



Early Education Handbook

2025-2026

Certified by FLOCS

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Preschool Handbook Introduction

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and your child to Hope Christian Academy. Our center is a non-profit child development center with Christian values. It is our priority to make your family feel at home in our center. Hope Christian Academy (HCA) provides childcare as well as child development for children ages 12 months old to 5 years old. The first years of your child's life are the most important for his/her development; therefore, we are honored that you have chosen us to participate in these precious early years.

All of our rooms are equipped with age-appropriate toys. Daily activities include arts and crafts, math and science exploration, music appreciation, early literacy, social and emotional development, dramatic play, outside play, free play and a defined curriculum. Our teachers are first aid and CPR-certified and receive continuing education each year. We complete FBI fingerprinting and criminal background checks on all staff members before they join our team.

History

Hope Christian Academy was founded in 2001 under the direction and support of Hope Baptist Church of Theresa, Florida. Former Pastor Dr. E.V. Coons had a vision for a Christian School that would be a witness to the world and provide an excellent education to the students that would eventually attend the school. The school originated with 10 preschool students and now boasts over 200 students in three divisions: Early Education, Elementary, and Jr./Sr. High. Due to the Lord's blessing, the school has seen tremendous growth since its inception in 2001.

Facilities

Hope Christian Academy consists of several buildings on campus. We are blessed to have the use of the Hope Baptist Church educational building and fellowship hall (cafeteria). Additionally, we utilize the Redding Building, gymnasium, the church sanctuary, and 15 portable buildings on a spacious 20-acre campus.

School Board

Dr. Larry Strickland, Pastor (Ex-Officio)
Bud Tippet, Member
Linda Hartley, Member
Doyle White, Member

Vision Statement

To reflect God's unchanging LIGHT in an ever-changing world.

Mission Statement

Hope Christian Academy, in partnership with the community, purposes to academically equip and spiritually prepare students to become CHRISTIAN LEADERS willing to serve their COMMUNITY, CHURCH, COUNTRY, and the KINGDOM OF GOD for HIS GLORY.

General Information

Objectives

- ❖ To encourage your child's natural abilities and to promote his/her well-being in a safe learning environment.
- ❖ To assist working parents with the separation from their children by providing a caring, fun and loving educational atmosphere.
- ❖ To share the love of Christ with children.

Calendar

Monday through Friday

7:00 am – 5:00 pm

CLOSURES**

- ❖ New Year's Eve (Early Release - close at 3pm)
- ❖ New Year's Day (1 Day)
- ❖ Martin Luther King Jr. Day (1 Day)
- ❖ President's Day (1 Day)
- ❖ Good Friday (1 Day)
- ❖ Easter Monday (1 Day)
- ❖ Memorial Day (1 Day)
- ❖ Independence Day* (1 Day)
- ❖ Labor Day (1 Day)
- ❖ Veteran's Day (1 Day)
- ❖ Thanksgiving (3 days – Wed thru Fri)
- ❖ Christmas week (5 days)

**Refer to Early Education Google calendar for any early release, field trip closures, professional development days, and whether or not care is provided on such days.

*If a holiday falls on a weekend, the center will close on an adjacent weekday. Full weekly tuition is due during these holiday weeks. Center will also close for one week at the end of summer and before the start of school for teacher planning and work days. These days will be listed on our calendar each year.

Children arriving after 8:30 a.m. will not be admitted into the center. Children who arrive late in the morning usually will not take a nap, and it is unfair to expect them to lie quietly for 2 hours while everyone else naps. The late arrivals usually disturb the other children's nap time which negatively affects the ability of our children to have a successful afternoon. The exceptions to this policy are documented medical appointments. However, please call the center and notify the staff if you are going to be late, so that we have adequate staffing and enough lunch prepared.

Children who are not picked up by 5:00pm will be charged \$1.00 per minute per child. This fee must be paid prior to the child's return the next day.

Meals

Morning snack, lunch and an afternoon snack will be provided for K2 – K4/VPK Wrap-around students. All menus are planned in advanced. We will not serve food that poses a choking hazard. Food will be cut in smaller sizes for children younger than three years to prevent choking. The weekly menu is posted in the classroom. Children will be served what is on the daily menu unless they have food allergies documented by a physician. You must inform the center if your child has any food allergies and provide doctor documentation.

