
You cannot educate children without caring for children. You cannot care for children without educating them. They are inextricably linked. Kate Gallagher Director of research and evaluation at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska

Early Learning News

109 York St.; Gettysburg, PA 17325 (717)-334-7171 childcare@stjamesgettysburg.org

August 2021

In one of the wealthiest countries in the world, the United States is ranked 35th out of 37 countries in providing funding for Early Childhood.

Dear Friends & Families,

During the week of July 12, 2021, PBS ran a special, "Raising the Future: America's Child Care Dilemma" during their 6:00 p.m. news hour. Some of the issues addressed are not only sad but issues I have lived with my entire career. According to reporter, Cat Wise, "America's fragile child care system was thrust into the national spotlight last year. It literally took a pandemic for the federal government to acknowledge this dilemma that most of us has been living with our entire lives." We are raising our children with a broken system. To sum it up, we have no system to support working families.

The pandemic acknowledged that the Early Childhood workforce is one of the lowest paid professions in the nation. The pandemic acknowledged that because of the lack of government funding, the cost of child care is not affordable. Some families pay more for child care than they do for rent or a mortgage. The pandemic acknowledged that access to quality Early Childhood Education is difficult to secure.

"Budgets are reflections of values. If we are directing large sums of money to subsidize parents parenting less, that is a very important statement to be making," according to researcher and author Kathy Stevens. To sum it up, we have no system to support working families, programs, or staff.

A lifeline is finally being thrown our way. The government has provided temporary funding to support programs and help families. Funds will be used for program improvements, to support staff salaries and benefits and maintain or improve quality. The question remains, can this be sustained in the future without continued support.

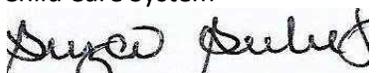
Throughout the most challenging time in my career, the Governance committee support has been exceptional. Recruiting and retaining staff became priority as we saw community staffing shortages. The CARES funding, we have received has largely been used to increase staff salaries and provide them with bonuses for retention as well as reduce the loss of income last year due to closures and reduced enrollment. I feel fortunate that the church, congregation, and committee's budget reflects the value that our children are a priority.

So, throughout a difficult year, something positive is on the horizon. Early Childhood is in the spotlight and budgets (although temporary) are beginning to reflect this. Although the struggle is not over, we are at least gaining respect, recognition, and appreciation. We can only hope that the future will be brighter as children finally become a national priority.

If you missed any of the reports and would like to see them, go to:

[The market controls child care costs in the U.S. Can that be changed? | PBS NewsHour](#)

or search: PBS NewsHour Series "Raising the Future: America's Child Care Dilemma" Explores the Country's Broken Child Care System



The end of summer is fast approaching, and a new school year is about to begin. So much of last year was spent adjusting and adapting to all the policies and procedures regarding Covid19. It appears this year, we are readjusting to what was life pre – pandemic. With many of the mandates being lifted, it is left up to individual organizations to readapt, rewrite and adjust to what will be more normal than the past year.

During the week of July 12, 2021, I had various meetings with members of Governance and the Covid Task Force regarding the use of mask. As a result, some of our policies and procedures are changing. However, it was not changed without an abundance of hesitation to do so. In our final discussions:

New policies and guidance:

- Masks will no longer be required indoors. If an adult who is unvaccinated is closer than three feet to a child for more than 15 minutes, a mask should be required. Staff will still be required to have a mask, however, will not have to wear them at all times.
- **Masks will be required if someone is experiencing symptoms of illness, have been exposed to Covid19.**
- Masks will be required if Adams County returns to High Risk for spread as determined by the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

Things that will remain unchanged:

- Cubbies will remain in the hallway.
- Exclusion criteria for fevers remain the same. Children will not be allowed to return until after 72 hours, fever free, without medication.
- Parents will continue to be greeted at the doorway instead of coming into the classroom.
- Inside shoes are still required.
- Sign in/out Sheets will remain in the hallway.

Covid Task Force made this statement:

“The St. James COVID-19 Task Force Committee (“this Committee”) believes that the health and safety of St. James Early Learning Center (“ELC”) students, staff and their families is of paramount importance. Vaccination rates in our community remain low. As the highly contagious “Delta Variant” of COVID-19 becomes more prevalent, communities around the country, particularly those with low vaccination rates, are experiencing a rapid resurgence in COVID-19 cases. Hospitals in these communities are reporting an increase in the number of young people, including children, experiencing severe illness requiring hospitalization. Almost all patients experiencing severe illness are unvaccinated.

The ELC serves a population (children under 12 years of age) which is not yet eligible for vaccination against COVID-19. Consistent with current [CDC guidance](#), the best practice is for all students (age 2 or older), staff, parents and others to wear masks while inside the ELC facility, regardless of vaccination status, until such time as COVID-19 vaccinations are approved for, and available to, children of all ages. Although this Committee accepts the decision of the Governance Committee, ELC staff should reinstate the universal mask requirement at the earliest sign of a resurgence of COVID-19 cases in our community.”

Other Reminders:

- Laundry will be done by individual families, not the staff of St. James. Give a huge shout out to the infant staff who endured this burden for a year without compliant.
- We will continue to monitor the health of the children on an as needed basis.
- Infants and Toddlers will open and close in 102 B and Preschool, PK and KC will open and close in 103 combining the different age groups. Combined opening will occur from 6:30 a.m. - 7:00 a.m. Combined closing will occur from 5:00 – 5:30 p.m.
- Breakfast will continue to be served in each classroom beginning at 7:00 a.m. each day.
- Birthday treats no longer need to be individually wrapped.

Dates to Remember:

- **Monday, August 9, 2021** – Last day to give notice if your child is withdrawing for the school year.
- **Monday, August 23, 2021** – First day of School
- **Monday, August 23, 2021** – Fall Transitions Begin
- **Monday, September 6, 2021** – Labor Day – Center Closed