

LENDING LIBRARY PROGRAM

Our Lending Library Program allows children an opportunity to select a children's book, take it home, and enjoy story time with parents and family members. Children visit our bookshelves weekly and can select a picture book, non-fiction, early reader, or informational book. It is our hope that parents will take a few moments out of their busy lives to cuddle up with their child and enjoy a shared reading experience.

Research suggests that one thing that you can do to make a difference in your child's early development to ensure later success in school is to READ ALOUD everyday with your child. Parents can enrich the learning experience by making every story come alive, inviting children to think about the characters, plot, action, and conflict. Talking about pictures, words, and stories and relate them to experiences you may have shared or lessons you may wish to reinforce. Think of story time not as a one-sided read aloud event but as a dynamic dialogue between you and your child. Enjoy!



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

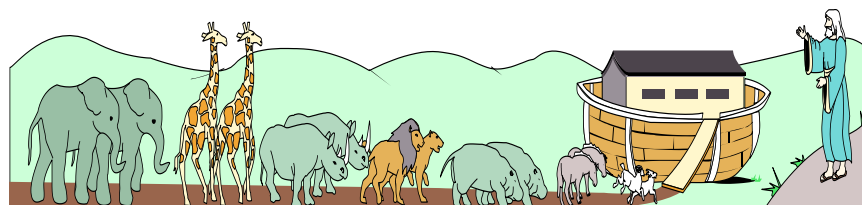
We enjoy celebrating birthdays at The Ark Children's Center! We celebrate birthdays many different ways within the classroom. Some classes choose to make birthday crowns, play birthday BINGO, make books of birthday wishes, make a birthday surprise, or share a birthday treat.

If you would like to provide a birthday treat (optional), please check with your child's teacher the week before your child's special day to make arrangements.

Some guidelines:

1. Keep snacks and refreshments simple! A cookie or cupcake is plenty since all children eat lunch at school.
2. All snacks must be PEANUT-FREE! Read labels carefully as foods "processed in a plant that packages and produces peanut products" are not safe for consumption.
1. NO GOODIE BAGS!

We also do not allow birthday party invitations to be distributed through school backpacks. Please be thoughtful about inviting school friends to birthday parties, as the children talk about these important "social events" and it can be hurtful when all class members are not invited.



The Ark Children's Center

at Oakdale Emory

3425 Emory Church Road, Olney, Maryland 20832

(301) 774-5369

The Ark Children's Center is a Christian education program which celebrates children- building foundations in social development, spiritual growth, and academic readiness in a nurturing, caring, and safe school environment.

HISTORY

Oakdale Emory has been the site for many quality education programs for the last thirty years. It housed YWCA programs (1968-1992) and a preschool program under independent and secular leadership, known as The Children's Center for Discovery (1995-1997).

In February of 1997, Oakdale Emory's Administrative Board voted to form and implement its own Christian preschool known as The Ark Children's Center. This ministry outreach program serves children ages 2 years through 5 years in programming offered weekdays, Monday through Friday. The school program is managed by an on-site director, supervised by the Pastor of Children's Ministry and is governed by a Board of Directors, who are all OEUMC members.

LICENSURE

The Ark Children's Center is a non-profit organization licensed by the State of Maryland (MSDE) for operation of a non-public nursery program known as The Ark Children's Center. We hold additional licensure through the Child Care Administration for operation of our Extended Care Program. We comply with all regulations set forth by both licensing entities.

PHILOSOPHY

We believe that every student is an individual who has been created by God and has been blessed with special gifts. Our Christian preschool celebrates children in a caring, safe, and nurturing environment. Our program promotes play, self-discovery, problem solving, social and emotional growth, developmentally appropriate learning, sensory experiences, and pre-academic readiness. Our Christian focus encourages children to learn about God, practice daily prayer, and treat others with respect. By modeling Christian attitudes and encouraging moral development, we believe our students can make profound differences in our community and in the world!

Our preschool environment encourages social awareness and provides many opportunities for children to serve others. Throughout the school year, children will be encouraged to use their "hearts and hands" to serve others in our local and world communities.

ADMISSION POLICY

The Ark Children's Center does not discriminate on race, religion, or national origin. When choosing The Ark Children's Center, it is understood that Christian values will be taught within the classroom.