Clothing

State regulations require our children to go outside year-round, weather permitting. Please dress your child for outdoor play each day. In the winter, please dress your child in layers. Please provide a coat, hat and gloves to keep your child warm. In the summer, please dress your child in cool clothing. Please provide a hat to help with sun exposure. Little girls who like to wear dresses and skirts, must wear a pair of shorts under the dress. Sturdy, closed-toed shoes must be worn at all times in the center and on the playground. Children will not be admitted if they do not have shoes on. We strongly encourage the children to wear play clothes, and tennis shoes for comfort and for safety. No sandals or flip-flops are allowed. ALL shoes MUST be rubber-soled. If a child wears any shoe that prohibits them from participating in daily activities or interferes with their safety or the safety of others this will be addressed with each family on an individual basis. Children should have an extra change of clothes in their cubbies at all times. One-piece outfits, rompers and overalls are not the best choice for children who are potty-training. Dirty clothes will be placed in plastic sacks in your child's cubby to be taken home. Staff members are not allowed to wash clothes or remove feces/urine from any personal item.

Personal Items

Toys from home are not allowed. Bringing things from home often instigates a conflict among the children. There may be an exception on a preplanned show-and-tell day, to be determined by your child's teacher, with an opportunity to bring items from home. If your child has toys he/she has outgrown and they are in good condition, the center will gratefully accept them as a donation. Stuffed animals, blankets and "lovies" are acceptable and once your child settles, it will be placed in your child's cubby or book bag and given to them for naptime.

Personal Needs

All items should be labeled with the child's first and last name. Please use a permanent marker. We are not responsible for unmarked items.

- ❖ Small fleece blanket (around 50" x 60") for naptime
- ❖ Commercial Diapers for one-year-olds, or diapers, pull-ups for 2-year-olds (if child is not completely potty-trained). We will use underwear, if you wish, for potty-training. Please bring plenty of clothing changes if using underwear.
- ❖ Complete, weather-appropriate change of clothes; including top, bottoms, underwear (if applicable), and socks (at least one set at all times; and more than one for potty-training children), and an extra pair of rubber-soled shoes.
- ❖ A spill-proof, refillable water cup for the day

Insurance

The center carries liability insurance and accident insurance for the protection of our children.

Medicine

Over-the-counter medications to be administered while at the center must be in the original manufacturer's packaging and we must follow the manufacturer's instructions for administering medicine, unless a doctor's note states otherwise. Prescription medications must be in the original container with the child's name and directions on the bottle/box label. All Medicine must be in the original prescription box/bottle with an appropriate dispenser or measuring cup and should be placed in a Ziploc bag with child's first and last name on it. Parents must fill out and sign the medication authorization at the drop off, or the medicine cannot be given under any circumstances. All medication must remain locked in the medicine box in classroom until picked up by the child's parent or guardian. Medication must never be stored in your child's personal bag while at school. Parent or guardian will be responsible for requesting medication from an Early Education staff member at pick up. As much as possible, please administer medicines before coming to or after leaving the center. Please keep in mind that for the safety of our children and staff we cannot make any exceptions to this policy. We will apply sunscreen, if requested and provided with written authorization. Parents must supply sunscreen for their child, labeled with first and last name.

Outdoor Play Policy

All children, one-year-old through school age, will be given daily outdoor time, weather permitting. We use the Child Care Weather Watch Chart to determine if the weather conditions are too hot or too cold for outdoor play. Per DCF rules, "playing in gentle rain or snow is a learning experience and can be both educational and fun for children. Make sure children are dressed appropriately." If weather conditions do not permit outdoor play, we provide time for vigorous indoor activities. Children that are too sick to go outdoors and/or are not able to participate in all daily activities, which include outdoor play, should remain home until they are well enough to participate in all daily activities.

Sun-Safe Policy

We will apply sunscreen to your child at your request. You must provide the sunscreen for your child with the medical authorization form signed by the parent. Sunscreen will only be applied one time per day, right before afternoon outdoor play. Parent/guardian is responsible to apply sunscreen in the morning before arriving at HCA. Please provide a hat to help protect your child against sun exposure.

Insect Repellent Policy

When public health authorities recommend use of insect repellants due to a high risk of insect-borne disease, HCA will apply repellent supplied by the parent and with permission form completed. Insect repellent will only be applied to children two years of age and older. Insect repellent will be applied in the afternoon before outdoor play. Parent/guardian is responsible for applying insect repellent in the morning before arriving at HCA.

