

The Oaks Early Learning Academy Parent Handbook



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*Building the Future
One Child at a Time*



Jacksonville Housing Authority

The Oaks Early Learning Academy
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EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The Oaks Early Learning Academy believe that children thrive when parents and teachers work together to provide a *safe, nurturing, self-paced* environment, which encourages children to learn through play and exploration.

We offer creative open-ended activities with *hands-on* experiences to stimulates your child's curiosity. Children learn most effectively through a concrete "*play oriented*" approach to learning.

We provide an environment to build and maintain a *positive* self concept, so that every child develops to their greatest potential, *Physically.. Socially.. Emotionally.. and Intellectually...*

We strive to:

Establish a Balanced Day of:
Physical Activities
Cognitive Stimulation
Social and Emotional Development

Develop and Reinforce:
Habits of Safety
Habits of Good Health
Attitudes of Friendship

Develop Attitudes and Traits Conducive to:
Success and Learning
Curiosity and Persistence
Self-Reliance and Confidence
Communication Skills
Creative Imagination
Good Work Habits
Problem Solving Techniques

To Acquaint Your Child With:
Language and Pre-Reading Skills
Math Readiness and Counting Experiences
Pre-writing Skills
Shapes, Sizes and Colors
Their Environment
Their Community
Themselves

Our Mission and Responsibility

Our mission is to provide the highest quality of care and education each child. We encourage each child to develop to their greatest potential—physically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually.

Open Door Policy

Parents are welcome and encouraged to visit our center at any time. We also encourage you and your child to visit the classroom before enrollment.



Non-discrimination Policy

Enrollment applications are accepted without regard to sex, race, religion, color, national origin or any special need that your child may have.

Hours of Operation

Our center is open from 6:30 am—6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. We do ask that you make every effort to have your child at the center by 9:00 am, so he/she does not miss any scheduled activities. Please be considerate and pick your child up promptly, as our teachers have families too. All children need to be out of the building by 6:00 pm. If your child is picked up after 6:00 pm there is a \$1.00 per minute per child late charge. If you are sending someone else to pick up your child, who is not on the pick up list, you must notify the center and the person must have identification. Anyone that we don't know picking up a child will have their id checked.

Vacation

After continuous enrollment of 6 months, each child will be eligible for 1 week (5 days) of vacation at no charge. A "no charge" vacation can be taken one day at a time or as a whole week. You must let the director know in advance as to what your plans are. For all other absences, including illnesses, you will be charged the full weekly tuition. In the event of an extended absence, it is usually best to terminate enrollment, and pay a new registration fee when your child returns. Please let us know any time your child is going to be out. If your child is absent for more than a week without making us aware of the circumstances, we will terminate your child's enrollment.

Letter from the director continued

The way to help your child succeed in school is to explore and learn in your home environment. Help your child become an independent, enthusiastic, curious learner. You don't need to buy a lot of special toys—just be a good listener and talk to your child as you go about your normal everyday household chores. Sometimes after a long day at work this may seem difficult, but you'll find that this kind of attention and interaction has a wonderful effect on children and makes your job as a parent more fun, interesting and sometimes easier.

You have made a good choice for your child by choosing our early learning program. If at anytime we do not meet your expectations or you just have a suggestion for us, my door is always open. You are a welcome and valuable asset to our program.

Sincerely,

Charlene Gross

Director

"Dreaming New Dreams"



Charlene Gross
The Oaks Early Learning Academy

Dear Parents,

We welcome you and your child to the Oaks Early Learning Academy. Our curriculum works best when teachers and parents work together—and we are looking forward to developing a partnership with you and your child.

Being trained in child development and early childhood education, we see how your child interacts with other children and adults, assess what your child is learning and how he or she is progressing,—but only you have in-depth knowledge of your child. You know your child's interest, fears, joys, routines and past. You are most familiar with your child's world. You know your child's learning process. If you share with us what is happening in your child's life, death of a loved one—nightmares—trips—separation from a parent, we can better understand your child's needs. We can help deal with your child's positive and difficult events through reassuring stories, soothing activities, and extra TLC.

You are also your child's first and most important teacher. Your home is a continued learning environment, the way you talk with your child makes a tremendous impact on how they think, feel about themselves and the kind of people they will become.

Continued....

Registration Fee

A non-refundable, one time registration fee of \$25 per child will be due upon enrollment (this fee does not pertain to those who are on a subsidized child care program). Families with an enrollment of more than one child will be charged \$35.00 per family.

Tuition Payments

Payments are due on Monday for the current week of care. Special arrangements may be made to accommodate payments on a bi-weekly or monthly basis, these special arrangements must be made and approved in advance by the Director. If you fail to make special arrangements in advance there will be a \$15 per week late charge.

