



Family Handbook

updated December 2023

Contents

Our Educational Philosophy	4
Admission, Registration, and Tuition	4
Enrollment	4
Tuition Fees	5
Annual Rate Increase and Registration Packet	5
Annual Calendar	6
Withdrawal Fees and Changes in Status	6
Termination of Services	7
Parent and Guardian Conduct Policy	7
Language	7
Threats/Disruptions	7
Zero Tolerance	7
Obligation to Inform Law Enforcement	8
Family Cooperation	8
Emergency and Release Contacts and Approved Pickups	8
Inclusion	9
Translation Services	10
Child to Staff Ratios and Primary Caregiving	10
Complaints	11
Child Supervision	11
Accidents and Injuries	11
Emergency Response Procedures	12
Extreme Weather Policies	12
Security	12
Confidentiality	13
Mandated Reporting	13
Arrival and Departure	13
Visitors	14
Media Policies	14
Special Activities	14
Our Management	15
Highlands Academy Teachers	16
Professional Development and Planning time for Teachers	16
Parent Teacher Conferences	17
Positive Guidance	17
Behavior Management and Developmental Concerns	17

Food and Nutrition	19
Breastfeeding	19
Allergens	19
Celebrations and Birthdays	19
Clothing	20
Diapering and Toilet Learning	20
Personal Belongings	21
Rest Time	21
Health	21
Hand Washing	21
Allergies	21
Medication	22
Illness	22
Medical Records	23
Immunizations	23
Physicals	23
Community Resources	23
Infants: 6 weeks up to 18 months	24
Toddlers: 12 months up to 36 months	24
Preschool 30 months up to 4 years	25
Pre-K: 42 months up to 6 years	25
Transitions	26
Ancillary Programming	27
Communication Tools	27
Newsletter	28
Weekly Updates	28
Brightwheel	28
Experience Curriculum	28
Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies Gold	28
Family Involvement	29
Babysitting Policy	29

About Highlands Academy

Welcome to Highlands Academy! Highlands Academy, affectionately known as HA, is a premiere preschool and nursery committed to the needs of busy families living or working in the Highlands and Downtown area. Highlands Academy is dedicated to providing a nurturing and play based environment where infants through pre-kindergarten age children will grow, develop and thrive. Highlands Academy holds a Permanent Childcare License for children aged 6 weeks to 6 years. Our hours of operation are 7:30 am- 5:30 pm Monday – Friday.

This Family Handbook is intended to acquaint newly enrolled families with center management, programs, and policies.

Our Educational Philosophy

Highlands Academy and our staff believe in learning through play. Children blossom when the process of discovery is encouraged and guided by knowledgeable, nurturing teachers. In this environment, learning is a natural and joyful experience. Our dedicated teachers focus on your child as a whole person: physical, social-emotional, cognitive, and language development. Each of these aspects is carefully addressed in every lesson plan and activity. Our classrooms are set up with distinct learning areas: blocks, dramatic play, toys and games, art, library, discovery, sand and water, and music and movement. This configuration encourages self-constructed learning by students of all ages.

Highlands Academy has developed a continuous quality improvement plan that includes goals, timelines, and outcomes that are updated annually by the owners and administration and shared with families and staff. Continuous quality improvement is a process which ensures that our organization and partners are systematic and intentional about improving services and practices and increasing positive outcomes for families and their children. This process is highly valued at Highlands Academy. We send out an annual Parent Survey that advises us on our program's strengths and opportunities for improvement. These results are added to the plan and sent to families with our new goals each year in newsletter format.

Admission, Registration, and Tuition

Enrollment

When you choose Highlands Academy as your school, we require a non-refundable application fee to place your child on our waitlist. When a space opens for your child you will be asked to pay a deposit/registration fee to hold the space until your start date (usually within 30 to 60 days).

Children are admitted without regard to race culture, sex, religion, national origin, or disability. We do not discriminate based on special needs if a safe, supportive environment can be provided.

To enroll your child, you must complete the Enrollment Packet for your child, which includes guardian, emergency contacts, medical and emergency, and authorization information. In addition, you must provide the medical forms from your child's most recent well child visit. You must complete and sign all forms before your child may attend. We require that all children have up-to-date vaccinations to enroll. If your child is on a delayed schedule, we will require the documentation to support this delay. This information must be complete prior to or on your child's first day of school. We may deny your child's attendance at school until this information is submitted.

Enrollment is based on classroom availability. We are a full-time program, with limited part time enrollment for 3 - 5 year old students. Occasionally, we will have scheduling conflicts with the part time enrolled children and need to adjust schedules to accommodate transitions. Parents will be notified at minimum two weeks before this change is needed.

Tuition Fees

We currently use Brightwheel for billing — you will be invited to sign with your waitlist application. Tuition is due on, or before, the first of the month in which service will be provided. A \$25 late fee will be assessed if tuition has not been paid by the twentieth of the month. Non-payment of tuition by the end of the month is grounds for dismissal from Highlands Academy. However, if you anticipate difficulty paying tuition by the deadline, please immediately speak with center management.

Tuition fees, attached with this handbook, are not subject to pro-rating for illness, holidays, or emergency closures of the center.

When a child transitions to a new age group, the next billing invoice will reflect the current year's tuition rate.

Annual Rate Increase and Registration Packet

Highlands Academy operates based solely on tuition. Annual rate increases of 2 - 5% are typically announced in January with new enrollment contracts. The increases would be in effect September of that year to coincide with the new school year. There are times when increases can take place outside of this period at the center management's discretion; you will be notified well

in advance. Should you complete your packet by January of any given year, you should be aware that a tuition increase will go into effect on September 1 and will not reflect the tuition rate which you have been shown previously.

Each January, annual registration packets that outline the upcoming school year's tuition rates, enrollment forms, any changes to this Family Handbook, and other communication about Highlands Academy will be distributed to each current family. These must be received by January 31 for HA to bill the registration fee that will hold your space. These fees are not optional and will be invoiced through Brightwheel annually in March.

