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January 2023

Dear St. Jerome ECC 2023-24 Four-Year Old Families,

Eighteen years ago, St. Jerome Early Childhood Center took a leap of faith and made the decision to participate in the state's four-year-old Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program, which allows four-year olds to attend a half day program (540 hours) at **no cost to families**.

Each year we revisit our decision to remain a VPK provider, as the state funds allotted per child (approximately \$3,000) continue to fall grossly below the actual tuition cost needed to meet our expenses. The cost for your child would be over \$5,800 for the school year, if not for the VPK program. **The difference between the state's amount per child and our current tuition is \$2,800.** In a class of 15 students, this equates to a **loss of \$42,000.00.**

To address this financial challenge, we ask that our VPK families consider pledging a contribution to our center. The attached pledge card specifies different pledge amounts. Ideally, we would like for each family to pledge a donation of \$280 per month in order to offset our loss of revenue from participation in the state's VPK program. This would help us to maintain the standards of our high quality program.

Working together, we can continue to offer the **BEST** early childhood program for our children and families. St. Jerome ECC plans to remain a nationally accredited early childhood program, with quality, credentialed, faith-filled educators as the hallmark of our program. We are currently the only nationally accredited (NAEYC), Catholic early childhood program in Pinellas County. St. Jerome ECC was voted the Best Pre-school in Pinellas County by the TBNWeekly Newspapers. Our Annual School Readiness Rate is consistently high when our preschool children are assessed in kindergarten. Both public and Catholic schools continually praise our efforts in preparing our children for kindergarten.

As you plan for the upcoming school year for your four-year old, please be aware of the following:

- A \$100 deposit secures your child's space in our school. Beginning with our scheduled VPK start date, \$25 will be deducted from that deposit for each non-attended day until your child begins the VPK program. Following the first scheduled attendance day, with your child in attendance, you may: 1. Apply the deposit to upcoming Extended Day fees or to your Pledge; 2. Donate your deposit to your child's classroom; 3. Submit a written request for a refund.
- Families participating in the VPK Program must sign, submit, and abide by the attached VPK Parent Agreement/Attendance Policy with your reenrollment/application materials.

We look forward to having you and your family with us in the year ahead. May God continue to bless the work we do in His Name.

Sincerely,

Phyllis Steele

Phyllis Steele, Administrator

St. Jerome Early Childhood Center



St. Jerome Early Childhood Center, a Catholic community, provides a loving and accepting environment that fosters respect for all people by modeling Christian values as our children grow and learn.