



The Growing Place School

Preschool Program



**536 Coral Way
Coral Gables, FL 33134**

**www.thegrowingplace.school
(305) 446-0846**

Welcome to TGPS!

About Our School

The Growing Place School is a faith-based school serving children ages one through 5th grade.

Established in 1963 as a ministry of the church, our school is founded on Christian beliefs, values, and traditions. We prioritize community and family involvement, and take great pride in providing well-rounded, robust education in a nurturing, innovative and welcoming environment. We are an accredited program through the Florida Council of Independent Schools (FCIS), the Christian Preschool Association (CPA) and a Gold Seal Quality Care recipient from the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF). We are also active members of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), Dream in Green, and The Fairchild Challenge. The Growing Place School welcomes families from all backgrounds, faiths, ethnicities, and nationalities as we value being part of a culturally diverse community.

Our experienced teaching team celebrates each child's unique individuality, supports collaboration between home and school, is committed to the field of education, participates in professional development, and strives for excellence in providing a meaningful, creative, and spiritual learning experience for your child.

With low child-to-teacher ratios, small class sizes, an active parent-teacher organization, and several community outreach opportunities, we are confident that you and your family will feel at home at our school as we partner together in providing your child with the best educational experience.



Why choose TGPS for your child?

- **Our Toddler Program** is rooted in the belief that young children learn and grow in their development through purposeful play and meaningful classroom experiences that are rich in creative expression and exploration. With a strong focus on predictable routines; warm, loving and nurturing relationships with trusted caregivers; self-help skills; and supporting development in language, physical, cognitive and social emotional domains – your toddler will acquire the skills to become a confident and inquisitive learner.
- **Our Preschool Program** is geared towards active classroom participation, hands-on learning, and the belief that preschool children are driven by the need to discover and investigate as they learn about the world around them. Its curriculum supports the whole child, with a strong focus on developing readiness skills in early writing, reading, math, social studies, science, and the arts. Learning becomes meaningful, and motivates and supports independence and self-reliance in your child.
- **Our Lamar Louise Curry Elementary Program** offers Kindergarten through 5th grade. Our elementary school is a robust program with innovative educational approaches in place to support a strong academic program and a purposeful commitment to the arts, the environment and culture. We are committed to educating the whole child, nurturing children to develop and excel academically, socially and spiritually. Our goal is for each child to reach their full potential as we support their unique individual talents and skills. Key elements include STREAM curriculum; national standards; project-based learning; small class size; individual support; social emotional learning; and strong partnerships with children, families and the community. Elementary children have access to the Art Studio, STREAM Lab, Media & Language Lab, Courtyard, Outdoor Learning Spaces, Chapel and other community settings for events and activities. With field trips and outreach, your child will develop their academic potential, 21st century thinking skills, and their role as a caring citizen in our community and world.



Take a closer look...

Our Mission

Growing Faith, Hearts and Minds

The Growing Place School is committed to providing an **inclusive, faith-based education** for children ages one year through 5th grade, preparing children for entrance into diverse community middle school programs, and cultivating a **community of spiritual, compassionate, creative, and thriving world citizens**.



We Believe

We believe in nurturing the whole child to develop their individual strengths as a **confident innovator, creative critical thinker, resourceful problem solver, and compassionate change maker**.

We believe happy children thrive in a safe, stimulating, innovative environment that honors the **wonder of childhood** and the **beauty of nature**.

We believe in fostering an **enthusiastic, caring community of learners** dedicated to serving the world around them with **respect**.

We believe educators are guides, mentors, coaches, facilitators, and co-learners who nurture children with **meaningful learning experiences**, based on children's interests, that are geared towards creativity, self-expression, exploration, discovery, and investigation.

We believe the school community is built on **collaborative partnerships** with parents and the church that embrace the greatest intentions for a child's well-rounded development and success as a happy citizen.