Illness

HCA has the responsibility to keep the spreading of illness to a minimum. We take the following steps to ensure this:

- ❖ Staff and children wash hands regularly throughout the day.
- ❖ We disinfect toys and equipment daily.
- ❖ We disinfect the classrooms, bathrooms and kitchen on a daily basis.
- ❖ We require documentation of immunizations prior to a child's enrollment, with required updates.
- ❖ We require that you provide an updated immunization form to the office when your child is vaccinated, or before the form's expiration date. The same applies to physical forms. This helps us keep our records up to date.
- ❖ We strictly and consistently enforce our Health Policy.
- ❖ We have installed air purifiers in every classroom and office in Early Education to ensure the reduction of airborne viruses and illness-causing bacteria by up to 80%.

Health Policy

We feel these precautions will assist in safe-guarding your child from illness. We also require that you help by keeping ill children at home and immediately picking up your child should he/she become ill.

Major Illnesses

Any child found to be ill cannot receive care that day and the following day. For example, if your child is sent home at 12:00 noon on Tuesday, they will be gone the rest of Tuesday and all of Wednesday. If symptoms have subsided for 24 hours at that point, they can come back into the center on Thursday. The center requires you make arrangements to keep your child home when he/she has any of the following:

- ❖ Fever of 100.0 degrees or more
- ❖ Vomiting
- ❖ Undiagnosed rash - If your child has a rash, a doctor needs to be seen. The child can return to the center if the doctor determines the rash is not contagious. However, a doctor's note is needed. If they don't give the "all clear" then the child needs to stay out until the rash clears up.
- ❖ Draining of ears or open sores
- ❖ Any symptom of possible infectious disease (such as red, matted eyes or green discharge from the nose).
- ❖ 2 bouts of diarrhea within one hour, 3 bouts in a 24 hour period, or 1 uncontained bout (will not stay in a diaper)

Minor Illness

Rest of day exclusion: if your child is sent home with the following characteristics, they need to go home that day.

They can come back the next day if these characteristics are not present:

- ❖ Misery with a cold, including matted, watery eyes, running nose, or other physical symptoms or a deep, chesty, croupy, constant cough, or wheezing.
- ❖ Inability to cope in group situation because of not feeling well or feeling "under the weather". Teething falls under this category. When children are miserable they should not be put into a group setting. Please put yourself in this situation. How would you feel if you were sick and you had to be with 15 very active people? It is a miserable situation to be put into.

Head Lice

In order to minimize the spread of head lice in our programs, we have a nit-free policy in place. Children who are found to have head lice (nits and/or live lice) will be sent home for treatment and will not be allowed to return until they are nit-free. While parents have the primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice, our Early Education program will work in a cooperative and collaborative manner to assist all families to manage head lice effectively. If a child has live head lice present, they are to be excluded from the Early Education program until treatment has commenced and all live lice and eggs/nits have been removed (the most important part of the treatment is the removal of eggs/nits with a comb; treatment alone does not remove the lice and eggs/nits). The procedure should be repeated in 7 days to ensure that any live eggs/nits that weren't removed in the first course of treatment are killed off before hatching into lice. Parents will be encouraged to talk to:

- ❖ Your children and let them know we conduct regular inspections in our programs.
- ❖ A trusted professional (doctor, pharmacist, naturopath, etc.) to determine the treatment that is appropriate and effective for your family.
- ❖ HCA Early Education to keep us informed if you have detected and/or have been treating your children for head lice.

The most effective way to ensure that lice do not remain in your household after treatment, is to also treat your household (carpets, linens, clothing, furniture, stuffed toys and any other soft surfaces, including vehicles) thoroughly.

If a child is found to have lice or nits, all affected classrooms will be thoroughly treated.

Enrollment

We must have the following items before your child attends:

- ❖ Completed Enrollment Application; with all authorizations signed
- ❖ Payment Policy; signed
- ❖ Immunization Form (updated each time your child receives shots and prior to expiration date on record)
- ❖ Physical Health Form (updated every two years)
- ❖ Copy of Birth Certificate
- ❖ Discipline & Dismissal Agreement; signed
- ❖ Student Handbook Signature Form (policies and procedures); signed
- ❖ Publication and Photography Permission Form; signed
- ❖ Certificate of Eligibility; signed (VPK only)
- ❖ VPK Attendance Policy; signed (VPK only)
- ❖ Flu Information and Distracted Adult forms; signed
- ❖ All needed supplies (diapers, change of clothes, blanket, water cup, etc.)