Annual Calendar

The annual calendar for the following school year is also released with registration each January. Each year, Highlands Academy has between 28 and 30 closure days, these include closures for holidays, professional development days for our staff, and seasonal breaks (Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer). Our recognized holidays are as follows:

- New Year's Day (January 1st)
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- President's Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth (June 19th)
- Independence Day (July 4th)
- Labor Day
- Indigenous People's Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day (December 25th)

Withdrawal Fees and Changes in Status

If you should choose to leave our center, we require written notice **sixty days** before your child's last day in the classroom. The last month's tuition will be due the first of the month and will be prorated if your child is exiting prior to the end of the month. If the required notice is not given, families will be billed for up to two additional month's fees. Please understand that we are based solely on tuition and when there is inadequate notice, we do not have sufficient time to notify families who have been placed on our waitlist for anticipated availability.

If your Preschool or Pre-K aged student will be departing Highlands Academy to attend ECE-3, ECE-4, or Kindergarten in another program, we require notice of their exit date by March 1. The annual registration fee will not be applied if your student is exiting the program. If you are unsure if your Preschool or Pre-K aged child will be departing Highlands Academy for

another program, you may place them on our Preschool or Pre-K waitlist. Families who choose to re-enroll at Highlands Academy from the waitlist may not have a guaranteed space despite their prior enrollment in our program. If you enroll your Preschool or Pre-K aged child at Highlands Academy and then depart for another program without notice by March 1, your family will be charged up to six months of tuition for the vacated space.

If the full sixty day notice is provided and your departure is on or prior to the 15th of the month, you will be prorated 50% of your final month's tuition. If your departure date is after the 15th of each month, you will be charged the full tuition amount for the month.

Termination of Services

Occasionally, some children and/or families may not adjust to the center environment. In these cases, center management may ask a parent or guardian to withdraw their child. If we make that decision, we will notify the family at least one week in advance. There may be cases where immediate withdrawal is required, such as the safety of enrolled children or staff being threatened. Highlands Academy reserves the right to terminate services as deemed appropriate at our sole discretion, with or without notice.

Parent and Guardian Conduct Policy

Language

Students and parents are prohibited from using profane, obscene, bigoted, or another type of offensive language or gestures on campus or at school-sponsored events.

Threats/Disruptions

The school has a zero-tolerance policy regarding threats and disruptions. Any threat or disruptions will be addressed as a serious issue and parents, or students may be asked to leave or be removed from school grounds and consequences may include suspension, probation, or expulsion.

Zero Tolerance

The school does not allow the consumption, possession, dissemination, or individuals under the influence of any alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, marijuana, or illegal drugs. School policy expressly forbids students and parents from smoking, vaping, juuling, or using tobacco products, as well as possessing such products including oils or liquids, at any time in or on School property. All cigarettes (including electronic), vaping devices, smokeless tobacco,

lighters, matches, etc. or other devices like cigarettes, lighters, matches, etc. brought on campus by students will be confiscated. Discipline will be imposed based on the circumstances existing at the time and may include suspension, probation, or expulsion.

Obligation to Inform Law Enforcement

If we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child, to protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick-up the child, or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Recurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

The school has a duty to report certain situations to The Department of Family and Protective Services, Childcare Licensing and/or law enforcement. The school also may contact and/or cooperate with law enforcement personnel or other governmental agencies if the school, in its sole discretion, believes it is warranted in a particular situation. The school may assess disciplinary consequences for student/parent conduct, even if a criminal investigation or other legal action is ongoing.

Family Cooperation

A positive and constructive working relationship between the school and its families is essential to the fulfillment of the school's educational purpose. Thus, the School reserves the right not to extend the privilege of enrollment or re-enrollment to a child if the school reasonably concludes that the actions of the child's family make such a positive and constructive relationship impossible or otherwise seriously interferes with the school's accomplishment of its educational purpose. Moreover, Highlands Academy reserves the right to expel a child at any time if, in the judgment of the Owner, conduct of anyone directly associated with the child, including but not limited to the child's family, in or out of the school, is not in keeping with the school's accepted standards or principles. There will be no refund of tuition where such enforced withdrawal occurs, and any unpaid balance is payable in full according to the terms of the child's enrollment contract.

Emergency and Release Contacts and Approved Pickups

Emergency and Release Contacts and Approved Pickups are subject to the same conduct policies as parent(s) and guardian(s).

Inclusion

Highlands Academy is committed to identifying developmental issues that may affect a child's success in school and later in their adult life. Early intervention is the key to mediating any issues that may arise for a child. If the parent or teacher of an enrolled child has a concern that a child has a developmental delay or other problem (physical, developmental, emotional, social, or behavioral), staff will support the parent through the process of contacting the appropriate agency, for example Child Find, for further observation and evaluation. Child Find is part of Colorado's system for identifying children suspected of having a delay in development. If a young child is not meeting typical developmental milestones, or someone is concerned about the child's growth or learning, Child Find teams will evaluate how the child plays, learns, speaks, behaves and moves. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine if there is a significant delay or if there is a need for early intervention or special education services. Evaluations conducted by Child Find teams are at no cost to parents.

Families with children with special needs are welcome to apply for enrollment. Highlands Academy is an environment that strives to accommodate the needs of all children. In some cases, the administrative staff in consultation with the family, the nurse consultant, and/or other specialists may determine if we are able to meet the child's needs and the child will benefit from the program. If it is determined that we are not able to appropriately meet the needs of the child and the family, we will work closely with specialists to refer the family and the child to a more appropriate placement.

Each child who has identified special needs and an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) is encouraged to provide a copy of the plan to Highlands Academy staff. This ensures that teachers and staff working with your child are informed about certain applicable aspects of their IEPs. Sharing the plan ensures that the recommendations found in the plan are being followed while the child is in this program. If there are any changes to the information, please make sure that the child's teacher and the HA administration are made aware of those changes. Providing us and the doctor and therapists with a signed release will also encourage better communication.