Christian Education

Our teaching staff and administration help children to appreciate, show and understand God's love for His creation, including people of different cultures, races and religions. Throughout the school year and implemented in daily classroom practice and routines, children:

- Are given opportunities to experience the **creative power of God** as they discover the world God created.
- Are encouraged to participate in **Christian worship and music**.
- Participate in a variety of **Christian celebrations** in the classroom and during school and church-sponsored events.
- Broaden their experiences and build **ideas, feelings, and understandings** related to the **Christian faith** through Bible stories, pictures, songs, Bible verses, and play activities.



Philosophy

The Growing Place School's educational practice and approach is founded on the beliefs and research of the **"Constructivist Theories"** (Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky) where learning is viewed as a **complex process of individual and social experiences**, and where children construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through a multitude of experiences and reflecting on those experiences. Classroom practice is **child-centered** and **developmentally appropriate**.

Children are viewed as **competent individuals** and **active learners**. Teachers are facilitators and co-learners who present children with **meaningful learning experiences** based on children's interests, and geared towards **creativity, self-expression, exploration, discovery and investigation**. The classroom environment is designed with furniture, materials and resources to facilitate and support this process of child-centered, active and engaged learning.



Curriculum

Building on our educational philosophy, The Growing Place School uses the HighScope curriculum, a research-based and innovative approach to learning and development for toddler and preschool children.

What Is The Highscope Curriculum?

HighScope's educational approach emphasizes **"active participatory learning."** Active learning means students have **direct, hands-on experiences** with people, objects, events, and ideas. Children's interests and choices are at the heart of HighScope programs.

They **construct their own knowledge** through interactions with the world and the people around them. Children take the first step in the learning process by making choices and following through on their plans and decisions. Teachers, caregivers, and parents offer **physical, emotional, and intellectual support.** In active learning settings, adults expand children's thinking with diverse materials and nurturing interactions.

How does this approach differ?

The HighScope educational approach is consistent with the best practices recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Head Start Performance Standards, and other guidelines for developmentally based programs.

Within this broad framework, however, HighScope has unique features that differentiate it from other early childhood programs. One is the daily **plan-do-review** sequence. Research shows that planning and reviewing are the two components of the program day most positively and significantly associated with children's scores on measures of developmental progress.





A second unique feature is our **curriculum content**, the social, intellectual, and physical building blocks that are essential to **young children's optimal growth**.

Our content areas are organized in **eight main categories** that correspond to state and national learning standards; the categories are:

- 1. Approaches to Learning**
- 2. Social and Emotional Development**
- 3. Physical Development and Health**
- 4. Language, Literacy, and Communication**
- 5. Mathematics**
- 6. Creative Arts**
- 7. Science and Technology**
- 8. Social Studies**

Child Development & Learning

Knowing what is typical at each age and stage of early development is crucial. This knowledge, based on research, helps us decide which experiences are best for children's learning and development.

Within these preschool content areas are 58 key developmental indicators (KDIs), formerly called key experiences. The KDIs are statements of observable behaviors that define the **important learning areas for young children**. HighScope teachers keep these indicators in mind when they set up the environment and plan activities to **encourage learning and social interaction**. They also form the basis of HighScope's child assessment tool, the Preschool Child Observation Record (COR).

To read and learn more about HighScope, please visit: <http://www.highscope.org>

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Developmentally appropriate practice, often shortened to DAP, is an approach to teaching grounded in the research on how young children develop and learn in what is known about **effective early education**.

Its framework is designed to promote young children's **optimal learning and development**. DAP involves teachers meeting young children where they are (by stage of development), both as individuals and as part of a group; and helping each child meet **challenging and achievable learning goals**.

Culturally Important

We make an effort to get to know each child's family and learn about the values, expectations, and factors that shape their lives at home and in their communities. This background information helps us provide meaningful, relevant, and respectful learning experiences for each child and family.

Individually Appropriate

What we learn about specific children helps us teach and care for each child as an individual. By continually observing children's play and interaction with the physical environment and others, we learn about each child's interests, abilities, and developmental progress.