Annual Registration

Per DCF regulations, we are required to update all enrollment information annually. The annual registration packet includes:

- ❖ Updated emergency care information, including health insurance coverage, child's doctor, dentist, and eye doctor information.
- ❖ Emergency contact information, including updated information on persons to whom a child may be released to, Vaccinations and Health Assessments. We are required to maintain up-to-date health records for the children in attendance. You must submit evidence of up-to-date immunizations prior to your child's first day of attendance. Please bring a copy of the immunization record each time your child receives immunizations.
- ❖ If your child cannot receive immunizations due to a medical condition we must have documentation of this from your child's doctor. If your child cannot receive immunizations for religious purpose, you must complete the appropriate form to have on file at center. Your child will be excluded from care immediately if a vaccine preventable disease occurs in the center.
- ❖ You must submit a signed physical form within the first 30 days of enrollment.
- ❖ If your child is behind on immunizations or health assessments as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, you must provide evidence of an appointment for immunizations or health assessment in order to stay enrolled in the program.

**If the early education academy closes, all student and employee records will be kept in the Hope Baptist Church financial office for the required five years and then destroyed. **

Special Health Needs

Please inform the center if your child has a special health need such as allergies or chronic illnesses (asthma, hearing or vision impairments, feeding needs, seizures, diabetes, etc.)

If your child has a chronic condition such as asthma, seizures, or diabetes, we have an allergy/medication form that must be filled out and signed by your child's doctor. The allergy, medication form will be discussed with the teachers. The allergy/medication form must include symptoms to look for, procedures to follow, and medication needed.

- ❖ If your child has a food allergy, you must have the food allergy action plan and the meal modification plan signed by the doctor. The plan must include specific foods child is allergic to, possible reactions, symptoms to look for, and medications to use.
- ❖ All allergy forms will be posted in the classrooms and the kitchen.

Withdrawal Procedures

Parents are required to give a written notice to administration at least 2 weeks prior to withdrawal. If your child drops without appropriate notice, you will still be billed for 2 extra weeks. Most of the time we have a waiting list and need to let other parents know when we can accept their children. HCA has the right to terminate enrollment of a child for non-payment for services; not showing up for several days without calling; disregard to the center's policies; or verbal abuse by parents to teachers, other students, or other parents.

If we are unable to meet your needs or your child's needs, we will also terminate their enrollment. We may also suspend a child for 1-5 days for continual misbehavior. Payment will still be due. If the suspension does not solve the problem, then the child may be withdrawn from the center at the director's discretion. HCA prohibits discrimination against any person seeking entrance into the center on basis of race, creed, sex, national origin, disabilities and/or religious beliefs.

Academics

Curriculum

The Bible tells us, "Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and man." This is the foundation for all we do with our children. Each day, our children will be provided with age-appropriate, hands-on activities that will lay a foundation of growth for the whole child. The teachers use a combination of Frog Street curriculum and ABC Jesus Loves Me Bible curriculum along with fresh ideas from qualified teachers to create a program that is unique to HCA. The activities will be child-directed and teacher facilitated through the use of learning centers. Our preschool curriculum begins daily at 8:45 am. Children in the preschool classes should arrive by 8:30am so they will not miss important instructional time or disrupt the teacher's class.

Child Development Assessments

- ❖ Assessments are completed through one-on-one interaction between the teacher and child, discussions with the parents/guardians, and through documented observations while the child is interacting with other children in the classroom.
- ❖ Assessments are maintained in individual child's portfolio. All assessments are kept in a secure location and are confidential.
- ❖ Conferences will be scheduled with the parents to discuss the assessment. The goal of the conference is to strengthen the partnership between home and center in order to support your child's continued development. During the conference, the teacher will discuss the results, how to interpret the results in terms of future learning opportunities, and the methods used to assess your child.
- ❖ When indicated through formal and informal assessments and screenings, we may refer your child to professionals for diagnostic assessments. Examples of referrals may include, but are not limited to speech therapist, Behavior Specialist, Dentists, and Eye Doctors.
- ❖ Teachers receive training prior to using the assessment tools.
- ❖ Teachers use the assessments in a variety of ways to enhance learning. First, teachers use the assessments to help plan daily activities to encourage continued growth along the child development spectrum. Second, teachers use the assessments to identify children's interests and goals to make the environment more appealing for learning. Finally, teachers use the assessments to aid in improving the curriculum and adapting teaching practices to better suit the individual child and group as a whole.

Hope Christian Academy Lions



HOPE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY
3900 S.E. State Road 100
Starke, Fl. 32091

Early Education Department: K3 – K4

Weekly Tuition (7am – 5pm)
Due on Friday of each week

Graduation Fees: \$80

*VPK only & due by Nov. 30th of
the school year.