“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it”

Proverbs 22:6

LUNCH POLICY and GUIDELINES....

We are a PEANUT-FREE School!

We care deeply about the health and safety of all children in our care. Each year, we work very hard to educate parents about the medical dangers associated with children who possess peanut allergies. We have children in our program who are highly allergic to peanut/nut products. We need your commitment and cooperation to keep our school environment safe from peanut/nut allergens. Peanut/nut allergies are often severe and can be fatal. Even a tiny amount of exposure (taste, touch, or smell) to peanut/ nut particles or residue, can cause the allergic person to experience strong reactions. Without medical interventions, the person can die within minutes.

Over the years we have taught children “who love peanut butter sandwiches/crackers” to choose other food choices when they understand that those “peanut butter/nut products” can make their friends sick. Please talk to your child about this food safety issue and prepare your child for making different lunch choices to help keep everyone safe at school. Some helpful suggestions and guidelines:

We will not allow your child to eat nuts/peanut butter products at school! Encourage understanding of children with peanut/nut allergies by using words like, “It’s not okay to take peanut butter/nuts to school because it can make your friends sick”.

We are unable to refrigerate lunches. We suggest non-perishable foods and the use of frozen ice packs to keep food chilled.

No candy, sodas, glass bottles, or thermos containers.

Involve your child in a variety of lunch choices. Ask your child what other friends are eating during lunch time. Encourage your child to help pack a healthy lunch.

Read labels carefully and seek foods that are not processed in peanut plants. Be very careful to avoid bulk food choices and seasonal baked cupcakes and decorated cookies.

Check labels carefully as many of these seasonal food items are processed in peanut plants.

Try some fun lunch alternatives... Check labels:

Applesauce	Fruit Cups	Graham Crackers
Leftover Pizza	Yogurt	Cold Cuts
Fresh Fruits	Celery w/soft cheese	Mini bagels
Cheese Sticks	Mini Carrots	pudding Cups
Cold Spaghetti	Hot Dogs	Favorite Leftovers
Pita Pockets	Goldfish	Pretzels
Popcorn	Rice Krispie Treats	Raisins
Dried Fruits	Fruit Roll-ups	Cheese & Crackers

CLUBS PROGRAMS

Our clubs programs are an optional stay opportunity for children to satisfy their ever-growing curiosity and need for extended care options. These clubs are led by enthusiastic, kid-friendly adults who encourage children to explore a variety of hands-on and motor activities. Clubs are offered during fall, winter, and spring sessions. Reservations are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis and placement is only confirmed when the registration form and full payment are received. Our clubs program encourages child participation. If your child demonstrates adjustment issues or is unable to appropriately participate in the club, we will suggest withdrawal.

Consider joining the fun..... We have offered cooking, soccer, karate, story time, creative arts, and “Little Minds, Big Ideas” science options. Clubs are open to children in the 3’s and 4’s classes who have successfully transitioned into our regular preschool program. Our youngest, Lambs and Chicks, may not explore clubs as an extended care option.



WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL WHAT NOT TO BRING!

SMILES..... More SMILES !

We know some children will be a little anxious about school in September and upon return from long holiday breaks. It’s perfectly normal and expected. Be sure to hold your child’s hand while entering the building, give your child a hug in the hallway, and a quick kiss goodbye. Parents need to leave the building after saying “goodbyes”. Prolonged “goodbyes” at the classroom door makes the separation process more difficult for the child. Our staff are experts at calming upset children! You are welcome to call the office after 9:30 AM if an update is needed.

Peanut/Nut-Free Lunch

Please send lunch in an insulated lunch tote with zipper (Sack or Square style- no larger than 8 ½ x 11). Box styled beverages only! Please refrain from sending in Capri pouch style drinks!

Standard size backpack to school each day. (No suitcase/ roller style, please! They cause accidents on the steps). Notices, schedules, and child “masterpieces” will be sent home on a regular basis. Please remove notices and artwork daily and be sure backpacks are labeled with your child’s name on the outside of the backpack.

Change of clothing, including underwear & socks for when accidents occur at school. Please keep these sealed inside a large zip-lock bag in your child’s backpack.