It is important to note, that although HA will work with all children to address a variety of disabilities, our staff does not have specialized degrees or expertise that may be needed to address every disability or health need. In the event the parents or the teachers have a concern regarding any one child's development, the parents and the teachers will meet to discuss all available options that will provide the child with necessary help and interventions. This is a collaborative venture; participation and cooperation of all involved parties is required.

Translation Services

At Highlands Academy, we are committed to provide our families with quality care. In some circumstances, communication creates a barrier between family and HA staff which can impact the quality of services we provide. HA will make every reasonable effort to communicate with English as a second language families in their home language.

If there is a language barrier that limits communication with a family, we will utilize a translator from Trans-Perfect Translation Services, or another service available. We will use their service to schedule an over the phone appointment to assist families. We will ensure that written forms of communication are translated either through a language translation service or by using Google translation services.

Additionally, if there is a predominant language in a classroom, in addition to English, it is the policy of this program that we will proactively attempt to provide a teacher or aide in the classroom who is bilingual in that language. Research has shown that bilingual teachers and staff can help build strong relationships and communication between families and a program to support the development of the young learner. To that end, we will also ensure that there are materials in the classroom that support the languages of the children, such as labels, music, and books.

Child to Staff Ratios and Primary Caregiving

All Children are always supervised. All caregivers receive scheduled breaks which reduce fatigue and help to ensure alertness. Highlands Academy has implemented a plan to improve teacher to child ratios by employing a third teacher in each classroom throughout the school. Each classroom has a lead teacher and two assistants that are assigned to your classroom for the year. Ideally, your child will be assigned a classroom for the year and transitions to the next oldest class will be discussed and scheduled the following summer or fall. These transitions could occur at different times if opportunity arises.

At minimum HA maintains the following standards for child to staff ratios:

Age	Child to Staff	Maximum Group Size
6 weeks - 18 months	<u>[5 to 1]</u>	<u>[10]</u>
12 - 24 months	<u>[5 to 1]</u>	<u>[10]</u>
24 - 30 months	<u>[7 to 1]</u>	<u>[14]</u>
30 - 36 months	<u>[8 to 1]</u>	<u>[16]</u>
3 - 4 years	<u>[10 to 1]</u>	<u>[20]</u>
4 - 6 years	<u>[12 to 1]</u>	<u>[24]</u>

Complaints

We are a licensed facility striving for the highest care possible. Here is the licensing contact information should you need it. Our License number is #1630106.

Colorado Department of Early Childhood
1575 Sherman Street, Denver, CO 80203
Tel: (303) 866-5958 Fax: (303)-866-4453

All licensing reports are available for review in the office, or you can view them through the licensing website via Colorado Shines, located at https://www.coloradoshines.com/program_details?id=001o000000JBEDdAAP.

Safety and Security

Child Supervision

Children entrusted to our care will be always supervised by qualified teachers and staff. Teachers will meet or exceed state licensing requirements for the care and education of young children. Our teachers are all certified in Adult, Child, and Infant CPR/First Aid and Standard Precautions (previously known as Universal Precautions and Bloodborne Pathogens).

Teachers use Brightwheel, our in-school app, to track the children's location throughout the day. A name to face tool is used at regular intervals and during all transitions to identify where children are at all times and maintain proper adult to child ratios.

Accidents and Injuries

Childhood is full of accidents. When a child is involved in an accident at Highlands Academy, an incident report will be written by the classroom teachers and sent through Brightwheel to parents/guardians at the time of the incident. Parents/guardians are able to access these reports at any time. If a child is involved in an accident involving the head or face, HA staff will also contact the family via telephone as soon as possible.

All minor injuries, such as cuts and scrapes, will be treated with soap, water, ice, and/or Band-Aids. If warranted, 911 will be called immediately, if not, parents or other persons listed on emergency cards will be contacted. If no one can be reached, we will call the primary physician you have listed.

Emergency Response Procedures

Highlands Academy has a detailed Emergency Response Plan for all cases of emergencies located in the main office. Highlands Academy practices monthly emergency drills, including fire, tornado, and secure premises drills, which includes “Lock- Out” and “Lock-Down and Hide” that are in response to suspicious activity that may be in the immediate vicinity. Highlands Academy follows the Denver Police twitter feed as well as all news bulletins to stay informed of any emergencies in close locations. In the event of an actual emergency, parents/guardians will be notified as soon as possible by center staff first by email and then by phone if children need to be picked up early.

In case of a missing child, parents/guardians and local authorities will be notified as soon as possible.

Extreme Weather Policies

Highlands Academy follows the Denver Public School district’s decisions should severe weather or other conditions (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, or blizzards) occur. If Denver Public Schools announces a closure or delay, Highlands Academy will also be closed or delayed. Parents will receive an email and Brightwheel notification within the same hour as Denver Public School’s announcement. If it becomes necessary to close early in other emergency situations unique to Highlands Academy (i.e. power outages, water flooding or loss of water, gas leaks, hazardous conditions, etc.), we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. Your child’s early pick-up is your responsibility to arrange.

We provide daily outdoor time for all classrooms as long as children can comfortably play outside. If temperatures are extreme, either hot or cold, classrooms will spend the day inside. In cold conditions, classrooms may participate in a shortened outdoor time as long as the children have proper winter attire. In hot conditions, the classrooms will provide water play to help the children stay cool and may also spend a shorter span of time on the playgrounds.

If lightning is spotted, all children are kept inside.

Security

Keeping your child safe and secure is a top priority at Highlands Academy. In addition to built-in security features, such as the coded keypad entrance, we strictly follow arrival and departure procedures. All children must be signed in and out each day by parents/guardians using Brightwheel. Upon enrollment, each family will complete an Enrollment Agreement and be prompted to join Brightwheel where they can enter primary and approved secondary pickup contacts and emergency release contact information. It is the parent/guardian’s responsibility to

update these contacts and keep them current. Persons not listed on these forms will not be authorized to pick up your child without prior written notice from you. This notice can be in the form of an email or a Brightwheel message and include the person's full name. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID for verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

Each parent/guardian and any regular pickup persons pre-authorized by the parent(s)/guardian(s) of an enrolled child will receive a Mobile ID to enter the Highlands Academy building. These Mobile IDs are issued to individual devices and cannot be shared by multiple persons for entry to the building. If you are having technical issues with your Mobile ID, please contact center administration.