*Only required for VPK students
who wish to participate in our graduation
program, ceremony and related activities.

Registration Fees (due upon enrollment)

Early Registration Late Registration

Single Student: \$50 Single Student: \$100
Family: \$75 Family: \$150

Curriculum & Materials: \$150

*We do not require this fee all at once. We will
charge your student(s) Brightwheel account(s).

*VPK students ONLY are exempt from this fee.
However, if your student is enrolled in VPK
Wraparound Care, their account will be billed.

Full Time (All prices per week)

K2: \$145
K3: \$145
K4: \$155

Above prices for our K2, K3, and K4 classes include lunch, 2 snacks daily, nap mat.

VPK M-F, during the school year. (see VPK calendar)

VPK Wraparound Care: \$100 weekly

VPK Wraparound Care is optional and you must register to use this service. The weekly fee includes naptime cot, hot lunch and afternoon snack.

Extended Care Registration Fee: \$25

School-age Before Care: \$20

School-age After Care: \$65

****Step Up For Students scholarship does not pay for extended care fees****

Early Education and Extended Care Payment Policy:

Full tuition is due even if your child is sick or not in attendance. All fees are due by Friday of each week and payable in advance. A late charge of \$20 will be added if the fee is not paid by 9am the following Monday morning. If the full balance due (two weeks of tuition plus late fee) is not paid at the end of two weeks, another \$20 late fee will be charged, and a notice will be sent warning of the child's dismissal from Early Education or Extended Care services. The account will then be referred to Head of School, Terry Denmark. If the full balance due (three weeks of tuition plus late fees) is not paid by the Friday of the third week, the child will be dismissed automatically at the end of the third week. The center will not hold the child's space if he or she is withdrawn. You may make arrangements to pay in advance on a biweekly or monthly basis if you desire, however, **fees must be paid in advance rather than in arrears**. Your tuition payment holds your child's spot. Please contact the Director for more information.

Payments can be made on Brightwheel, in the drop box in the front foyer of the Early Education building or through the Early Education office. For your convenience we accept check, debit/credit, official checks and money orders. Do not pay the teachers as they do not know tuition amounts and are not authorized to handle payments. Please make checks or money orders payable to HCA. If you would like a receipt, we will be happy to give you one. Payments are logged on Brightwheel and can be viewed by parents at any time. For returned checks, you will be responsible for the amount of the check plus a \$30.00 returned check fee. If a total of three of your checks are return for insufficient funds, checks will no longer be permitted. At this point, only cash will be accepted.

Enrollment Documents

We must have the following items before your child attends:

- Completed Enrollment Applicatio; all authorizations signed
- Immunization form (updated each time your child receives shots and prior to expiration date on record)
- Physical Health form (updated every two years)
- Copy of Birth Certificate
- Discipline & Dismissal Agreement; signed
- Student Handbook Signature Form (policies and procedures); signed
- Publication and Photography Permission Form; signed
- Certificate of Eligibility; signed (VPK only)
- VPK Attendance Policy; signed (VPK only)
- Flu info; signed
- Distracted adult info; signed
- All needed supplies (diapers, change of clothes, blanket, water cup, etc.)

Annual Registration

Per DCF regulation, we are required to update all enrollment information annually.
See handbook.

HCA reserves the right of dismissing any child if fees have not been paid.

Advanced Payment Procedures

Tuition payments are due on the Friday for the proceeding week. A \$20.00 late fee will be charged to weekly accounts that have not been paid by Monday, morning at 8:00 am. Full tuition is due even if your child is sick or absent. If payment is not received by 8:00 am Wednesday morning, the child may not return to class until tuition is paid, unless the parent has set up a payment plan with the director. After 2 weeks of non-payment, your child will be un-enrolled. The center will not hold the child's space if he/she is withdrawn. Payments can be made in the drop box in the front foyer or through the front office or in Brightwheel.

For your convenience we accept cash, checks, debit/credit cards and money orders. Do not pay the teachers as they do not know tuition amounts and are not authorized to handle payments. Your check or debit card receipt will serve as your receipt. Please make checks or money orders payable to HCA. If you pay with another method and would like a receipt, we will be happy to give you one. Payments are logged on the computer and upon your request you will be given an annual statement in January for tax purposes, if accounts are current. You may also print this document out yourself from Brightwheel. See Director for questions. You will be charged a \$30.00 fee for returned checks. If a total of three of checks are returned for insufficient funds, checks will no longer be permitted. At this point, only cash will be accepted.

