



## Newsletter St. Matthew's Lutheran Day School

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July, 2009

Dear Parents,

Welcome to St. Matthew's Lutheran Day School!

If you're new to St. Matthew's this letter is full of information you'll need to know. If you are a returning family, this year will still be "new" for your child – new teacher, new classmates, and new experiences to match growing interests and abilities. Take a few moments to refresh your memory, learn about any changes (including the new extended day/"lunch bunch" options), and update your calendar. The first important date is **August 3<sup>rd</sup>**.

If you are a first-time preschool parent, you may wonder what you might do to get your child "ready." Actually, we think schools and teachers need to do the getting ready, but a few things may ease your child's way. Children thrive when there's a routine at home with a bedtime that affords them ample rest. The preschool day follows a "daily routine" that lets everyone know the plan and their part in it. If your child is used to something like a "bath-story-bedtime" ritual, school should be an easy transition. Organize your mornings to be unhurried, with enough time for a good breakfast and time to use the bathroom "one more time" before leaving the house.

A child who is used to listening to and following parents' directions will also fit in easily, though we expect to teach and guide and remind as the year goes on. As children grow and learn, new challenges can come along, both for them and those who care for them; growth isn't always smooth sailing. Fortunately children are interested in getting bigger and BIGGER, better and BETTER, and teachers provide the opportunities and guidance needed for that to happen. One positive step is to minimize "screen time" of any kind, and eliminate programs that "script" inappropriate play from your child's viewing options.

Prepare for unhurried mornings with a good breakfast and enough time to use the bathroom "one more time" before school. Take time to talk about what will be coming up during the school day and teach the "good greeting words" like "good morning," or "hello" that your child will use to greet teachers and friends.

If you've chosen St. Matthew's you know that the children learn in a warm, supportive, center-based social classroom environment. According to brain research it's the best learning environment you could provide. The classroom world that the children experience will be a microcosm of the world that you and I live and work in (or hope to). Organized around a predictable daily routine (a model for their growing ability to plan and organize) and with instruction and encouragement from caring teachers, children learn: to take initiative (choose and engage in an interesting center), extend focused attention, take a risk and succeed or fail without consequence, practice persistence (in pursuing a task independently and cooperatively), develop self-control and manage emotions, ask for help when needed, and so much more.

Within a social setting, the "academic" tools of our society are taught – beginning literacy (speaking, listening, writing & reading) foundational concepts of mathematics, and processes of science. The teachers incorporate activities within the order and purposes of the daily routine to stimulate, inform and support growth in these areas. The classroom's social structure provides real-life reasons to read, to write, to count and compare. Children have ample opportunity to acquire and use academic tools as part of becoming successful school girls and boys.

The playground is our outdoor classroom. Outdoor play strengthens children physically and emotionally. “Living large” on the playground – running, jumping, rolling, climbing –stretches and refines bodies and pumps up confidence and courage. We try to go outside everyday in all sorts of weather – boots, a raincoat, and a warm jacket should be on your shopping list for the fall.

We’re in this together! Newsletters and notes will come home regularly in your child’s tote to let you know what’s going on, and what’s coming up. It is important that you read them, write down the important dates, and respond as requested. *School is a family affair.* If this is your first child to go to school, consider this as your year to “train” to be a successful school mom/dad/family. Good beginnings build a solid foundation for later success. The life-lessons we teach at school and that you teach, coach, and model at home will color many futures as our preschoolers grow to become students, workers, husbands, wives, dads, moms, and friends. It’s worth our time, attention, and effort. . . . **Now the news:**

### Dates and Deadlines

By **August 3<sup>rd</sup>**, several things are due:

1. May 2010 tuition pre-payment,
2. \$40 activity fee,
3. Signed Payment Contract

May’s tuition must be received by the time class lists are finalized to guarantee your space. If your preschool plans have changed, call today.