Cash payments are not accepted. We accept checks or money orders only. For your convenience checks/money orders may be put in the drop box located in the Parent Resource Room, or the Director's office. We offer a 15% sibling discount for families that have more than one child enrolled at the Oaks ELA.

Returned Checks

Returned checks will be assessed a \$30.00 service fee. Money Orders will only be accepted after two returned checks.

Emergency Plans

We have written emergency plans regarding child security and safety, hurricanes, fires, power failure, etc. The are available for parents review if requested. In the event of severe weather and the Oaks ELA is closed, please check the local tv/radio station. We are usually only closed if City offices are closed. You may also call the center. In most case a message will be left on the center's voice mail system.



Parent Volunteers

We encourage parents to participate in their child's education by volunteering in the classroom, coming along on field trips, attending parent meetings, or helping out with special events.

When volunteering most often you will be asked to work in your child's classroom, but please check with the Director, sometimes there may be a specific activity or project that we need your help with.

Long-term volunteers, or volunteers who come on a regular basis will receive a orientation, and may be required to have a background check.

Although we want you to have a good relationship with the school staff, we discourage personal related visits and socialization with staff while they are working. The staff's attention must stay focused on the children.

Please always sign the volunteer log in the office when you visit.

While at the Early Learning Academy or participating in a sponsored event we ask that you help us by:

- *Assisting where needed under the direction of the professional staff*
- *Maintaining a professional attitude at all times*
- *Allowing professional staff to deal with problem situations*
- *Supporting the philosophy of the program*
- *Treating all children with dignity and respect*

Pick up & Drop off Procedures

For the safety and well being of your child, parents are required to sign children in and out upon entering and exiting the center. The sign-in book is located in your child's classroom. When signing in and out you must use your full signature with first and last name. This book is an important security log, so please do not let your child write in it. You must make sure that your child's teacher is aware that your child has arrived in the morning and also that he/she is leaving in the afternoon. Parents must walk into the classroom to drop off and pick up their child. *For your child's safety, DO NOT drop children off in the parking lot or at the door.*

NAEYC Accreditation

Our Early Learning Academy is licensed by the Department of Children and we follow all standards set by the State of Florida. We are also one of the few programs in North Florida that is accredited by The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

We have undergone a comprehensive process of internal self-study, have had an outside professional reviewer to verify compliance with the criteria for a High-Quality Early Childhood Program. In a high—quality program you will see:

- *Frequent, positive, warm interactions among teachers and children*
- *Planned learning activities appropriate to children's age and development, such as block building, painting, reading stories, dress-up, and active outdoor play*
- *Specially trained teachers and directors*
- *Ongoing professional development*
- *Enough adults to respond to individual children's needs*
- *Many varied age-appropriate materials*
- *Respect for cultural diversity*
- *A healthy and safe environment for adults and children*
- *Inclusive environments*
- *Nutritious meals and/or snacks*
- *Regular, two-way communication with parents who are welcome visitors at all times*
- *Effective administration*
- *Ongoing, systematic evaluation*

The Oaks Early Learning Academy is a "Not for Profit" Program. All fees go directly towards program operation.

Our Curriculum

Do you want your child to

Become an avid reader? Enjoy solving math problems?

Speak and write well? Be creative?

Make decisions independently? Develop physically?

Have good study skills? Get along well with others?

Be self-confident? Enjoy learning? Love school?

If you do, then we share the same goals for your child and our early childhood program is perfect for your child.

We use the “Creative Curriculum” program, published by Teaching Strategies. The philosophy behind our curriculum is that young children learn best by doing! Learning is not just repeating what someone else says, it requires active thinking and experimenting to find out how things work and to find out first hand about the world we live in. More information on our curriculum, planned activities, and curriculum goals can be found posted in the classroom & in your enrollment packet.

Parent Responsibilities & Ways to help your child Learn

- Bring your child to school by 9am so they don't miss any part of the program
- Be available to talk to your child's teacher at pick up & drop off
- Expect your child to go outside at school. Dress them for the weather
- Communicate with your child's teacher about anything pertinent that may affect them
- Read to your child every day. It can be anything—a book, magazine, a menu, a cereal box.
- Use new vocabulary words in your conversations with them
- Recite Nursery Rhymes with your child
- If your child's teacher assigns homework, make sure that your child does it and turns it back in
- Show your child that you are interested in their work at school
- Remember that your child is always learning. They listen to your conversations, tv shows, and music. They watch how you handle stress & problems. They love you and want to be just like you.

Signing In and Out—continued

Under no circumstance will we release a child to anyone that is under 16 years old or is not listed on your child's enrollment form without prior notice. We will ask for identification when we are not familiar with the person picking up your child. If a person comes to pick up a child without authorization, we will not release the child.