Vacation Time

After 1 year of enrollment, each family will be eligible for one week's vacation from September 1-August 31

Certified by FLOCS

HOPE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY
VPK ATTENDANCE POLICY

2025-2026 School Year

Hope Christian Academy's Early Education department will be operating a Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) for 151 days. All enrolled families will receive a calendar showing the scheduled days off during the operational period of August 18th, 2025 through May 12th, 2026. Attendance during the scheduled instructional days is of utmost importance to remain in the VPK program. Not only is HCA VPK funding linked to attendance, but also the child's success upon entrance into Kindergarten. You will be required to sign and comply with the following policy on Attendance and Tardiness to remain in the VPK program. VPK students not picked up by the end of the VPK instructional time will be charged HCA's VPK late pick up fee. (see below)

Tardiness: Arrival for the VPK program is no later than 8:00 am. This means your student is inside the classroom by the designated arrival time. The instructional day starts at 8:00 am and all children are expected to be in place and ready to start the day, promptly at 8:00 am. Arrivals after the designated arrival time are disruptive to the group in progress and difficult for the arriving child as well. We understand that it is occasionally unavoidable to be "running late", but more than twice a month will not be acceptable and will count as an unexcused absence. Arrivals after the designated arrival time that plan to stay for VPK wraparound care will need to bring a lunch for that day, as lunch counts have already been submitted for the day. There is no charge for care provided before VPK instruction begins.

Late Pick Up: The VPK program ends at 11:30 am daily*. You will be charged a late fee of \$20.00 if your child is not picked up by 11:30 am*. This VPK late pick up fee will be billed through your Brightwheel account and is due by Friday of the week it is billed. If your student is picked up late repeatedly, you will be asked to register for our VPK wraparound program and billed the \$100 weekly fee for that program.

*Does not apply for extended exceptional days. On extended exceptional days starting April 9th, 2026 and ending May 12th, 2026, children must be picked up by 12 pm.

Absence: Daily attendance in the VPK program is necessary for optimal learning; however, you will be allowed 30 absences (20% of VPK days) during the school year. If a child exceeds the allowed absences in a school year, your student may be dismissed from the VPK program, as HCA will not receive payment for your child's spot for absences beyond the allowed 30 absences.

Verifying your child's attendance and absences: The office staff will ask you to stop and see your child's VPK teacher at the end of each month to sign a Parental Choice certificate. You will be asked to sign stating you affirm your child's attendance in the HCA VPK program. Your signature on this form will not only verify the attendance, but also will direct the Early Learning Coalition of North Florida to direct payment for the month's VPK program for your child to HCA, and that you continue to choose Hope Christian Academy to provide your child's VPK program for the upcoming month.

Arrival and Departure Procedures

Arrival

Children from two-year-olds to K4 must arrive no later than 8:30 am.

VPK students must be in their class not later than 8:30 am.

If a child arrives after 8:30 am, they will be turned away because late arrivals may interrupt the classroom learning environment.

When arriving at the center you are to:

- ❖ Escort your child into the center.
- ❖ Assist your child to the appropriate room. Do not leave children at the front door.
- ❖ Assist your child in placing his/her belongings in the proper cubby.
- ❖ Notify a teacher of your child's arrival.
- ❖ Check your child in using the tablet in the lobby or your child's classroom.

The center is not responsible for any child who is not properly checked in or who is not escorted to the correct room.

Parents, please limit your stay to 15 minutes due to the limited parking.

Departure

When checking your child out of the center, you are to:

- ❖ Enter the center to pick up your child and check your child out on the tablet
- ❖ Check your child's cubby for class work, soiled clothing, lunchbox or dirty dishes.
- ❖ Assist your child with any belongings he/she needs to take home. (linens go home each Friday for laundering)
- ❖ Inform a teacher you are leaving with your child.
- ❖ This is the time to verbally interact with the teachers to discuss your child's development and learning.

A daily report will be recorded for toddlers of how your child's day was. This summary can be accessed through your parent account on Brightwheel.

A list of responsible people to whom your child may be released is kept in your child's file and on Brightwheel. Please update these names as needed. The center must see a picture ID of the person picking up your child if we do not know them. Also, please call us ahead of time if someone on your list will pick up your child if they do not normally do so.

Children will not be released to any individual who is obviously impaired (intoxicated, disoriented, aggressive, etc.).