Confidentiality

All information contained in your child's records is confidential. Anyone not directly involved in your child's care or affiliated with state licensing agencies, child protective services, or other government agencies will not have access to their records without your written authorization or court order. As a parent/guardian you may request access to your child's records at any time. If you withdraw your child from our care, we will maintain your child's records for the minimum time required by the state licensing body.

Only parent/guardian emails will be shared as part of a directory in the classrooms. If you do not want to share your email with the class, please let your teachers and the administration know so we can remove you from any of the classroom directories.

Mandated Reporting

The law requires everyone who works directly with children to report suspicions or evidence of child abuse or neglect to state licensing agencies and law enforcement agencies. If you have suspicions of child abuse, please call the Denver Child Abuse Reporting Hotline at 1-844-264-5437.

Arrival and Departure

We want to make sure your child's day begins and ends on a positive note. We open at 7:30 AM. Please do not drop-off your child prior to the opening. The caregiver that is dropping off is required to accompany their children, make contact with the classroom teachers, and sign their child into the classroom. We close at 5:30 PM. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time. Again, the person picking up is required to sign the child out of the classroom. A late fee of \$1/minute is assessed after 5:40 pm. Should these procedures need

to be changed due to extenuating circumstances (i.e., a pandemic), parents/guardians will be notified of alternate drop off and pick up procedures.

We must have accurate numbers for staff to child ratio while honoring the individual child's routine. If your child is going to be late to school or absent, please message the center through Brightwheel to let us know before 9:00 am. Late arrivals need to be present in the school by 12:00 pm. If your appointment goes beyond noon, your child will not be admitted into the classroom environment but may return the following school day. If your child leaves early for an appointment and will not return to school by 12:00 pm, they will not be admitted back into the classroom environment until the following day.

If a child has not been picked up by 5:30 pm, HA staff will attempt to contact parents/guardians. If parents/guardians cannot be reached, HA staff will contact the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts in the Enrollment Agreement. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, however, should HA staff be unable to contact a parent/guardian or emergency contact within thirty minutes of the center closing, child protective services and local authorities will be contacted to take custody of the child.

Visitors

All visitors must present photo identification upon entering Highlands Academy and sign into the visitor's log, located in the lobby. No visitors will be admitted to the building without proper identification and reason for visiting.

Media Policies

Preschool age children may occasionally be exposed to digital video content and technology media for educational purposes. Your consent is given via signature in your child's enrollment packet.

Teachers will notify parents about special movie days for parents to decide if they do not want their child to participate.

Special Activities

During special activities (walking field trips, water play, etc.) Highlands Academy will provide additional staff as needed. The Center Director will oversee staffing decisions and will act in the best interests of the children in HA's care. Please notify your child's classroom staff if you do not wish for your child to participate. Highlands Academy does not transport children at this time.

Faculty

Our Management

Holli Martin, MA is the Owner at Highlands Academy, as well as a parent (her daughter Francesca was Highlands Academy's first student). Holli began her career in Early Childhood Education in 2004 in the ECE Master's program at University of Colorado at Denver, coupled with practicum hours at a Reggio inspired preschool in Boulder, CO. She returned to that school after graduation for another school year with toddlers and then moved on to a position as a Large Childcare Center Director. Holli enjoyed working with different children and families as well as working alongside other professionals while learning the ins and outs of the business side of preschool. She spent some years back in the classroom as a Lead Teacher and Childcare Program Director at a therapeutic preschool in Denver. In this position, she worked alongside a therapy team to write curriculum and set and meet goals for children with special needs that attend preschool and learn alongside their typically developing peers. She has opened Highlands Academy with the purpose of providing reliable, high-quality care to working families.

Claire Southard, MA is the Executive Director at Highlands Academy, as well as a parent. Claire joined Highlands Academy in April of 2013. Claire has been working with infant, toddler and preschool age children for over 20 years. She started out working as an assistant in a Reggio Emilia inspired preschool in Boulder while finishing her undergraduate degree in humanities from CU Boulder. She began working as a teacher in a privately-owned school while finishing her MA in Educational Psychology with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education. She later worked at The Rise School of Denver when it was first moving into a bigger building and was there for several years while learning about teaching all children, incorporating therapies, integrated education, and the importance of sensory integration in the preschool setting. Claire has also worked as a private provider for in home programs, lead teacher of before and after school programs, as well as multiple preschool programs and settings. Holli and Claire have worked together in the past and have a shared vision of education in the world today.

Deanna Constantine, BA is the Director of Curriculum, as well as a parent. She received her undergraduate degree in English from the University of Colorado at Boulder and then went on to complete her Elementary Education degree and licensure at Metropolitan State University of Denver, during which she student taught at Stedman Elementary. Deanna joined Highlands Academy in 2016 and spent several years in the Pre-K program, served as a mentor teacher and internal coach, and taught a remote learning pod in 2020 before moving to the Administration team in 2021.

Trisha Van Wagenen, BA is the Assistant Director. She has been in the education field for 15 years, working with children of varying ages and abilities. After completing her undergraduate degree in Sociology with a minor in Family and Child Studies at Northern Illinois University, Trisha moved to Colorado in 2014. She began working at Highlands Academy in 2017 in our Toddler program before joining the Administration team in 2022.

Highlands Academy Teachers

Each classroom has a three-teacher team with one lead teacher and two assistants. Our lead teachers hold an ECT (Early Childhood Teacher) certificate, director's license, associate degree, or bachelor's degree. Our teacher assistants are either ECTA (Early Childhood Teacher Assistant) certified or are currently enrolled in classes for that certification with the goal of all assistant teachers actively working toward full ECT certification. In addition, our Infant program staff are either INS (Infant Nursery Supervisor) certified or working toward that distinction.