**September 2009 tuition due September 1<sup>st</sup>**

**School begins on September 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup>**

### Tuition Fees for 2009-2010

T/Th	9:00 – 11:45	- \$130/month
MWF	9:00 - 11:45	- \$194/month
MTWTh	9:00 - 11:45	- \$260/month
MWF	12:30 – 3:00	- \$175/month
MTWTh	12:30 – 3:00	- \$235/month

The monthly fee is 1/9th the annual tuition. It is not tied to the number of days in a given month or days your child is present. You may pay in larger increments (2, 3 or 4 payments), just note the months covered by the check. Use the enclosed payment labels whether you mail or send payment in your child’s tote. Write your child’s first name on the check’s memo line.

### Forms

**Registration card** – Call the office to update information (phone numbers, e-mail address, emergency contacts) as changes occur.

**Proof of Identity** – You must present the original copy of your child’s birth certificate or passport before or within 5 days of school’s beginning.

**Physical Form** – The state requires a physician’s signature verifying immunizations before your child begins school. Forms are available in our

office or at [www.dayschool.stmatthews.us](http://www.dayschool.stmatthews.us).

**Parental Consent Form** - (enclosed) Detailing information needed to secure emergency care and includes permission for your child’s participation in announced field trips. Return by August 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Developmental History** - (enclosed) Complete and return by August 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Permission to administer medication** -If your child requires medication during school, written permission from both physician and parent is required. Call the office to inquire about the procedures involved.

### Getting started

Three events usher in the new school year: **home visits**, a **classroom visit**, and **“beginning days.”** These opportunities go a long way toward assuring that your child will feel confident and secure from the start. Read on:

### Home Visits

We like your child to get acquainted with the teacher on his/her home turf. When your teacher comes to visit, she will bring something from her classroom (like a book or puzzle) a nametag to wear on the first day, and choices of a “letter link” matching the initial sound of your child’s first name.

To help the visit succeed, please prepare for the teacher’s arrival. Enclosed you’ll find a plastic bag. Involve your child in choosing a few photos or mementos of summer activities or things your child enjoys– an acorn from a walk together, a shell from the beach, a ticket stub from the circus, a photo of a visit to Grandma, etc. Your child can show these items to the teacher during her visit. In addition to being a

conversation starter, they will give the teacher clues to your child's interests and experiences.

Choose a place for the visit where your child will feel comfortable . . . and make sure your child is ready and at home. It sounds silly, but sometimes a child has to be "rounded up" or pulled away from friends, the TV or the computer. The teacher becomes an unwelcome intruder – not a good beginning.

This is a visit with your child, so please stay in the background if possible, and ask siblings and friends to excuse themselves, too. If you have specific questions or information to convey about your child, please arrange to talk later by phone. If you have questions about curriculum or school policy, call me.

Teachers will be scheduling home visits from August 25<sup>th</sup> through September 11<sup>th</sup>. If you will be out of town during that time, drop us a note or call the office. We'll tell the teacher, so she can schedule accordingly.

As you can imagine, visiting a class or two of children is a HUGE task. Teachers schedule visits by neighborhoods, to shorten drives between calls. Please arrange your schedule to accommodate the teacher. If she seems reluctant to stay and chat when her 10-minute visit is over, please understand that someone in the next block may be waiting.

If your child is in childcare, the teacher can visit at the sitter's. We know that parents are eager to meet the teacher, so we'll try to give you enough lead-time to arrange to be home. If that doesn't work, there will be other chances for you. Giving the child an opportunity to meet the teacher is the goal. (Teachers do not visit during evening or weekends, and may ask you to bring your child to visit her in the classroom if you live out of the immediate Lake Ridge/Dale City/Manassas/ Montclair area.)

A note in closing: Children are bright little people. They're learning all they can, all the time. When you introduce or speak about your child to the teacher within his hearing, make sure your words teach him who and what you want him to be. Your description gradually informs who he is: "He's shy." "She's a terror! He won't listen." "I know she'll cry." Instead, by your words and actions, expect and support your child

to be the best he can be in every situation.