NO TOYS FROM HOME, please! Please follow Show N’ Tell schedules and guidelines from teachers.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The Ark Children’s Center operates part-time Christian preschool offerings from September to May. Class size ranges from 10-14 students per class, with a lead teacher and assistant teacher.

CLASS OFFERINGS

2’s Programming

(Children must be 2 by September 1 of enrolling year)

Chicks

Monday & Wednesday

9:00 - 12:00 PM

Lambs

Tuesday & Thursday

9:00 - 12:00 PM

3’s Programming

(Children must be 3 by September 1 of enrolling year)

Tuesday & Thursday ~ 9:00 – 12:00 PM

Tuesday & Thursday ~ 9:00 – 1:00 PM

***Monday, Wednesday, Friday ~ 9:00—1:00 PM**

4’s Programming

(Children must be 4 by September 1 of enrolling year)

***Monday, Wednesday, Friday ~ 9:00 – 1:00 PM**

***Monday through Friday ~ 9:00 – 1:00 PM**

*** Children must be potty trained.**



STAFF

Staffing is a key element to successful programming. Our staff members believe in Christian education and practice Christian principles each day in their actions and words. They are committed to providing the best learning experiences for healthy physical, social, emotional, and spiritual growth and development in young children.

Staff credentials are in compliance with education requirements established by Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). All staff participate in Continuing Education classes annually and have fingerprint clearances issued from the State of Maryland and Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). Our staff members participate in CPR and First Aid training annually.



REGISTRATION

Registration for preschool classes occurs in January for the following school year. Community members may call the office in December/early January to request registration materials for the upcoming school year. All currently registered students will receive registration information and be eligible to participate in early registration. Priority registration is given in this order:

- Current In-House students and siblings
- Oakdale Emory Church Members and ARK Alumni
- Community Members

Following the registration process, students will be accepted as space permits until all classes are filled. Once classes have been filled, we will start a waiting list for students who wish to be considered for placement.

Health forms will be given to parents upon confirmation of preschool placement in late January. These health forms (Health Inventory, Health Immunization, and Lead Screening Certificate) should be completed by the physician and returned to the preschool before May 1st of the enrollment year. Please don't delay completion of these medical forms, as they are required before children can attend our program.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN

Every school needs a comprehensive emergency plan in case there is a need to dismiss children early from school. Different situations might require an early closing of our school. Instances might include building damage, loss of power, heat, or water in our facility, and other unforeseen emergency conditions.

Should an emergency evacuation be necessary at The Ark Children's Center:

If the Emory Hall educational building is not operational, children will be moved to the Historic Oakdale Chapel located on the property of Oakdale Emory United Methodist Church. This building will safely accommodate our students and has direct phone service (301-774-1573) into the building. A phone message indicating the need for evacuation will be recorded on our school answering machine, a note will be posted on our exterior doors, and parents will be notified via email of our location change.

Students will remain under the supervision of staff in each of these emergency evacuation situations. **Students will only be released to authorized parent(s) or adults indicated on the child's emergency card. It is extremely important that emergency card information is kept up-to-date with current home, work, and cell phone numbers, along with names of authorized persons for pick-up.**



DROP-OFF & PICK-UP PROCEDURES

Parents should park on the Georgia Avenue side of the building during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up times.

Parents should walk children into the building at 9:00 AM when doors open. Upon entering the classroom, every child will be encouraged to put their backpack in the backpack bin located outside the classroom, and hang up his/her coat and place their lunch in the designated class area. These routines are intended to build self confidence and help promote self-help skills within the classroom.

Parents should meet students enrolled in our 4's classes in the courtyard area at afternoon dismissal time. On rainy days we dismiss on the porch area. Parents who have children enrolled in 2's or 3's classes should meet children inside the building at classroom doors.

Children who have not been picked up by 5 minutes after the dismissal hour will be taken to the office. Parents will be billed an Emergency Late Fee of \$ 5.00 per half hour.

VOLUNTEERS

We welcome volunteers into the building in late October. All parents who serve as volunteers must complete the Baltimore-Washington Sexual Misconduct Form before serving at The Ark Children's Center. Please watch for volunteer opportunities posted on classroom doors. We are unable to welcome siblings into our building during volunteer service times but have many Take N Make projects that can be completed at home. We appreciate your service to the children and staff!



INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event of MCPS Delayed opening, we will operate as follows with NO lunch at school. Please note these hours are a change from previous years.

MWF & Monday-Friday Classes	11:00 AM – 1:00 PM
T-TH Classes	11:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Lambs & Chicks (2's)	11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Clubs will be offered on a delayed opening schedule.

If MCPS closes school, we are also CLOSED! You may call our school answering machine (301-774-5369) if ever in doubt. Recordings are available after 7:00 AM. We also announce school closure with WTOP. Log onto www.WTOPNEWS.COM for information regarding school closure announcements.



FAMILY CONCERNS

While it is not our intent to pry into your personal life, we do find it helpful to be notified if your family is under any unusual stress or if you have any legal custody concerns. Please keep us informed about new joys (i.e.: birth of baby, new home, adoption, etc.) and difficult transitions (i.e.: divorce, custody changes, shared living situations, etc). Sharing important "family changes" can help us better understand your child's needs so we can better support your child through these life changes.

We are happy to pray for you and your family's needs... please let us know how we can best support you and your family! You are welcome to call the office (301-774-5369), schedule an appointment with the director, or send a note to school.

FEES & FINANCIAL AGREEMENT

At time of registration, parents are responsible for the following financial commitment to enroll their child into our preschool program:

- **Application Fee-** NON-REFUNDABLE at any time.
- **Materials Fee-** NON-REFUNDABLE after August 1st of the enrolling school year.
- **Tuition Installment-** **Our yearly tuition is divided into ten payments. The first payment is made at registration.** followed by 9 monthly payments (Sept. to May).

Tuition is due by the tenth of the month. Tuition payments are paid monthly, bi-yearly, or on a yearly schedule. Payments may be mailed to the school or may be dropped in the tuition box located outside The Ark Office. All check payments should include the child's name and class information in the memo section of the check.

Late charges will be assessed for any tuition payments received after the 10th of the month (a \$5.00 late fee). Thereafter, a \$10.00 fee will be incurred on the 15th, 20th, and 25th if payment has not been received. Returned checks will be charged a \$25.00 processing fee. Past due tuition and other fees are subject to collection interest at 1.0% per month. Associated court costs, and attorney's fees will also be assessed.

A monthly coupon book will be provided for each family selecting the monthly payment option at our Open House.

Please refer to our Hours & Tuition Fee Schedule for fees and school tuition rates.



When enrolling your child at The Ark Children's Center, parents acknowledge that they have registered their child for our preschool program and will meet all financial obligations in a timely manner. Inability to honor and/or refusal to comply with the following financial commitments can result in your child's immediate dismissal from our preschool program:

- When repeated attempts to collect an overdue account are unsuccessful.
- An account becomes overdue for more than two occurrences in a school year.
- Numerous efforts to collect delinquent tuition are unresolved by established deadline dates.

WITHDRAWALS

Requests for withdrawals from our preschool program must be submitted in writing. Please include in your letter, the date of correspondence, the date of withdrawal request, your child's name, reason for withdrawal, and the class for which your child was enrolled. All letters should be addressed to the director and mailed to the school.

Written withdrawals post-marked before August 1st of the enrollment year will be considered for partial refund (Materials Fee and Tuition Installment). Withdrawals made after August 1st of the enrollment year are not eligible for refund.

- Withdrawal requests made during the school year require 30 days notice, in writing. Withdrawals that occur without the 30-day notification will be subject to the current month's tuition payment and an additional monthly payment.

SUMMER MAILINGS & STUDENT FORMS

All families who have confirmed enrollment for their child will receive an information packet in July of their enrollment year. This packet will contain information regarding the upcoming school year, including the school calendar, emergency card information, update on student health records, and important information about what is needed for the school year ahead.

Our school office is closed from mid-June through mid-August. Student forms are available on a table located outside the church office or by visiting our link on Oakdale Emory's website @ www.oeumc.org. The church office is open from 8-4 PM, Monday through Friday and on Sundays from 8-1 PM. Please return all student forms via U.S. Mail to the school.

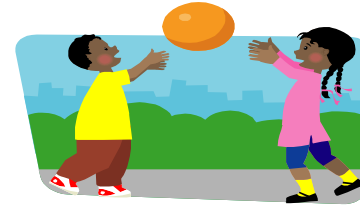
Please note:

All student records must be complete before your child can attend school. No exceptions!



