Weekday Preschool Ministry Director Position Recommendation

Faith formation is a lifelong process in which people claim their identity as beloved children of God and their call to participate in God’s purposes for the world. This process begins at birth, and involves information (what we know), formation (who we are and who we are becoming), and transformation (how the world is changed because of who we are and how we live). A life of faith, then, includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. The effectiveness of this has an impact on how well a local church fulfills its mission “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (¶ 120, The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church).

A weekday preschool director needs knowledge and skills in several areas to be effective:

- Resource development
- Child development
- Relationship building
- Spiritual disciplines
- Setting and meeting goals
- Communication
- Staff management
- Regulatory bodies
- Evaluation
- Safe Sanctuaries®

Some potential staff will already possess many of these skills. Other skills will be developed as a person works in a particular position.

The director must be at least twenty-one (21) years of age with a high school diploma or GED and meet all state and local government, educational, credentialing, and training requirements. Directors are encouraged to complete a minimum of a two-year degree in early childhood education or related field.

The weekday preschool ministry director is committed and willing to support the Christian faith and the vision and mission of The United Methodist Church.

Useful skills for this position are the ability to listen to and communicate with people of all ages; the ability to work with other adults, parents, and guardians, and children.
This leader should show genuine interest in responding to the needs and concerns of children.

Since each weekday preschool ministry program is different, the staffing needs related to the weekday preschool ministry program will also vary. However, there are a number of factors that will affect the successful employment of a staff person. Factors to be considered include realistic job expectations, adequate salary and benefits, continuing education and development, healthy staff relationships, and regular feedback.

The staff-parish relations committee will find a description of its responsibilities related to staff in ¶258.2g of The Book of Discipline. These responsibilities apply to both ordained and lay employees. This document provides additional help for congregations in the process of hiring a weekday preschool ministry director and in evaluating their current staff configuration.

Recommendations for Hiring Directors of Weekday Preschool Ministry

Screening Process
Each church needs a screening process for potential staff. This process should include a reference check, a criminal background check, a psychological assessment, and a review of the candidate’s social media.

Job Description
The staff-parish relations committee should provide a written job description. The job description should be used in annual performance reviews. It should also be updated whenever a person’s responsibilities are altered.

The weekday preschool ministry director will be attentive and responsive to the nurture, safety, and educational and developmental needs of children in the preschool.

Compensation
Churches should pay equitably, demonstrating the importance of children’s ministry and considering the local economy and the resources of the congregation.

Additional factors to consider include:
• Educational background
• Previous experience
• Full-time versus part-time
• Scope of responsibility
• Local cost of living

Increases in salary should be based on merit and on increases in the cost of living.

Churches can consult with The United Methodist Association of Preschools - Florida and/or Discipleship Ministries to determine current compensation ranges for directors of weekday preschool ministries.

**Benefits**
Benefits should include health insurance, continuing education, retirement benefits, and reimbursement of work-related expenses, such as mileage and supplies.

**Clergy**
When an ordained clergy person is chosen for this position, the congregation needs to follow the appointment process as described in the appropriate sections of The Book of Discipline.

**Supervision and Retention**

**Supervision**
The director of weekday preschool ministry programs serves as a member of a team. The person’s supervisor should be clearly identified, and the two should meet on a regular basis for prayer, planning, and conversation about the weekday preschool. Supervisors should be trustworthy, respectful, and collegial.

At a minimum, the staff-parish relations committee should conduct an annual evaluation of the weekday preschool ministry director. The evaluation should be based on the director’s written job description and include documentation of effectiveness and any need for improvement. It can be helpful to schedule quarterly or midyear evaluations for new staff.

**Communication**
Consistent communication between the weekday preschool ministry director and supervisor should be the norm. In addition the director will need to communicate regularly with weekday preschool staff, support staff, parents and guardians, and the pastor.

Additionally, the weekday preschool ministry director should be added to contact
lists for district and conference news (print and electronic). They should be encouraged to join appropriate United Methodist and social media groups.

**Spiritual, Physical, and Emotional Health**
Part of supervision is working to ensure the director takes care of his/her spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being. Effective leaders nurture their relationship with God. They schedule days off, vacation, and time with friends and family.

If the need arises, the weekday preschool ministry director should have access to counseling services and/or professional coaching.

**Professional Development**
The weekday preschool ministry director should continue to build her/his knowledge and skills for educational leadership and ministry. Participation in workshops, conferences, online courses, and professional networks are a part of staff work. Budget planning should provide time and financial assistance for the director's participation in ongoing development.

Churches can contact Discipleship Ministries for church-sponsored learning opportunities. Other professional development organizations that relate to staff in weekday preschool include United Methodist Association of Preschools – Florida and Tennessee, National and State Associations for the Education of Young Children, and Discipleship Ministries Children’s Ministry (http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/children).

**Termination of Professional Relationship**
Termination of employment should occur only after adequate measures have been taken to improve performance, resolve conflict, or address other issues. When termination becomes necessary, all persons involved should demonstrate grace in the process.