Upon hire, every teacher is required to complete a full background check for Colorado and any state they have lived in in the past 5 years, as well as a full child abuse and neglect background check. These are all on file before these teachers are allowed to be alone in the classroom and updated every 5 years.

Professional Development and Planning time for Teachers

Each year, we set aside time for professional development for our teachers to maintain our high-quality staff. Our goal is to develop and elevate each ECE professional's skills and techniques. These trainings and workshops allow our teachers to better assist families and students in their early educational experiences. We embed these training dates into our closures for the school year or offer opportunities for faculty during the school day.

Paid teacher planning time is important to increasing positive outcomes for children. Effective teaching requires time for teachers to design developmentally appropriate lessons, prepare materials, choose effective strategies, and strategize with co-workers, families, and administrators. Teachers and teaching staff, therefore, need a protected time when they are not caring for and teaching children to review and plan for the diverse needs of the young children in their classrooms. Here at HA, we acknowledge the importance of paid teacher planning time; lead teachers are provided with 2 hours weekly and assistant teachers are provided 1 hour weekly, which is reflected in each classroom's individual weekly schedule.

To ensure that your child is receiving excellent childcare and education services, we evaluate each teacher's performance annually. The results of those teacher evaluations are also seen in our Quality Improvement Plan. Teacher evaluation refers to the formal process a school

uses to review and rate a teacher's performance and effectiveness in the classroom. The findings from this evaluation process are used to provide feedback to teachers, which they can use to guide and inform their professional development and their Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP).

Parent Teacher Conferences

Developmental evaluations and parent conferences for all age groups are conducted twice a year. Virtual conferences will be held in the fall and spring of each school year. Conferences are highly encouraged for all families. Sign-ups are made available for each classroom and parents are strongly encouraged to attend. The conferences will be verbal in nature and will be accompanied by a written report to be filed in the child's portfolio. The evaluations will be discussed with the parents, and a copy of the report will be made available to the parents.

If a child is having a behavior, developmental, or physical concern, the parents will be notified, and an additional meeting may be necessary. If parents have additional concerns or questions, conferences are available any time upon request. If your enrollment begins after the scheduled conference times, teachers may request to have a conference with you within 90 days of starting in order to discuss your child's progress.

Childcare and Health

Positive Guidance

We take a preventative and proactive approach to child guidance, reinforcing appropriate behavior rather than focusing on inappropriate behavior. Our teachers are trained to use redirection, praise, distraction, and developmentally appropriate techniques that promote self-regulatory skills in young children. As part of this self-regulatory processing, children may be provided "space" from the group based on their individual needs. Children will not be put in a time out. Physical restraint is not used or permitted for discipline. There are rare instances when we need to ensure a child's safety, or that of others, and we may restrain a child by gently holding them only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation. We welcome any parental input that is in accordance with our positive guidance philosophy.

Behavior Management and Developmental Concerns

The teachers at Highlands Academy are here as resources for you and your child. There are times that a child exhibits behaviors or signs of developmental delays. The teachers and the administration are here to make sure that your child is healthy and successful at school. If we

have a concern, we will meet with your family to discuss the observations and suggestions about next steps, outside support, and assessments that might be available in the area.

Challenging behavior is a part of the early childhood experience. Children are learning about themselves and the world around them, including boundaries and rules. As a school, we are dedicated to supporting children's social-emotional development and working with families to ensure that the children are safe and comfortable. With any incident, we will notify the parents of the children involved through written documentation via our Brightwheel application. We will work together with the families to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change. Highlands Academy is NOT a zero-tolerance school. We work with each case individually.

When challenging behaviors occur, we do not punish the child. Instead, we focus on effective behaviors and more appropriate behaviors that address the reason for the challenging behavior. Should the challenging behavior affect another child (i.e., biting), we respond with care and help for the second child, which includes promoting self-advocacy. Please note that biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When there is a repetitive challenging behavior with a child, our staff responds with protocol that ensures the child is getting all the support that is needed to be successful and progress in the classroom. These stages are a guideline, but timelines are not definite as the stages can go quickly and or can take some time -- we may see the situation get worse before it gets better. Partnering with parents and utilizing outside resources can help us to get to the root of the behavior and how best to support the child. Each behavioral instance is an individual case and may be treated differently depending on the child and situation.

Stage 1: The teacher will conduct classroom observation and documentation with attempts to curb the behavior using classroom management strategies.

Stage 2: A meeting will be held with parents/guardians to discuss new strategies, potential need for referrals to outside resources (therapists, etc.) that may or may not be necessary, and to create a partnership for appropriate responses (this step could go through many repeated meetings as the behavior may change).

Stage 3: Contacting our mental health professional consultant and scheduling an in-person meeting with the teachers to provide and coach them through additional behavioral supports. This consultant will then help us move forward with formal behavior plans, parent meetings, observation or intervention, and other supports if needed. (This stage can last through the year as the consultant will be addressing the concern from different perspectives).

Stage 4: If your child requires more care than our ratios can provide, we will require you to find alternative care. This could be temporary if the behavior subsides, and we are able to reintroduce your child to our everyday routine and ratio.

Food and Nutrition

HA strives to offer a healthy and varied menu for children to enjoy and parents to feel good about. For children that are eating solid foods, we serve morning and afternoon snack, as well as the option to opt-in to a catered lunch program. Menus are available at the beginning of each month and will change regularly to maintain fresh, in-season foods wherever possible. If your child has any special dietary needs or allergies, please contact the center director for accommodations. We may not be able to supply substitutions for all dietary preferences.

