

# Welcome to **VPK**!



**Mrs. Rachel Backus**

**Bay Pines Lutheran VPK Handbook**

**2025-2026**

## **Included in Folder:**

**Enrollment Form** (fill out and return)

**Enrichment Program Agreement** (sign and return)

**Attendance Policy** (sign and return)

**Introducing...** (fill out and return)

**Parent/Guardian Compliance** (sign and return)

**Calendar**

**Snack List**

**Know Your Children's Center**

**Food Experience** (sign and return)

**Emergency Medical Release** (fill out and return)

# Welcome!

I am so glad you will be part of our classroom family! I consider it a privilege to teach (and learn from) your children. Children are a precious gift from God — thank you for sharing your gifts with me! May the Lord bless our 2024-2025 school year!

## Who am I?

This is my ninth year teaching at Bay Pines Lutheran VPK, and I am very happy to be here! I graduated from Martin Luther College in Minnesota with my teaching degree in 2000, and married my husband the following summer. I taught 4th-6th grade in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for two years, until my oldest daughter was born. I was a stay-at-home mom to her and her two sisters for seven years. I then began assisting in our church's preschool program and found a new joy in Early Childhood Education. For the last fourteen years I have assisted and taught in classrooms with children from 1 - 4 years old. Eight years ago I completed the education necessary to become a Preschool Director. In my spare time I enjoy spending time with my family, reading, music, movies, and the beach.



## What do we do here?

The mission of Bay Pines Lutheran School is to provide a Christ-centered education for the the children of our congregation and community, preparing them for life on earth and in heaven.

We believe that each child is a unique creation of God, made in His image and deeply loved. Our mission is to nurture young hearts and minds in a Christ-centered environment where children grow spiritually, emotionally, socially, and intellectually.

We emphasize the love of Jesus in all we do, guiding children to understand their identity in Christ and to show kindness, empathy, and respect to others. Social-emotional development is foundational, and we cultivate this through intentional teaching, supportive relationships, and Christ-like modeling.

Learning through play is central to our approach. We believe play is God's gift to young children—a natural way to explore, create, and make sense of the world. Our classrooms provide rich, developmentally appropriate experiences that foster curiosity, problem-solving, and joyful discovery.

In all aspects of care and instruction, we strive to partner with families, honor each child's developmental journey, and reflect the love, grace, and truth of Jesus Christ.



## How will we do that?

Two things are very important in this classroom:  
praise and play.

Praise: We recognize that each child is a son or daughter of God, and we will learn about His plan for us and His world in Bible Stories, songs and activities. We will grow closer to Him through prayer and His Word, and we will be comforted with His love when we struggle. We will give Him praise by doing our best with the gifts He has given us.



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BUT FOR CHILDREN PLAY  
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OF CHILDHOOD.  
-FRED ROGERS

Play: We will do a lot of learning in this classroom, but to the average visitor it may look like we are just “playing.” And we are! Play-based learning is a highly effective way for the brain of a young child to take in new information, to problem-solve, to develop and grow. We will have large and small group learning time and individual teacher/student time, but we will do our best “school work” when we are building a tower, pretending to be a chef, or doing experiments with water and sand.

## What does a VPK day look like?

The school doors open at 7:40 am, after that time you may sign in your child. Please call, email or text the teacher or school office promptly if your child will be late or absent. VPK instructional hours are from 8:15 to 11:30 am each day. You may take your child home at any time after 11:30 am, the hours after 12:30 pm are billed as Enrichment Hours.



### VPK Daily Schedule

7:40 - 8:15	Arrival, Table Toys
8:15 - 8:30	Morning Greeting, Jesus Time <small>All-School Chapel (Friday)</small>
8:30 - 9:00	Prayer, Snack Time, Restrooms
9:00 - 9:30	Outside Gross Motor Time
9:30 - 10:00	Circle Learning Time <small>Music Time with Kindergarten (Friday)</small>
10:00 - 11:00	Free Choice Centers, Teacher Table
11:00 - 11:15	Circle Time, Calendar <small>Signing Time (Thursday)</small>
11:15 - 11:45	Outside Gross Motor Time <small>11:30 Parent Pick Up</small>
11:45 - 12:30	Prayer, Lunch, Restrooms <small>12:15-12:30 Parent Pick Up</small>
12:30 - 2:00	Rest Time
2:00 - 2:30	Restrooms, Snack
2:30 - 3:00	Outside Gross Motor Time, Free Choice Centers

## What can you expect from the VPK Staff?

Every staff member in the Bay Pines VPK program has a degree in education and/or extensive training in child development. They are constantly learning how to educate and care for your children, researching best practices in the Early Childhood field and implementing them in the classroom.

Staff members will maintain a loving and Christ-centered atmosphere in the classroom. They will be organized and ensure the classroom is calm and secure for the children. They will set developmentally appropriate limits that are clear and well-defined. They will invite children to participate in new activities and encourage goal setting, but respect a child's wish to observe.

We know that each of our students is a unique child of God. We will strive to help them learn about themselves and others in our classroom learning times and activities. We will encourage the children to think for themselves, correct their own mistakes, and solve their own problems. We will support positive social skill development through books, games, and role-play. We will encourage communication and interaction between the children and staff members, employing teachable moments such as taking turns, filling each others' positivity "buckets," and being classroom helpers.