Gradually with your coaching and

encouragement, those words will come true.

(Confide concerns privately. We'll work on them together.)

### **Classroom Visit**

To help your child feel more comfortable, plan to visit the classroom on September 9<sup>th</sup> (Morning 3 & 4 day classes), 10<sup>th</sup> (2 day classes), or 11<sup>th</sup> (Afternoon classes). The teachers will not be present, so you and your child can look, find, and get familiar with the school setting together. Other children and parents from your child's class will be visiting at the same time. (Perhaps you'll find a carpool partner!) Plan a short stay - about 20 – 30 minutes. In addition to locating the classroom, playing and cleaning up, finding the bathrooms, and water fountain, parents of boys might "introduce" the urinal. Boys may use either the commode or urinal, but the latter is new to some. The playground will be closed. (We save it as a first day of school treat!)

### **Beginning Days**

Your child's first day at school will be with only half the class present and will last only 1½ hours. Your teacher will tell you whether your child will attend the first or second "beginning day" when she calls to schedule your child's home visit. Check the calendar at the end of this letter for beginning dates.

This gradual introduction helps ensure that the first days will be easy for children to manage, making the first impression of school a positive one. Although some children are ready to dive right in, many are tentative. Even for returning students, there is a new routine, new teachers, and new children. It's an exciting day.

### **"Potty Proficiency"**

Children must be toilet trained before they begin school. We expect accidents now and then, and we expect to have to encourage some children to wipe independently, but your child should be more reliable than not. Begin now to teach your child to manage their clothes and clean up independently. If your child uses a potty-chair, help him/her get used to using the adult toilet at home.

Avoid "Pull-ups." They delay potty training by eliminating that uncomfortable WET feeling.

We would prefer changing a few wet pants and socks in the beginning of the year, to having to call you to come in to change diapers throughout the year. Better to clear your schedule, put your child in regular underwear, and watch closely. When kids get to school, they find that trooping to the bathroom with their buddies is way cool! Everybody does it!

Call if you have a concern. We can be flexible if you've almost accomplished your goal – but don't tell your child that. Try, try, try. Remember, you have until mid-September.

### **Carpools**

For the first few days, you will walk your child to and from the classroom. On the first day, we'll send home a list of children attending school with your child. Use it to contact people in your neighborhood with whom to carpool. (A great way to save on gas!)

If you want addresses for carpooling before then, you may come in to look at preliminary lists. We will also have lists to see at September's Classroom Visit.

We know that your primary concern is the safety and comfort of your child. Plan a get-together with carpool partners so the children can meet and the adults can make a schedule and agree on safety rules. Some parents divide up by driving days, some split arrival and dismissal.

We'll need a list of your carpool riders by September 21<sup>st</sup> (3, & 4-day classes) or by September 24<sup>th</sup> (2-day classes) We will assign your number, send home the card and begin the carpool routine on the **23<sup>rd</sup>** (MWF & MTWF), and **29<sup>th</sup>** (T/Th). (Procedures for carpooling accompany this letter.)

If you drive alone we still call you a carpool and expect that you will take your turn in line at arrival and departure. If you walk, you'll wait on the sidewalk for a teacher to usher the child in or out. (No fair parking at the apartments and walking over to avoid the line. Last year a child and mom were almost hit by a mom coming in, not expecting another mom to be chasing a child across the lot.) The carpool line is safer for all concerned.