Families have a wide variety of preferences regarding infant nutrition. For this reason, Highlands Academy asks families to provide all bottles and baby food for infants until solid food has been introduced. The infant teachers will partner with families to make sure that the foods that we provide have already been introduced to the child's diet at home as we will not introduce new foods to your child. Bottles provided by families should be clearly labeled with the child's name and premade in the appropriate amounts for each feeding; they cannot be poured into different bottles. Each day, infant teachers will label the bottles with the child's name, the date, and the contents of the bottle (breastmilk or formula). Breast milk or formula that is not finished in the required time limits cannot be used again. The infant teachers will have consistent communication with the families as the amounts in the bottles need to be adjusted.

Breastfeeding

As a nursing mother, you are encouraged to visit anytime and are welcome to stay in the classroom. Your decision to breast feed is a personal one, and we respect your choice when it is time to wean your child. If you choose to continue breastfeeding past infancy, please partner with center management to ensure that we are supporting your decisions in the best way possible. Weaning is not a requirement for transitioning into the next classroom.

Allergens

Highlands Academy strives to provide an allergen safe environment for all of our students. First and foremost, we are a nut-free facility and do not allow peanuts or tree nuts in our classrooms. In addition, we do not allow eggs or fish to be served. If you are providing food for your child, please be sure that it does not include any of these major allergens and that it also excludes any additional allergies in your child's classroom, which classroom teachers will communicate periodically.

Celebrations and Birthdays

Your child may want to celebrate special occasions including holidays and birthdays with their classmates. Please plan with center management and classroom teachers before bringing in

any special treats. Highlands Academy is committed to an inclusive community environment and will be happy to work with families to make celebrations enjoyable for all. For this reason, state licensing requires that all treats are store-bought, and Highlands Academy asks that your treats are nut-free and exclude any allergies in the classroom. In addition, we ask that you only send treats and not favors, decorations, or party supplies.

Clothing

Each child in attendance must provide two full changes of clothes, including socks. We also request an extra pair of shoes and a sweater or sweatshirt to be kept at the center. Early childhood is often an active, messy experience. We recommend sending your child to school each day in comfortable, washable clothing. All walking children must have shoes. Be sure that shoes are comfortable for school indoors and outdoors.

We are a community and sometimes circumstances come up where a child might need to borrow another child's clothing. We do our best to return items as quickly as possible. Please remember to label all items with your child's first and last name.

Diapering and Toilet Learning

Children requiring diapers will be checked for wetness or feces at least every two hours and whenever the child indicates discomfort or exhibits behavior that suggests a soiled or wet diaper. The child will be changed when found to be wet or soiled. A diaper changing station or changing area is provided in each classroom and is located separate from any food preparation, storage, or serving area and will comply with Colorado Department of Health and Environment Rules and Regulations Governing the Health and Sanitation of Childcare Facilities.

Potty time is a very collaborative process between teachers, parents/guardians, and children. Children best learn toilet skills through consistent, positive encouragement from all the adults who care for them daily. We are committed to working with your family to make toilet learning a developmentally appropriate process with as little stress as possible. If your child is potty training, please partner with your teachers to make sure you are providing enough clothing for the day, more than the standard two sets.

Parents are responsible for providing diapers and diapering cream; Highlands Academy provides wipes. If you would like teachers to apply diapering cream as a preventative measure, your consent for ointment/lotion is given via signature in the enrollment packet.

Personal Belongings

Highlands Academy provides a wide selection of stimulating, educational toys. Please do not allow your child to bring personal toys from home. If your child has a special blanket or stuffed animal which provides comfort for rest time, these items will be allowed for naptime only. If your classroom lesson plan includes a “show and tell” activity, please encourage and guide your child to bring appropriate items.

Rest Time

Children of all ages require time each day to rest. At our center, your child will rest for one hour at minimum in the afternoon, depending on their needs. For children who no longer nap, quiet activities will be provided while they recharge such as reading or puzzles. Depending on your child’s age, we provide cozy cribs or cots for rest time. Families in the Toddler, Preschool, and Pre-K programs are required to bring a blanket for rest time. We provide sheets for all the classrooms as well as sleep sacks for the Infant classrooms. Please remember to label all items with your child’s first and last name. Bedding provided by HA will be laundered a minimum of once a week. Blankets provided by families or soiled bedding will be sent home for laundering.

Health

Hand Washing

Teaching our children of the importance of proper hand washing at an early age helps maintain healthy students. Families are asked to enter the classroom at drop off and assist their child in washing their hands at the beginning of each day. Parents are also required to wash their own hands at drop off and pick-up times. Children will wash their hands before and after eating, before and after sand and water play, after coming in from outdoors, after bathroom visits or diapering, and at any time their hands are soiled.

Allergies

If your child has an allergy, you must notify us in writing before your first day and must update this information annually. If it is a food allergy, the written notification should list appropriate food substitutions so we can provide them as needed. Allergies can be life threatening and each child with an allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the child’s pediatrician.

Medication

Medications will be administered in accordance with Colorado state childcare licensing guidelines in partnership with our nurse. We recommend that parents/guardians administer medications outside of school hours. When medication must be administered at Highlands Academy, please speak with center management to coordinate medication administration. Do not place medication in your child's belongings. Highlands Academy requires a physician's orders with a medication or health plan for our records. The medication provided with this plan must include the original prescription label and packaging. If it is an over-the-counter medication, the original packaging must be labeled with the child's name, and a medication or health plan on file. After we have these documents, the medication will be placed in your child's classroom, but will be inaccessible to the children.

Illness

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children you may not bring a sick child to the center. The center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. You will be called and asked to pick up if any of the following conditions apply to your child:

- Your child is at risk of infecting other with a contagious illness, either because of symptoms or recent close contact.
- Your child does not feel well enough to participate in usual activities.
- Your child needs more care than staff can provide while still caring for other children.
- Your child has symptoms or an illness where staying home is required. Exclusionary symptoms include a fever above 100.4 °F, diarrhea, vomiting, or flu-like symptoms. If these symptoms are not due to a specific illness, children may return after fever, diarrhea, or vomiting have resolved without the use of medications for 24 hours or if flu-like symptoms are improving after 24 hours and a negative COVID result has been received (this can be from an at home test).