# What are the expectations for students?

PreKindergarten is important for one big reason: it is when we learn how to be in school. A young child cannot be expected to learn their letters and numbers if they have not yet learned how to listen, how to communicate needs, how to problem solve or how to calm themselves when they are frustrated. For this reason, a large part of our learning will be focused on social-emotional development, and how to succeed within the classroom community. We will spend a lot of time on procedures (lining up, sitting quietly, classroom helpers, etc...) to keep our classroom a safe and pleasant place in which to play and learn.

Sometimes a student will exhibit challenging behavior. This can be defined as any repeated pattern of behavior that interferes with learning. Parents will be notified as soon as concerns arise. We will utilize observation and assessment tools to determine the trigger and/or reason for challenging behaviors. We will ask to meet with you regularly and work as a team to guide your child towards a successful learning experience, and we will always communicate Jesus' forgiveness. (a)

Example: Student has been throwing toys in the classroom.

1. Concerns are shared with parents/guardians
2. Staff will observe and document times of day and surrounding factors of behavior
3. Staff will meet with parents/guardians and work together to design a plan; this could include student-led goal setting, positive behavior rewards, etc.
4. Plan is implemented in classroom and documented by staff.
5. Staff will meet with parents/guardians again to determine the success of the plan and how it can be improved.
6. Repeat and adjust plan as necessary, with constant communication between staff and parents/guardians



**No child will ever be subjected to discipline which is severe, humiliating or frightening, or associated with food, rest or toileting. Spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited in our classroom. If behaviors do not improve and the teaching staff is concerned about the safety of the learning environment, we reserve the right to remove a student from our program. (If this becomes necessary we will provide the family with resources for support services or recommendations for alternate school placement, if desired.)**

**The Conscious Discipline Classroom Management program guides children toward self-discipline by directing him to choose constructive behavior patterns in developing self control. This includes the use of positive direction, redirection, clear limitations and the modeling of appropriate behavior and language. “Green and Red Choices” will also be used to assist with behavior management. Please feel free to ask about these programs at any time!**



## What do we need for school?

Your child is required to comply with a dress code which consists of a solid color polo or polo dress and khaki, blue or black pants, shorts or a skirt. Hoodies and jackets are only allowed outside. They will be given a Bay Pines T-shirt that they may wear to school on Fridays. They must wear closed-toe shoes.



Since your child's day in VPK will be full of interactive indoor and outdoor activities, "messes" may happen! Please send along an extra outfit, including socks and underwear, to keep at school. Label all articles of clothing.



**PLEASE SEND A LABELED WATER BOTTLE WITH YOUR CHILD EACH DAY.** If they are staying for lunch, please send a meal for them. They will have access to a refrigerator. We are not allowed the use of a microwave for student meals in our classroom, so please do not send anything that needs to be heated. Please send nutritious food; soda and candy are not allowed at school! Morning and afternoon snack will be provided, a menu is posted in the classroom. You are welcome to provide an alternate snack if your child has sensitivities to the food that is served. **PLEASE INFORM US IF YOUR CHILD HAS ANY FOOD ALLERGIES! ©**

Rest time will happen each day after lunch. We will provide a cot and cot sheet for each student. Please bring a blanket. You may also bring a (small) pillow and a stuffed lovey if you wish.



## What do parents/guardians need to do?

Parents and guardians are required to sign their children in and out everyday using their assigned four-digit code on the classroom tablet or the app on their phone, and make sure their monthly attendance paperwork is signed. In order for your child to receive the benefits of the VPK program it is essential that your child be here on time every day and in attendance for the instructional hours. (b)

The last pick-up after Enrichment Hours is at 3 pm (After Care until 5 pm is available upon request). As we care about your children and our staff, if you know you will be late please communicate with the classroom as soon as possible. If lateness becomes a frequent occurrence we reserve the right to remove a child from the program.

Please make sure that all student paperwork is up to date, especially if shot records or medical records are needed. **AN IMMUNIZATION FORM IS NEEDED UPON ENROLLMENT.** (Please note that there may be children in school that are not fully immunized.) Students without appropriate medical records may be asked to stay home until those documentation needs are met. By enrolling your child in this program you give permission for any member of the teaching staff to have access to your child's files. (d)

If your child is ill, please keep them home until they are not contagious. This means 24 hours after vomiting, diarrhea or a 100 degree fever. If your child has other symptoms of a communicable disease, please do not return until they have been examined by a doctor. Thank you for helping to keep our classroom healthy! (e)



## **How can you help your child succeed?**

**Pray for and with your child.**

**Talk with your child and listen to them. Conversation is an incredibly important building block for early learning.**

**Read with your child! Only fifteen minutes a day can make a huge difference.**

**Be patient with your child. Four is a BIG year, and PreK can be a big step! Let them know that we are all working at this together.**

**Check ClassDojo often for updates. If you have any concerns about your child, the classroom, or simply wish to check in, please make a point to schedule time with me! I would be happy to set up a private visit with you, free from distractions.**

**The family home is the first and most important classroom in which a child learns. I pray that I can partner with you in helping your child succeed in their second classroom! My door is always open and I am happy to answer any calls, texts or emails.**

**Thank you!**

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**“The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy!” Psalm 126:3**