### **For your child's safety**

**Send in a note if your child is to ride home with someone other than you or a regular**

**carpool driver.**

**Put away your cell phone when driving in and out of the parking lot and when your child is getting in or out of your car. Give your attention to the carpool helpers and your preschooler(s).**

**Never drop off your child at the sidewalk or the front door. The class may be on the playground, leaving the classroom empty and your child alone, frightened and unsupervised.**

**Keep us informed of changes in child care arrangements and emergency contact numbers. Correct phone numbers are critical in an emergency.**

### **Fall Orientation**

Shortly after school begins, you will receive an invitation (via newsletter) to your teacher's Fall Orientation night. After a short general session, you will visit your child's room. Your teacher will share her goals, and will have information and schedules for parent participation in the classroom. (Please arrange child care for your preschooler.)

### **Snacks**

Everyone needs a lunch box (no backpack) in which to carry a snack. Guide your child's choice of a standard size, hard plastic lunch box. This style opens flat, the lid providing a tray in which the drink cup can set securely.

Make sure your child can open the lunchbox independently. If you buy one that's tricky or a bit stiff, limber it up by serving lunch or snack in it this summer, or let your child carry his treasures around in it before school starts. She'll get the knack of manipulating it, and the stiff parts will loosen up. (One mom replaced the latch with a Velcro tab.)

Send **NO** drink, but do send in either the cup from the thermos or a short (not sippy) plastic cup for water. The children delight in pouring their own water at snack. (A good place to help your child practice pouring is on the open door of the dishwasher.)

**Print your child's name prominently on both cup and lunchbox – to provide your child a chance to read his/her name, and distinguish between look alikes.**

Appropriate snacks are small, **nutritious**,

neat, and easy to manage independently. Good choices for picnic style eating are: grapes, ½ a banana, apple wedges, ½ a sandwich, a few crackers, etc. Save fruit cups, applesauce, yogurt, Snackables, fruit roll-ups, cakes, and candy for after-school snacks.

If a particular snack proves to be a problem, or if you're sending too much, your teacher will let you know. Snack time is a time for refreshment, and friendly conversation. Fussing with food or cleaning up after it gets in the way of more important business.

We wash our hands before eating. Each child must bring an anti-bacterial towelette daily. Some moms pack the wet wipe in a plastic bag or include a small plastic wet-wipes case. Children find them easier to handle than the individually packaged kind.

### **Dress for Success**

If you buy only one thing for school, make it sneakers. Rubber soled shoes are essential for top performance on the playground. Unstable or slick soled shoes undermine children's efforts to climb, balance, and run swiftly. Most injuries on the playground are directly attributable to improper foot gear. Keep leather soled party shoes (slippery), sandals (mulch catchers), or cowboy boots ("OUCH! You *stepped* on me!") at home.

When you buy school clothes, choose work clothes. We move, we paint, we play in the sand, climb over logs, walk through the woods, and sit on the floor. When we're at our best, we're up to our elbows in whatever we're doing. We all feel bad if something "precious" gets a spot or a splash on it. It puts a damper on the good things that are happening and discourages your child from participating fully.

### **"Let ME try!"**

Growing toward independence is one of the most important preschool tasks. Learning to see oneself as capable requires the time, attention, and opportunities provided by caring adults. As the summer progresses, help your child "get ready" for school by providing TIME and a supportive "YOU can do it!" attitude. Make success possible by choosing clothes that your child can manage easily. Help your child practice such things as wiping up and pulling up after bathrooming, fastening clothes, and releasing and

fastening the seatbelt.

Your child's self-esteem grows as she masters these self-help skills.

### **Adjustments**

Although home visits, the classroom visit, and shortened beginning days make adjustment easier, a few children feel uncomfortable being left at school. If you think you should stay, you are welcome to. We can work toward your "graduation" at a pace that suits your child's needs. However, we have found that with most children, the best practice is to say a confident good-bye and leave. Crying, if there is any, is usually over quickly. We can call you if we think you should return early. If the problem persists, we will work with you to help your child feel secure. (Children who are reluctant to come to school often do better riding in a carpool. They separate from mom at home and arrive at school happily with their carpool friends.)

### **Until Then . . .**

Continue to talk casually and confidently about school's beginning. Assure your child that St. Matthew's is a safe, comfortable place, with caring adults, children to play with, and fun and interesting things to do.