If your child is diagnosed with a specific illness, please see [“How Sick Is Too Sick”](#) from Children's Hospital for exclusionary guidance. If your child has been excluded due to illness, they may return when cleared by their pediatrician. Highlands Academy must receive a doctor's note stating that your child is no longer contagious and the date that they may return to our care.

It is your responsibility to notify Highlands Academy if your child has an infectious/communicable disease such as: COVID-19, RSV, pertussis, measles, mumps, chicken pox, head lice, etc. When a child has been diagnosed with a communicable illness, the center will immediately notify the local health department or the State Department of Public Health and Environment, all staff members, and all parents/guardians of the children in our care. Children's confidentiality will be maintained.

Medical Records

Immunizations

Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org. Every September, we check with the public health department or the American Academy of Pediatrics for updates to the recommended immunization schedule. Highlands Academy requires all children enrolled to be immunized or be in the process of being fully immunized, therefore we only accept medical exemptions. If your child is on a delayed scheduled, please see center management for the proper paperwork to document your child's immunization schedule.

Physicals

Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org. A copy of your child's most recent general health form is required to be submitted with your enrollment packet before your child begins the program but must be received no later than 30 days after your start date. Every well child visit requires an update for the school records. Families are responsible for ensuring that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to Highlands Academy. An updated general health form is required from the following well child health visits: 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 24 months, and 30 months, then annually at 3, 4, 5 and 6 years. These updated forms are due within 30 days of your child's age milestone marker. If they are not received after 30 days, you will have 14 days to procure the general health forms before your child is disenrolled from Highlands Academy.

- ❖ If you are in need more information about Health Insurance for you and your family, please reach out to us. We are here as your resource and support in the community.

Community Resources

Community-based services can provide families and children with needed resources and information. Services may focus on children's developmental needs, such as early intervention screenings, or family needs, such as housing, job, and food assistance. If you need support locating a particular resource or service, please let us know how we can support you and connect you to the proper agencies. You can contact us any time by speaking personally with your child's teacher or the Directors; you can also phone or email us. A binder with a list of common resources, as well as a variety of pamphlets, brochures, and other materials, are accessible at any time in the front lobby.

Educational Programs

Infants: 6 weeks up to 18 months

Your infant will enjoy tummy time and other motor activities on the floor on a daily basis. We promote independent movement, guiding and supporting your young child along the way. Your child will be cared for by three Infant Nursery Supervisors, developing strong relationships with our nursery staff and enjoying responsive high-quality care. We begin modeling emotional literacy with your infant, focusing on facial expressions and labeling feelings. Your infant will be provided with a quiet and calm environment that promotes opportunities for expressive and receptive communication. Your child's daily routines will be talked through in an effort to expand vocabulary and curiosity. Natural materials as well as different colors and textures abound in the infant room, encouraging exploration and curiosity. Your little one will be exposed to cause and effect, sequencing, and spatial concepts through play.

Program Features Include:

- Individual activity plans for each infant
- Group interactions to promote socialization and expand experiences
- Frequent story times to begin developing a love for reading
- A focus on motor skills and cognitive development through playtime and planned activities
- (When ready) Morning and Afternoon Snack
- Observation collections that reflect your child's progression
- Ancillary Programming

Toddlers: 12 months up to 36 months

Your toddler's fine motor development begins to become a focus as they are introduced to toys and games that develop grasping strength and pinching with the thumb and forefingers. Your child is invited to join a circle time group twice each day where cognitive concepts are introduced, language skills can be developed, and social skills are practiced. Basic cognitive concepts are explored in this busy classroom including primary colors, basic shapes, and an introduction to letters and numbers. Our highly qualified teachers promote an environment that encourages your little one's autonomy and parallel play. As your curious toddler develops, teachers will set up opportunities to expand on their communication by asking questions, commenting on processes, and narrating events. This is a time of language explosion! Your child will be encouraged to learn new songs, finger plays, word games and participate in group experiences.

Toilet learning is implemented in the toddler classroom when your child turns 18 months. As your child begins this process, we provide resources for toilet training should you need them.

Program Features Include:

- Daily whole group instruction promoting social skill development
- Balanced attention to nurturing, playtime, and learning
- Development of children's communication with peers and adults
- Morning and afternoon snack
- Observation collections that reflect your child's progression
- Toilet Learning
- Ancillary Programming

Preschool 30 months up to 4 years

Your preschooler is provided with a rich academic environment. We lay a solid foundation of math, science, social studies, literacy, and friendship in our preschool classroom. Drawing from Experience Curriculum, the teachers lead students in play-based units that allow the children's interests guide exploration into new and exciting lessons and play-based activities. Your child is encouraged to expand their learning by talking about feelings, friendships, and social interactions through play.

There are two levels of Preschool: one is a 30-month program and the other is a 3-year-old program. We continue to support toilet learning in the 30-month program, but children must be using the bathroom independently in order to transition or enroll in the 3-year-old program.

Program Features Include:

- Experience Curriculum studies in 4-week increments
- Play based experiences to develop cognition and problem-solving skills
- Morning and afternoon snack
- Observation collections that reflect your child's progression
- Ancillary Programming

Pre-K: 42 months up to 6 years

Our final age group at Highlands Academy is our Pre-K program. The downstairs classrooms provide a collaborative space where your child begins focusing on 21st-century skills and encourages your child to be a leader in the preschool and nursery community. The Pre-K program utilizes the Creative Curriculum and Learning Without Tears to delve deeply into the nuances of the inquiry-based units and explore with the teachers serving as guides through their self- and classroom community-directed learning. Most of the students in these classrooms attend kindergarten the following fall, but some may spend two years in this part of the

program. As your child nears the end of their time at Highlands Academy, the classrooms feature a larger focus on handwriting, arithmetic, and pre-reading as the teachers preparing your child for kindergarten.