Extracurricular Experiences

- ✓ Weekly Chapel Worship
- ✓ Christian Music Education
- ✓ Art Experiences in our Art Studio (Early 3s, 3s, and Pre-K)
- ✓ Spanish Language Introduction (Pre-K)
- ✓ "Learning Without Tears/Get Ready for School" (writing, reading and math readiness for Pre-K) are offered to incorporate the arts and enrich the children's learning and experiences

TGPS Class Ratios

The Growing Place School adheres to the teacher-to-child ratios set forth per accreditation standards, ensuring low ratios and a high standard of care. All our age groups have a teaching team in place (lead and assistant teacher). Per our accreditation criteria through the United Methodist Church Association for Preschools, teacher-to-child ratios and class sizes shall be as follows:

Age Group	Ratio	Class Size	Compare to NAEYC*	Compare to DCF**
Walkers	1:4	Max. 8	1:4	1:6
Twos	1:6	Max. 12	1:6	1:11
Threes	1:8	Max. 16	1:8	1:15
PreK	1:9	Max. 18	1:10	1:20
Kindergarten	1:8	Max. 16	1:12	1:25
1st-5th Grade	1:8	Max. 16	-	-

* National Association for the Education of Young Children

** Department of Children & Families



I want to find a high-quality preschool for my child. What should I be looking for?

Based on several research studies, there are seven elements of a high-quality preschool program:

1

It has a child development curriculum.

Of all the ingredients in a high-quality program, a curriculum that recognizes the value of child-initiated active learning is the most important. The best early childhood activities build on children's natural curiosity, are matched to children's current and emerging abilities, and allow for exploration and variation rather than having to perform in a single "right way." Learning is a process of *developmental change*—that is, a process in which we learn by relating and adding new information to what we already know, and if necessary, changing the way we thought before. Learning does not happen when children are simply told something; to learn, they must see and do things for themselves, with parents and teachers present to encourage and challenge their thinking. Children must be secure and confident in what they already know before they are ready to move to the next level.

2

Low enrollment limits.

Studies have found that the fewer children per adult, the better the adult-child interaction. In addition to good staff-child ratios, the total group size should be limited based on standards recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

3

Staff trained in early childhood development.

Adults who provide care and education for young children need specialized training in child development and early childhood education. Research also shows that the higher the level of teachers' formal education, the more developmentally appropriate are their teaching practices.

4

Supervisory support and in-service training.

In addition to hiring well-qualified staff, program administrators play a central role in arranging for their ongoing and appropriate training. Teachers should have regular training in order to further their skills and keep up with new information in early childhood.

5

Involvement of parents as partners.

Parent involvement is essential to good education throughout their children's school years. Although there are often many obstacles to such involvement (for example, working-parent schedules and multiple demands on the family), high-quality programs are creative in overcoming these barriers. They offer many options for inviting family participation.

6

Sensitivity to the non-educational needs of children and their families.

Today's families cope with many demands and stresses. In addition to having concerns about their children's education, many parents also contend with financial, medical, social, or legal issues. Early childhood programs cannot be expected to meet all these needs directly. However, as part of a community network, staff of high-quality programs are aware of the services available and help families obtain the assistance they need.

7

Developmentally appropriate evaluation procedures.

The two main objectives of early childhood evaluation are to assess program quality and to assess children's development. Administrators use program evaluation to make decisions about agency policies and staff development. Teachers use child evaluation to plan appropriate educational activities for individual children and the class.



nextsteps

Toddler & Preschool Programs

Current Students

- Complete the Re-Enrollment Form
- Pay Registration Fee & Tuition Payment #1

New Students

- Complete the Application Form
- "Discovery Day" School Visit for New Pre-K Children
- Provide required documents:
 - Copy of birth certificate/passport
 - Health and Immunization Forms
- Completion of enrollment

Questions?

Corina Dekker

Head of School

cdekker@firstcoralgables.org

Alexandra Kagan

Assistant Head of School

akagan@firstcoralgables.org

The Growing Place School

536 Coral Way

Coral Gables, FL 33134

(305) 446-0846 • thegrowingplace.school

DCF License # C11MD0470