Neither "play" nor "fun" are insignificant or frivolous aspects of the curriculum. When young children are learning best, they are enthused, engaged, eager, focused - talking and laughing as they work. Your child can expect to have fun playing and learning at St. Matthew's.

As you can gather from the schedules and procedures, forms and visits, we try to make the transition from home to school as seamless as possible. Predictable routines and thoughtful limits characterize the school day. They are a source of both comfort and support to children, enabling them to feel safe and confident, and to use their energy for growth and learning in just and loving ways.

Parents help when they have high but reasonable expectations for their children's behavior, a balance of challenge and nurture. As a bonus, their children are more likely to be well adjusted and higher achieving than the children of parents whose style is either rigid or permissive.

If you need to work harder or differently to

provide boundaries for yourself and your family, I recommend Boundaries with Kids, by Cloud and Townsend, or 1-2-3 Magic by Thomas Phelan, or The Blessing of a Skinned Knee by Wendy Mogel. They're worth reading.

### **Totes**

**Children will receive a tote on the first day of school.** This will be carried to and from school each day – holding the snack box, notes or checks from home to school, and on the return trip, artwork and notes from school to home. **If you have a tote from last year, please wash it up and give it to your teacher when she visits.**

### **T-shirts**

St. Matthew's T-shirts will be available at the Open House. They are \$10.00 and come in sizes XS (4 -6) S (6-8), M (10-12). Adult sizes are \$12.00. We wear them on field trips and the first day of each month during the year. If you don't have one, plan to buy one at the Open House. (Sweatshirts can be ordered, too.)

### **Pictures**

Your teacher will need two snapshots or other photos of your child. Give them to her when she visits. These will be used on your child's nametags, and may not be returned. (Aim for about a 2"x2" photo of the face.)

Also, help your child choose family pictures to fill the album page that your teacher will bring to the home visit. Photos may be of your home, family, pets, vacations, whatever your child would like to have on his/her pages in the class photo album. Talk about them and print captions under each, so the class can know who is pictured and read about what is going on. It's your child's personal history.

Bring the completed album page to school on the first day. This album page will be returned at the end of school. It's the most popular book in the library center!

**School pictures** will be taken on October 22 & 23. Our photographers are great and will have photos back in plenty of time for Christmas giving. Siblings are welcome, too, on the 22nd.

**Family Pumpkin Patch Trip** is scheduled for October 7. It's a great opportunity to meet other children and families in your child's class.

**Lunch Bunch.** We'll offer families the

option of enrolling their child in a 2 hour extended day "Lunch Bunch" program beginning in October. Children attending 3 or 4 days/week can bring a lunch and stay until 1:30 on Thursday or Friday. There will be time for an extra measure of play inside and out, story, and more. We may be able to include children attending two days/week & invite 3 afternoons/week children to come early one day/week, but that will depend on enrollment and interest. If you are interested in participating (morning or afternoon) or want more information, e-mail [stmatthews@stmatthews.us](mailto:stmatthews@stmatthews.us) (subject line - "lunch bunch") The children love it; it gives mom some extra time, and gives the children a taste of a little longer day and lunch at school (big stuff!).

**A Few Openings.** We have a few openings remaining for classes in the fall. If you have friends, family, or new neighbors with preschoolers, please invite them to call or go to the website for information.  
[www.dayschool.stmatthews.us](http://www.dayschool.stmatthews.us).

**ARE YOU STILL WITH ME?** Thanks for staying with this long letter. You are now "in the know!" Most newsletters are MUCH shorter than this one. Events, requests, reminders, and changes in plans will come your way in monthly teacher's newsletters and periodic newsletters from me, carrying all-school news and information. They are also posted on the web.