CONCERNS, ALLERGIES, MEDICATIONS

Any parent(s) who would like to discuss their child's special medication needs, allergies, and/or custody concerns should call the office and schedule an appointment with the director. We are eager to work as a team to develop a plan and make your experience and your child's transition into preschool as smooth as possible. Please call before the school year begins or schedule an appointment with the director to discuss concerns!



GATHERINGS, SPECIAL TRIPS, CULTURAL ARTS

Throughout the school year we offer times when parents are invited into the building for special gatherings. These times are planned so parents can meet other school parents and to build a better sense of "community" within our school family. The children really look forward to parent participation on these special gathering events so please mark your calendars!

The special gathering dates are printed on the school calendar and indicated with an (*). Gathering dates include: Welcome Back Gathering (Sept.), Fall Festival Gathering (Oct.), Christmas Pageant (Dec.), Donuts for Dads (Mar.), Mother's Day Tea (May) & End of Year Picnic (May).

We offer two special off-site trips each school year. We travel to a working farm in late October and to area nature centers in late April/early May. Parents are responsible for transporting children to/from these trip locations and supervising children during the scheduled trip. Information about these trips will be sent home in backpack mail approximately two weeks before the trip. These trips will also be highlighted in the monthly newsletter. Off-site trips usually have additional costs that are not included in school tuition.

Cultural Arts Assemblies are arranged throughout the school year. Some of our recent visitors have been: Mad Science of Washington, Reptile Wonders, Author & Illustrator Visit, The Culken School of Irish Dance, Jugglers & Magicians, and local area Fire Fighters.

ABSENCES, SICK POLICY, INJURY AT SCHOOL

Please call the school (301-774-5369) if your child will be absent from school. Please leave your child's name, room number, and nature of their absence on the recording so we can inform the teacher. If your child has visited the physician and is diagnosed with anything communicable or contagious in nature (i.e.: chicken pox, strep throat, conjunctivitis, lice, pinworms, etc...), please notify the office so we can notify classmates of the outbreak.

Please keep sick children at home! Children must be fever-free or on prescription medications for 24 hours before returning to school. Other situations that might indicate and/or necessitate a day at home even though the child is fever-free:

- Thick and Colored discharge from the nose
- Diarrhea and loose bowel movements
- Child is fever-free, but vomited during the night or woke up repeatedly saying, "I don't feel well."
- Child complains about a headache and/or ear ache

We depend on parents to be considerate of the health of our school staff and family. Please use good judgment when making decisions about your child's return to school. Please be sure to practice thorough hand washing practices and healthy sneezing and coughing (into sleeves, not hands!)

Any injury happening at school will be reported to the parents on an OUCH~INCIDENT REPORT. While the injury may be minor, this report will document what happened, where the injury occurred, and the First Aid steps taken at school. This report is sent home as a precautionary measure just in case there are symptoms later in the day.

On the back of the emergency card parents are requested to fill in three names for emergency contacts. Please be sure to provide available and dependable second and third names, and people who have means of transportation in the event of illness or injury. In case of a head injury or a child who loses consciousness, we will call 911, and then contact the parents.



COMMUNICATION

We communicate school news and class happenings regularly with parents. It is important that you read notices carefully and clear out backpacks each day. Effective communication is a two-way process. Communication breakdowns occur when information isn't provided, or isn't read!

Our staff is committed to sharing information and answering questions about your child. It is difficult to have extended conversations at drop-off and pick-up times, so please feel free to send a note requesting our staff to call you at a convenient time. If you hear about something that happened at school that is of concern, please call us so we can look into the situation and clarify the details. We look forward to a partnership with parents.

Outside each classroom is a white board where teachers will update you on the day's happenings. This is a great way to start conversation about the school day and ask questions about class events. Don't be content with general statements like, "I had a good day"....instead, encourage your child to tell you more! We do many things at school and play with a variety of materials, so don't be shy about asking questions about an art project, graphing activity, sensory play, or free play time!

Class News is sent home at the beginning of the month by classroom teachers. This class newsletter will highlight themes for the month, dates to remember, things happening in the near future (upcoming month), and give highlights of things happening in the classroom.

