Little Steps Preschool, we promise. Even though almost all materials used at Little Steps Preschool are washable, there is always the chance that something could challenge even Martha Stewart's stain-removing ability.

Messy happens without warning at Little Steps Preschool. We do not believe in stopping the moment to throw a cumbersome protective shirt over a child's head. The simple act of protecting clothing could cause a child to become timid and decide against trying something new.

When choosing your child's clothing choices, keep the following in mind: Dress for mess equals less stress. 😊

Making a mess taps into children's innate curiosity about the world around them and their strong desire to explore and find out more. Messy play is characterized by risk taking, trying new things, building confidence and experimenting. Experiences like this strengthen a child's interest in learning more. We believe a messy child is an engaged child. Messy play is important to the development of the whole child and that is why we support it at Little Steps Preschool. A messy child signifies a child that was so caught up in the task at hand, there was no time left to worry about the mess being made. Children often get lost in their imagination

when engaged in messy play...imagination is the root of solving problems. Imagination is highly respected and valued here, therefore...bring on the messy play!

If your child's clothing gets stained at school, you have your first official school outfit. We don't care if they wear it every single day. We care more that your child is truly free to explore as they see fit in clothing they do not need to worry about.

Play is also emotionally messy. Children will be allowed to explore their emotions while at Little Steps. Play involves opportunities for children to fail, struggle, experience disappointment, be patient and all sorts of emotionally messy things. Children need to know that those feelings are okay, and they need to learn how to manage life's less-than-perfect moments in socially acceptable ways. Executive function is also developed through this type of "messy", child-led play. Executive function involves things like: decision making, impulse control, switching between tasks, planning and using information. Executive function is an indicator of school readiness.

Conflict Management:

It is our belief that children need opportunities to handle conflict. Conflict is not avoided here, it is welcomed.

When conflict arises, we will position ourselves in a way that we can closely observe, and coach as needed. For the most part, we let children explore different ways of NON-VIOLENT conflict resolution. Trial and error is the best way for a young child to learn...even in social situations.

When a child comes to us and tattles on another child, we will first thank them for telling us. We will remind them to never be afraid to let an adult know when they have been hurt (physically or emotionally). We will remind them that it is their problem to solve. We will then empower them with the skills/words they need at that moment, until that child can fly on their own. In a nutshell: children are empowered with ownership at Little Steps, even owning conflicts and how to manage them.

For example:

Bobby takes a toy away from Helen.

Helen comes and tattles.

After thanking Helen for telling us, we would hand the problem back to her. We would then coach only as much as needed as our goal here is to empower young children. We would suggest she uses the words

“Please give me that toy back, I am still playing with it.” Depending on where Helen’s conflict handling skills are, we may even add to that “I will tell you when I am finished and then you can have your turn.”

Discipline Policy:

Our “discipline policy” looks a bit different than what you may be expecting. Our policy is based on:

Fostering relationships
Empowering autonomy
Giving ownership
Modeling respect
Meeting needs

We have found when these five things are at the forefront, there is truly no need for any sort of disciplining.

Risk Taking:

Risk taking is encouraged at Little Steps Preschool. Risk looks different to each child, and each child’s uniqueness will be respected and the development of the whole child taken into consideration as each risky moment is assessed and managed by the child. Let’s face it, life is full of risk. The skill of risk assessment is a valuable, life-long skill. We haven’t met a child who doesn’t have the goal of building a tower to the ceiling. It’s important to know how to do that safely.

- **What does risk look like:**

For some children, risk is walking with scissors, for another, it is climbing up the slide or the ladder. Children’s risk taking will be supported in order to give them the valuable life-long skill of risk assessment and management.

- **Solving Problems Can Involve Risk:**

Children have permission to stand on a chair or even the ladder in order to solve a problem. The pre-requisite? Telling us their plan. We encourage planning ahead when it comes to taking risk. When a child is planning on stepping on a chair in order to reach something, they know they must let us know (this is part of the structure of Little Steps Preschool). We will then say “What is your plan?” After hearing their plan (which reassures us that they have thought this through and are not acting on impulse...which, helps with a child’s development of self-control and self-regulation), we will then approve and empowered they will be!

Toys from Home:

If your child would like to bring a toy from home, that is fine. Please know that there is no guarantee that toy will return in the same condition it arrived. It will be your child's responsibility, not mine, to take care of it.

We want your child to know we are interested in hearing about what is special to them, so sometimes, just a quick show and tell moment is what your child really desires, then the toy can go safely back to the car with you.

There is no one-size-fits-all way to handle this situation, so just know we are fine with toys coming from home, and depending on each unique situation, how we will manage whether that toy stays or not will vary.

Treasures and Other Amazing Finds:

We encourage children to bring discoveries to Little Steps. If they see a bird nest, take a picture and bring it in or text it to us. If they find an unusual leaf, pick it up, save it and bring it in. If they find the most amazing rock in the entire world...bring it in! Discoveries of every kind are honored and respected here. We highly encourage sharing them!!

What Your Child Should Bring Daily:

Your child should carry a full size backpack to Little Steps every day. Try as hard as you can to let them own this responsibility. In their backpack there should be:

A pair of:

Undies, socks, pants and a few shirts (The amount of extra clothes depends on your child's sensory needs, and needs to change clothing). It should be no surprise to you that the children will own this process as well. If they feel the need to change clothing, that decision will be supported, with as much of the process owned by your child as possible.

A water bottle and a pair of inside shoes is also required.

Conferences:

A conference may be scheduled at any time by either ourselves or the parent. At the forefront of this program is your child's well-being. If, at any time, you have concerns regarding your child's development, their participation at Little Steps Preschool, or just want to hear us praise your child, feel free to schedule a conference time.

If we feel, at any time, that we are struggling to meet your child's needs at Little Steps Preschool, we will schedule a conference with you. During that conference, we will collaborate

to come up with some solutions to whatever situation has arisen. We look at parents as partners. We are in this together. We take parent suggestions very seriously and to heart.

Little Steps Open House

Thursday, September 4, 2025*

We would like to give your child an opportunity to come and check out the classroom and meet the teachers before the first day of school so they are more comfortable when the big day comes. An email will be sent out with more information closer to the date.

Classes Begin

3 Year Old Class on Mon. Sept. 8/25*
(Monday Morning 9 AM - 11:30 AM)

3 Year Old Class on Wed. Sept 10/25*
(Wednesday Morning 9 AM – 11:30 AM)

4 Year Old Class on Wed. Sept. 8/25*
(Monday/Wednesday Afternoon 12:30 PM – 3:00 PM)

4 Year Old Class on Tues. Sept. 9/25*
(Tuesday/Thursday Morning 9 AM – 11:30 AM)

4 Year Old Class on Tues. Sept. 9/25*
(Tuesday/Thursday Afternoon 12:30 PM – 3:00 PM)

****Note about long weekends: If your class is on a Monday and it's a long weekend, your class will be made up on that Friday.**

****Last week of classes will be June 8-11, 2026****

******Please note that dates are tentative and may change******