Please call me if you have any questions or concerns. We want your child to have a wonderful experience with us, and that takes all of us working together - sharing questions, information, time and talents, trusting and respecting one another. This detailed newsletter attempts to anticipate and answer many questions, but if you have others, or if something is unclear, please speak to me.

Your next "official" contacts from us will be a letter in August announcing your child's class assignment, and then a call from your teacher to arrange her visit.

***See you in September!***

Mary-Catherine Deadman, Ph.D.  
Director

## 2009-10 Preliminary Calendar

Watch newsletters and notes for additions and changes if they prove necessary.

AUGUST	3	<b>May 2010 Tuition, Activity Fee and some forms due</b> (see pg 2)	
	25	Letter mailed announcing child's teacher & assistant teacher	
	28	Home Visits Begin	
SEPTEMBER	1	September tuition due	
	9	<b>Classroom visit</b> Morning 3 & 4-day classes - 9:30-12:00	
	10	<b>Classroom visit</b> for 2-day classes - 9:30-12:00	
	11	<b>Classroom visit</b> Afternoon classes - 9:30-12:00	
	14	MWF & MTWTh children meet - 1 <sup>st</sup> ½ of the class 9:00- <b>10:45</b> (AM classes); 12:30- <b>2:00</b> (PM)	
	15	T/Th classes meet – 1 <sup>st</sup> ½ of the class, 9:00- <b>10:45</b> MTWTh children meet - 2 <sup>nd</sup> ½ of the class, 9:00- <b>10:45</b> , 12:30- <b>2:00</b>	
	16	MWF children meet - 2 <sup>nd</sup> ½ of the class 9:00- <b>10:45</b> (AM classes) 12:30- <b>2:00</b> (PM) MTWTh-whole class meets 9:15- <b>11:45</b> , 12:30- <b>3:00</b> (begin regular schedule)	
	17	T/Th classes meet – 2 <sup>nd</sup> ½ of the class, 9:15- <b>10:45</b>	
	18	<b>MWF – all begin regular schedule</b> ), 9:00- <b>11:45</b> or 12:30- <b>3:00</b>	
	21	MWF & Pre-K CARPOOL LISTS DUE -	
	22	<b>T/Th</b> whole class meets 9:00- <b>10:45</b> <b>Carpooling begins</b> for <b>AFTERNOON</b> 4-day class	
	23	<b>Carpooling begins</b> for all 3-day & 4-day AM classes	
	24	All T/Th classes regular hours, 9:00- <b>11:45</b> <b>Tu/Th CARPOOL LISTS DUE</b>	
	29	Carpooling begins for T/Th classes	
	OCTOBER	7	<i>Pumpkin Patch <u>family</u> outing with classmates</i>
		12	Teacher's Inservice – No School
		22/23	School Pictures during class (Siblings on Thursday afternoon)
31		Halloween Parade MWF Classes (4-day classes invited)	
NOVEMBER	11	Veterans Day – No School	
	21	Nat'l Assoc. for the Ed. of Young Children – Conference – No School	
	24/25	Grandparents Day – Invite <u>your</u> parents to join their preschool grandchild at school for a reception, classroom visit, and sing-along	
	26/27	Thanksgiving Holiday – No School	
DECEMBER	22	Teacher In-service Day – No School	
	23-31	Christmas Holiday – No School	
JANUARY	4	School resumes	
	18	Martin Luther King Birthday – No School	
	28/29	Parent-Teacher Conferences	
FEBRUARY	15	Presidents' Day Holiday – No School	
	22	Registration opens to Day School families	
MARCH	1	Registration opens to Community Teacher Inservice – No School ( <i>this date subject to change</i> )	
	29-4/5	Easter Holiday through April 5 – <u>School Resumes April 6</u>	
MAY	3	SummerScience applications due	
	6-7	SummerScience acceptance notes sent home	
	24/25	Last days of classes (MTWTh ends May 24)	
	26/27	Parent-Teacher Conferences	

JUNE

2-15

SummerScience begins SummerScience ends June 15