Program Features Include:

- Creative Curriculum studies in 6 to 8-week increments that can be expanded by child-led direction
- Play based experiences to develop cognition and problem-solving skills
- Teaching Strategies Portfolio collections that reflect your child's progression
- Morning and Afternoon snack
- Ancillary Programming

Transitions

Transitions refer to the process of a child moving from one program or setting to another, for example, the transition from home care to formal care, to a new classroom within a program, or from one program to another. Highlands Academy recognizes that stability and consistency are important for a child's development and acknowledges that young children accomplish different developmental milestones at different rates. Smooth transitions support children's academic and social success and contribute to the well-being of the child and their family. At HA, we support intentional and thoughtful transition practices for children and their families.

HA uses the following strategies that support children's transition into a new program: Families are invited to set up a tour with the Admissions/Enrollment Director to view the facility and prospective classroom for their child to familiarize themselves with the program. The Admissions/Enrollment Director and the family will review the handbook and any questions the family may have will be answered. Once the family is enrolled, they may make an appointment to visit the program with their child for a meet and greet. This will allow the child to get acquainted with their new teachers and peers. This process will make for a smoother transition when the child begins attending for the first time on their own. After the child's start date, families may choose for their child to attend partial days as many times as a child needs, until the child is fully comfortable with being left on their own.

Children may also transition to a different classroom within the program. There are typically larger group transitions between June and September and again in January, though small transitions may occur if space allows. Any child that is changing classes will have a transition time sufficient for a successful integration into their new class. Before the change occurs, children will have an opportunity to visit the new classroom and familiarize themselves with the classroom, their new peers, and teachers. Typically, if other children from your child's class will also be moving to the new classroom, we transition them together to help make that change easier for all concerned. Parents are also invited to visit the new classroom with their

child during this transition process and are encouraged to talk with their child's new and former teacher about any concerns or questions. To help teachers become familiar with their new student, the new and old teacher meet and go over assessment data, portfolio information, and share insights on the child's learning style, and other important information about the social, emotional, and cognitive development of the child.

Children transition into the classroom with the opening for their age. If two classrooms have openings, then the center staff consider many factors such the boy/girl balance, whether there is a sibling in the class, and the age range balance in the classroom. HA is not always able to accommodate parent preference for which classroom the child transitions into. This is due to the fact that childcare licensing requires that children move to the next age group by certain times, and the classroom of choice to the parent may not be available.

A child may also transition out of the program, for example, when moving to a new program as part of a move or when the child moves up a grade from Pre-K to Kindergarten. Effective transition activities typically occur over time and are tailored to meet the needs of the children and their families. This increases the likelihood that there will be continuity across systems and minimize the discontinuities that can result from lack of communication between early care and education programs and between families and programs. Strategies to support a family and child when they are leaving the program can include exit conferences between families and program teachers, sharing assessment data, and communication between programs if authorized. We also provide information to the children regarding their transition to a new school, such as books about going to a new school which can help a child better understand and cope with their feelings.

Ancillary Programming

Highlands Academy offers ancillary programming to support whole child growth and development at no additional cost to families. These ancillaries allow for additional exposure to and instruction in areas like gross motor movement, the arts, language, and social-emotional learning. We offer several different ancillaries at one time and children participate in each group for 15-to-20-minute time blocks once per week.

Family Communication and Involvement

Communication Tools

Highlands Academy strives to ensure that the parents stay informed and are clearly and consistently communicated with. Here are some of the ways that we keep you informed:

Newsletter

The newsletter comes out on the 1st of each month. It features announcements from the Administration that includes information on special dates, policy changes and calendar notices. In addition, the television in the main lobby features high level information about the current month including upcoming events, teacher features, and staff anniversaries and birthdays.

Weekly Updates

Classroom teachers send out weekly updates that will keep you informed of the week ahead and classroom activities. These includes schedule changes, special activities, and lesson plans. Parents should feel connected and prepared for the day-to-day of classroom.

Brightwheel

Brightwheel is our daily communication for parents from the classroom. This app provides the essential information about your child's day (naps, meals, diaper/toileting), details about your child's activities, and photos and videos that provide a snapshot into their learning. We use Brightwheel to make announcements and reminders as well as send out billing invoices and contracts each year. You may also contact your classroom teachers or center administration through the messaging system.

Experience Curriculum

In our Infant, Toddler, and Preschool programs, Experience Curriculum provides resources for classroom teachers to keep you connected with your child's learning and development within the Brightwheel application. This tool is used by the teachers to send out lesson plans. It also allows teachers to share favored activities directly with families. During parent-teacher conferences, portfolios and report cards of your child's progress and development will be shared with families reflecting the assessments taken throughout the units.

Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies Gold

In our Pre-K program, Creative Curriculum provides resources for classroom teachers to keep you connected with your child's learning and development. This tool is used by the teachers to send out lesson plans, activities, and updates on goals created at the parent teacher conferences. It also allows teachers to send home-versions of favored activities from the classroom or similar activities more geared toward the parent-child relationship. In addition, our Pre-K program utilizes Teaching Strategies Gold for assessments. During parent-teacher

conferences, report cards of your child's progress and development will be shared based on these assessments.

Family Involvement

Parents and guardians are always welcome at Highlands Academy. We welcome your visits and invite you to get down on the floor and join in our activities! Communication between your family and center staff is vital to your child's early educational success. Please utilize our teacher's specialized knowledge and share with them your expert knowledge of your child. We value your observations and in-depth knowledge of your child. HA teachers partner with families to design a learning program that best suits each individual child. Spend a few minutes each day communicating with your child's teacher, whether in person, by email or by phone.

Highlands Academy wants to hear from you and see you at school! We send an annual survey and host family events throughout the year. Newsletters and the yearly calendar will provide the dates and times that these are scheduled.

Babysitting Policy

We understand that babysitting is occasionally a need over breaks, weekends, and vacation times. Teachers and parents are asked to sign a baby-sitting policy agreement for these services and these documents are kept in each child and staff member's file.