Emergency Contact Procedures

In case of an emergency, parents will be contacted immediately. If parents cannot be reached, contacts from child's file will be called. If no one can be reached and the child may need medical assistance, the physician listed on the application or an ambulance will be notified. Fees for medical services are the parents' responsibility. Our protocol is to call an ambulance or take the child to the nearest medical facility if we are ever in doubt of whether or not a child needs medical assistance.

Fire Drills and Severe Weather

Children and staff rehearse fire drills monthly and severe weather drills at least twice per year. In event of a disaster, parents should stay as calm as possible since phone lines may not be working and traffic may be heavy. Parents, or persons on contact list, will be notified immediately. We will evacuate immediately according to evacuation plans. Parents should make the proper arrangements to pick up children immediately if such an event should occur.

Lock-Down Policy

In the event that there is a threat to the children of our center, we may have a lock-down. This means we will lock all doors and place the children away from all windows. Examples of threats would be having an enraged parent or person who has threatened to come into the center, having an unauthorized person trying to pick up a child, or being advised by the local authorities that there is just cause for us to lock all doors. People may not enter or leave the building until local authorities tell us the situation is over.

Photographs

HCA will contract with a professional photography company for the purpose of providing portraits to the parents. HCA further allows the following people to take photographs: parents, grandparents, legal guardians, and any other person designated on the parent approved release list, Photographs of children by other than HCA staff may be taken during special occasions such as birthday celebrations, graduation field trips, and HCA sponsored family events. All parents must sign a photographic release upon enrollment and specifically designate approved photographic situations.

Guidance and Discipline Routines

As with the academic learning, the staff and administration of HCA believe that what children learn now in the social atmosphere will create a firm foundation for the social skills they will need in the future. Teachers maintain daily routines and set clear limits within each age group. These routines are frequently discussed and defined with children.

Consistency, or knowing what to expect throughout the day, helps children develop a sense of trust and understanding of their environment. We teach children 4 very simple Classroom rules that cover most any situation that may arise when learning how to be good friends, good students and good citizens.

Our classroom rules are as follows:

1. Be Safe – (nobody gets hurt)
2. Be kind – (be nice)
3. Be responsible – (making good choices and taking care of our classroom materials)
4. Have Fun – (It's not fun when we don't follow the first 3 rules)

When discussing with a student, a bad choice that student made, one or more of these rules is applied, helping young students begin to make connections that good choices lead to natural good consequences and bad choices lead to natural bad consequences. These lessons teach students an appropriate level of autonomy when making future decisions regarding behavior. They teach respect, care and consideration for others and the students' environment.

Parent and Teacher Communication Communication

Communication between the lead teachers, parents, and administration is vital to a successful experience for the children and the families in our program. We encourage parents to discuss their child's day with their teacher daily. Positive, guiding communication with the children is our primary practice to help the children develop a sense of independence, confidence, and competence in their own abilities to get along with peers and adults and to involve themselves positively in the classroom activities. Teachers model language and appropriate ways for children to express their feelings and emotions. All the children are encouraged to "use their words" to explain what they want, what they need and how they feel.

Discipline

Appropriate and positive behaviors are recognized on a daily basis. Teachers respond to inappropriate or negative behavior by reasonably discussing the problem and redirecting the child to more positive ways to express himself/herself. Teachers make every effort to build trusting, supportive relationships with each child enrolled in their classroom. In some cases children may need to be separated from the group to calm down or have time away. Children are never isolated out of view or sound of a teacher or director. Once the child has had the opportunity to calm down the child and teacher will talk about what led to the separation and what the child may choose to do the next time a situation arises. A general rule of thumb we follow with a time away is one minute per age of child. For example: a two year old is not away from the group longer than 2 minutes or a three-year-old longer than 3 minutes. Repeat behaviors may result in a time away with the director or supervisor. In cases where there are frequent separations, the teacher will try to discuss concerns with the parents and set up a behavior log to track what may be causing the problem behavior (Ex. Child is hungry, tired, sick, etc.) Corporal punishment or the use of verbal or emotional threats, shaming, or name-calling are never used in this program and are not legal responses for ANY adult in a child care program. However, if unacceptable behavior continues over time and in spite of repeated staff efforts, the center reserves the right to un-enroll the child and terminate Early Education services with the family.

Behavior

This policy will serve as our first step in communication with you about discipline and correction. (By signing the Parent Handbook, you are agreeing to all of our Early Education Academy policies, including this one) Our teachers will also talk to you when you drop off or pick up your child to let you know about good or poor behavior issues. Sometimes, it may be necessary for the director to speak with you about continual behavior issues. The director will contact you, if he or she needs to schedule a conference with you immediately. Dismissal from the center may be necessary if a child's behavior threatens another child or staff member.