What to Bring

- **Extra Set of Clothing**
- **Diapers & Wipes (if apply)**
- **Blanket and a crib size sheet**
- **Toothbrush**

Because children have bathroom accidents and spills during meals, art activities, etc. You are required to keep *one full set of clean clothing* for your child, at the center at all times (you may want to bring additional clothing if your child is in the potty-training stage).

Children in diapers will also need a *supply of diapers and wipes* for the day, week, or month (whatever works best for you). We will let you know when your child is running low. If your child needs any kind of ointment or powder, you will need to sign a permission slip with the exact brand name listed on the form, this can be done in the office or with your child's teacher.

Your child will also need to bring a *sheet or blanket (and maybe a pillow)* for nap time and a *toothbrush*.

Children should not bring toys from home unless for a special activity such as “show & tell” Your child's teacher will let you know of special activities.

**We are not responsible for toys brought from home.*

Community Resources

We maintain a current list of child and family support services available in the community. If at anytime you need information on health services, mental health, nutrition, special education screening, subsidized housing or childcare, please see your child's teacher of the director.

Meals and Snacks

All children enrolled will receive a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack. We participate in the USDA Food program, and there are no additional charges for meals. We ask that you do not bring food from home (or a fast food restaurant) unless there is an specific dietary reason. Please let us know of any allergies your child may have. We can make food accommodations in most cases if your child has a minimal food allergy. In cases of children with severe food allergies the parent will be responsible for providing the meal, and a doctor's note will be required with emergency instructions. Weekly menus are posted in the office and classroom.

Breakfast will be served between 7:30—9:00 am. Children arriving after this time will not be served breakfast. Teachers have activity plans and class schedules that they make every effort to follow.

Medication

Any medication that your child is required to have during operating hours must be given directly to your child's teacher. For safety reasons medication can not be left in your child's bag, pocket or cubby. A medication form must be completed and signed by a parent. We are not authorized to dispense any medication without the written consent from the child's pediatrician and parent. All medication must be in its original container including the child's name, date, specific amount, and time of dosage. Children will not be given any medication that has been prescribed for a sibling, or any other family member. We are unable to give a different dose of medicine besides the dose on the label. We do not give over-the-counter medication, such as Tylenol or cough syrup, without a doctor's note stating the medications and the dosage.

Illness

For your child's well being, as well as the other children's, we ask that you do not bring your child to the Center displaying any signs of illness.

If at any time during your child's day at the Center he/she displays any of the following symptoms, you will be contacted and asked to pick your child up. If your child is sent home, he/she will not be able to return to the Center the following day unless he/she is symptom free or has a doctor's note stating that he/she is not contagious.

Parent Meetings

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We provide regular parent meetings to keep parents informed on center issues and activities. At these meetings we also usually offer a parent education activity as well. Each year, usually in September, parents have the opportunity to elect parent group officers who act in an advisory capacity to the Director. Although this parent advisory group has defined advisory roles, each parent has the capacity to give input and offer suggestions to our program.

Sleeping Arrangements

The children's rest time is generally two (2) hours that vary per classroom from 11:15 am —3pm. All of the children sleep on a mat on the floor with a blanket brought from home. For health reasons, we try to place mats 36" apart or with a solid barrier between them. Children's blankets are laundered at the center weekly and children's individual mats are cleaned and disinfected weekly. All children are directly supervised at the rest time, as well as throughout the day.

Communication

One of our goals is to keep you informed on your child's progress and keep you informed about the program, curriculum and activities and events. Beside daily communication with teachers, parents of children in the toddler and Preschool II will receive a written daily report about their child's eating, sleeping, daily activities, etc.

Children in the Preschool III and IV classes will have a daily board posted outside their classroom to inform you of daily educational activities.

All parents will be kept regularly informed in their preferred language by newsletters, fliers, parent meetings, and bulletin boards.

Teachers and parents will regularly converse at pick up and at drop off times informally. Formal meetings and or phone calls can be arranged at anytime with teachers and/or director—to share information, work out problems and differences, share ideas, work on a behavior plan, etc. Every effort is made to communicate with families both verbally and through correspondence in language that families understand. Please let us know if we can help in translation of any of our materials into another language.

Assessment of Children

Our staff continually assess each student in our program to monitor their strengths, learning style, needs and interests. Teachers compile portfolios on each child and do development check lists to review your child's progress. Parents will have the opportunity to contribute and give input on their child's assessment. Formal conferences will be set up with you but please feel free to request one at any time.

Throughout the year, outside organizations such as Nemours, Bright Start! and Jacksonville Children's Commission offer developmental screenings to be administered onsite at the Oaks. You will be notified of these screenings.