Once a month, the office publishes **The Ark Children's Center Newsletter**. This longer publication will offer more details about the many exciting things happening at the school, in the classrooms, at the church, and will feature additional information about outreach projects, cultural events, and upcoming monthly events.

Please look for **Important Weekly Updates** which are written on a communication board located in the main hallway, outside the restrooms. These messages will remind you of immediate events for the upcoming week, deadlines, and helpful reminders for the week.

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Our staff has been trained to identify physical and behavioral indicators of neglect and child abuse. In Maryland, the child abuse and neglect law requires that all persons report suspected abuse or neglect directly to Montgomery County Child Protective Services. **Never leave children unattended in parked vehicles in our parking lots. Please familiarize yourself with Family Law 5-801 which states:**

A person who is charged with the care of a child under the age of 8 years may not allow the child to be locked or confined in a dwelling, building, enclosure, or motor vehicle while the person charged is absent and the dwelling, building, enclosure, or motor vehicle is out of sight of the person charged unless the person charged provides a reliable person at least 13 years old to remain with the child to protect the child.

CURRICULUM

Serving children from age 2 years to 5 years requires dynamic programming with rich curriculum offerings. Our program is designed to meet the many needs of the “whole child”. We strive to nurture social, emotional, physical, moral, and cognitive growth in all of our students. We employ many different teaching strategies to encourage children to be successful in their learning process. The Ark Children’s Center offers a variety of creative school experiences and learning opportunities including:

Arts & Crafts	Creative Movement
Sensory Play	Circle Time
Cooking	Learning Centers
Music	Science Exploration
Chapel Time	Sharing Time
Bible Discovery & Song	Dramatics & Play
Gross Motor Play	Math Readiness
Concept Development	Cultural Arts Assemblies
Fine Motor/Manipulative Experiences	Library Time



More about our school programs....

Our Chicks and Lambs programs offer two’s opportunities for play, exploration, active discovery, and social interaction within a small group setting. Classes meet twice a week for three hours with a smaller class size to make their first school experience a success!

Our 3’s program is offered on T-TH and MWF for three or four hours in length. The 3’s program offers rich classroom experiences (see activities listed above), weekly Chapel & Music instruction, a focus on social and emotional skills, and an emphasis on sensory experiences, developmental play experiences and concept development/ pre-academic readiness skills. Children are not required to be potty-trained.

Our 4’s program offers 3 day and 5 day sessions that are four hours in length. All children must be potty trained. These classes are designed to nurture social, emotional, and spiritual growth, communication skills, independence, decision-making skills, and to develop readiness skills necessary for success in kindergarten. Weekly Chapel and Music instruction are offered. Our curriculum is the same for both the three and five day sessions, with additional extension opportunities offered in the 5 day program.

DISCIPLINE

We believe in Positive Discipline! By employing many different discipline strategies, such as redirection, modeling, guided choices, and positive reinforcement, children can work cooperatively and have positive outcomes. When difficulty arises between preschoolers, our staff encourages the children to use words to talk about actions and feelings. Teachers intervene in a child’s play when it is not headed in a positive direction. Children who are in danger of hurting themselves or other classmates are taken to the office for “cooling time”. The director will address the problem, talk about different ways the child might have acted, write a letter home, and (when appropriate) return the child to the classroom. The child will return to their classroom when: a) he or she regains self control, b) verbalizes how their hands, feet, or words hurt others, c) verbalizes that he/she is ready to return to the classroom and change their behavior/ resume activities.

We believe in communicating child successes and challenges with parents. We believe that children are more successful in mastering challenges when there is a **good communication** and a commitment toward **teamwork** between home and school.

Behavior contracts are always discussed between the director, parents, and teachers before implementation. Contracts are used to highlight positive choices and behaviors, and to communicate areas of needs, in an effort to improve behavior and classroom interactions with peers.

We strive to meet the needs of our individual students at The Ark Children’s Center. On occasion, after numerous conferences with parents, action plans, interventions, and adjustments to programming, we are still unable to adequately meet the needs of a student. In this situation, the director will suggest withdrawal from The Ark Children’s Center. The director will help to find alternative programming placement that might better serve the child’s needs.



*“Even a child is known by his actions,
by whether his conduct is pure and right.”*

Proverbs 20:11