Biting Policy

Biting is an age-related concern that usually happens during the toddler years.

Why young children Bite:

- ❖ They are very exploratory and curious. They begin experiencing the world using their mouths. Everything goes into their mouths(including other children's fingers)
- ❖ They do not have the mental ability to tell the difference between things that are real and things that are not (may bite another child's plump arm instead of a teether).
- ❖ They have not developed social skills and/or may not be able to talk yet or express themselves verbally.
- ❖ They bite because they are hungry, tired, not feeling well, or generally want to be left alone.
- ❖ They may be teething and biting relieves the pressure they are feeling from the new teeth coming through their gums.
- ❖ They bite to get attention (even though it is negative attention).
- ❖ They bite when they are around a lot of other children or are intimidated by another child who may be too close or is being too rough.
- ❖ Some children bite often while some children may never bite.

Steps Our Center Will Take to Help Prevent:

- ❖ We will maintain our teacher to child ratios throughout the day to keep class size smaller.
- ❖ We will provide teethers, rattles, and toys children can chew on when they are teething or are frustrated.
- ❖ We will encourage toddlers to use their words to express themselves.
- ❖ Our caregivers will stay as close as possible ("shadowing") to any child who has a history of biting, so he or she can quickly intervene. (Sometimes this is not possible).
- ❖ We will attach a teether to the clothing of any child who is biting and encourage them to bite on the teether instead of their peers.

Center's Action If Biting Occurs:

- ❖ The focus will be on the child who was bitten, not the biter.
- ❖ The teacher will clean the bite with soap and water. Ice may be applied, if necessary, to minimize bruising and swelling.
- ❖ The biter will be encouraged to comfort the bitten child and apologize if old enough to do so.
- ❖ Parents will be notified immediately if the bite breaks the skin
- ❖ An incident report documenting the occurrence will be written and signed by the witnessing staff member, signed by parent/guardian and director and filed in both student files.

If a child is an aggressive biter or is biting in an aggressive manner, the parent will be contacted immediately to pick up the child. If necessary, the child may be placed on a 1-5 day suspension period.

Since constantly drawing blood can create health issues and much distress from other children, staff, and parents, a child who constantly bites may be withdrawn from the center at the director's discretion.

Actions That Will Not Be Taken:

- ❖ Child will not be bitten back or physically punished.
- ❖ Biter's name will not be given out to the parents of the child bitten (due to confidentiality issues).

Communication with Parents

Our primary form of communicating with families is Brightwheel messaging. Many Times, there may be announcements placed on the parent board in the lobby for parents to read. Please check your child’s cubby daily to see if the teachers have sent home information for you as well. It is the parents’ responsibility to check daily reports and messages on Brightwheel parent account.

Parent Involvement

Parents are encouraged to visit the classrooms. We discourage visitation at nap since children are sleeping and the center is very quiet at this time. People who are not on the child’s pick-up list are not allowed to visit the children while they are at the center. Conferences should be scheduled ahead of time with your child’s teacher or the director in order for us to give you our full attention regarding your child. Caregivers cannot conference while they are teaching an entire class. We love to have parent volunteers, and we will consider any suggestions you have that may better our center.

Potty Training

Children who are potty-training must be in a diaper, pull-up or underwear. If a potty-trained child has an accident in his/her clothes, the clothes will not be washed out but will be placed in a bag to take home. Children must be completely potty trained before entering K3, K4, or VPK.

Childcare Assistance

Our school does not accept school readiness scholarships. We only accept VPK vouchers for those entering our PreK program.

Certified by FLOCS

Handbook Signature Form

Please detach and return this form to the director of HCA Early Education

I, _____ have read and fully understand the policies and procedures outlined in the Parents' Handbook. I have discussed any policy or procedure I do not understand with childcare center's director. I agree to the policies and procedures that are set forth in the handbook.

Father/Guardian Print

Father/Guardian Signature

Date:

Mother/Guardian Print

Mother/Guardian Signature

Date:

I also understand that sections 7.1 and 7.2, of the Child Care Facility Handbook, require a current physical examination (Form 3040) and immunization record (Form 680 or 681) in my student's file, and agree to provide such upon enrollment of my child, and update said physical examination and immunization record in a timely manner before expiration of forms currently on file.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date