Assessments are used as tools for teacher's to plan challenging and stimulating activities for the children. The assessment we commonly use is completed over a period of time and is not used as a one day test. If a teacher sees that a child has not mastered a particular skill, or that the skill is just beginning to emerge, then activities are planned to give that child more experience. If our assessments & screenings show developmental problems or delays, the parent will be notified and a plan worked out to provide and find the best possible services for the child. Assessments are completed in the fall, winter and spring of each year. Parent conferences are offered in the fall, winter, and in the spring or whenever a parent requests one.

All children assessments are confidential and are only shared with parents, pertinent staff and support personnel in relation to the child.

Special Needs & ADA Compliance

Our center is ADA Compliant and we will do our best to make every best modification to our program so that all children can participate.

If your child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or treatment plan from another agency or organization, we will follow it to the best of our ability.

Accident & Incident Reports

If your child receives a mild injury (bump, scrape, bite, etc) during the day you will receive a written report notifying you of what happened, and the medical treatment that was given. In some cases a more extensive injury (a bump on the head, a cut) will justify us calling you to let you know. Even with children being well supervised and the attention being paid to the safety of our program, accidents do happen. We will do our best to document the accident, notify you quickly if needed, and treat your child efficiently. All of our staff are Pediatric First Aid and CPR certified.

Illness—continued

Illness symptoms may include the following:

- Fever of 101° or more
- Severe coughing or wheezing
- Re-occurring loose stools or diarrhea
- Unidentified rash
- Thick green mucus or discharge from the nose

Holidays

The Center will be closed on the following days:

New Years Day	Christmas Eve
Memorial Day	Christmas Day
Fourth of July	Veteran's Day
Labor Day	President's Day
Thanksgiving Day	Dr. Martin Luther King Day
Day after Thanksgiving	Good Friday

Field Trips

To enhance our curriculum, occasionally we will take our 4-year-old children on field trips. Parents are always welcome and encouraged to attend. At times, there may be a small charge for field trips to cover the cost of admission and transportation. Car seats are required to transport children under four or under forty pounds.

We follow strict transportation policy to safeguard children on trips.

- Parents must sign giving children permission to attend before hand.
- Vehicle safety is checked before hand including that children are secured properly in the vehicle.
- Children are counted and attendance documented on and off the vehicle and while at the destination several times.

Continued

Field Trips — continued

- A cell phone, emergency parent numbers and first aid supplies are carried on each trip.
- If the arranged transportation is or becomes inoperable, alternative safe transportation will be obtained from JHA or an outside bus company.
- If your child has a disability or need that may require a different way to transport or additional supervision please let us know, and we will do our best to accommodate.

Parent Resource Room

In our efforts to promote parental involvement at home and, literacy and reading we have books, toys, and learning activities available for the children to borrow and take home. These materials are available for check-out in this room. Also in the parent resource room, we have internet access/computer available for parent use and various parent resources.

Dress

Your child should be able to fully experience outdoor play, art and paint projects, floor games, etc. Your child will go outside daily weather permitting. Please dress him/her for the weather. Also, dress your child in comfortable play clothes that you do not mind getting messy/dirty. We suggest that children wear tennis shoes to allow for playing, running, and climbing in a safe manner. Slides, Flip-flops and boots are not considered safe and should not be worn to school.

Jewelry such as rings, gold chains, bracelets, earrings, and hair beads should not be worn for safety reasons. The only earrings that will be allowed are small studs.

**We are not responsible for lost jewelry or clothing*

Smoking

Our facility, outdoor playground, and courtyard areas are entirely smoke free. Please no smoking in the presence of children or any Oaks ELA sponsored event or activity.

Discipline Policy

Discipline is the effective management of children's behavior with the goal of self-disciplined children. The most effective class management technique is the provision of many age-appropriate activities in an environment that promotes child success.

Guidance techniques used, include but are not limited to:

- *Anticipating problems to provide immediate intervention*
- *Gentle reminders*
- *Distractions*
- *Offering choices*
- *Using positive reinforcement*
- *Offering encouragement*
- *Redirection*
- *Consistency*
- *Discussion with the individual child*
- *Discussion among group of children*
- *Discussion with parents*
- *Overlooking small annoyances*
- *Providing renewal time*

Discipline may not involve any of the following:

- *Withholding of meals, snacks, or water*
- *Denying rest*
- *Physical punishment*
- *Threat of physical punishment*
- *Ridiculing or degrading*

Because our child guidance philosophy does not necessarily support punitive discipline practices, parents may not physically punish their child on the Learning Center Property.

Please Note: We are required by the Dept of Children and Families to report any suspected child abuse—physical, sexual, emotional, or child neglect.

Classroom Pets

As part of our learning curriculum, we have pets in some of the classrooms. We usually have animals, such as; fish, gerbils and birds. These animals are part of our learning environment, which allows children the opportunity to observe, touch and participate in the care taking process. If required, our pets have been certified for health by a veterinarian &/or pet store.