

## Our Services

Early Childhood Alliance is committed to meeting the needs of children and families by providing comprehensive child care services. Our mission is to build better futures for young children by promoting and providing quality early childhood education and services for families, early childhood professionals, and the community. We serve families and children throughout northeast and north central Indiana.

Founded in 1953, Early Childhood Alliance continues in its efforts to improve the availability, affordability and quality of child care and is dedicated to promoting the importance of early childhood education. We support our mission through the following services:

- Child Care Resource and Referral
- Early Childhood Care and Education
- Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Parent Engagement (Parents As Teachers and Book Buddies)
- Professional Training and Support
- Corporate Consultation

As a non-profit organization, we depend on the contributions of individuals and organizations throughout the community to continue services for children and their families. For information on giving opportunities or planned giving, contact the Development Director at (260) 458-0125 or (800) 423-1498.

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**naeyc**



# Learning Center Parent Handbook 2018-2019



Dear Parent:

Welcome to the Learning Center of Early Childhood Alliance. Your children are our community's most important assets. Our staff is committed to providing early childhood education and meeting the individual developmental needs of your child.

This handbook is prepared especially for you. In it, we share our philosophy, our program guidelines, and our policies. Please use it as a reference and discuss any questions you have with the Center managers.

We want to work with you as partners in your child's growth and development. The Learning Center is a positive extension of your family's home environment, and you are always welcome here.

We encourage you to share ideas, offer suggestions, and spend time with us.

Sincerely,



Madeleine Baker  
CEO

*Early Childhood Alliance selects officers, directors, committee members, volunteers, employees and persons served on a non-discriminatory basis with respect to age, gender, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, or any other barriers to participation.*

When symptoms are present that cause us to be concerned about the health of your child or other children in the group, the **Learning Center director may restrict the child**. If your child becomes ill at the Center, you will be notified.\* If a parent/guardian is unable to come within an hour, other arrangements must be made with someone else to pick up the child. We need written notice to release a child to someone other than a parent/guardian.

**\*Illness report:** You will receive an illness report that will inform you of your child's symptoms, action taken by the teacher, and when your child may return to the Center.

Inserted is a communicable disease chart to use as a reference. **In the event of a community-wide infections disease, children showing signs or symptoms of the disease will be excluded.**

## Medication

If your child is on medication, you must complete an Authorized Medication form. Medications must be prescribed by a physician and be brought to the Center in pharmacy-labeled containers. Non-prescription medications can be given provided a parent/guardian submits a written order from the physician. Any non-medicated lotions/soaps, such as sunscreen, without other additives, require only a note from the parent/guardian.

## Injury

In the event of a minor accident, your child will be given first aid and parents/guardians will be informed via Brightwheel. Further medical treatment is your responsibility. In the event of a medical emergency, the EMS will be called and the parent/guardian will be contacted immediately at the number listed on your Emergency Contact form.



## Illness

Children who are not feeling well cannot fully participate in the activities planned at the Learning Centers. For your child's well-being and the protection of other children, please keep your child at home when he/she has any of the following symptoms:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Severe cold, with cough
- Auxiliary (underarm) temperature of 100 degrees (without adding a degree)
- Child does not feel well enough to participate in the normal activities of the program
- Undiagnosed rash
- Earache
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
- Runny nose not due to diagnosed condition

## Conditions That Require Temporary Exclusion

- **Children younger than four months or with special health conditions** may be excluded with only a fever if it exceeds 100 degrees taken under the arm.
- **Vomiting** is not usually a normal response of healthy children. Occurrences more than twice in a 24-hour period due to illness could result in exclusion.
- **Diarrhea** in infants and toddlers in excess of two liquid stools in an 8-hour period, or an increased number of stools compared to the child's normal pattern may be a symptom. (Diarrhea consists of excessive liquid in the stool that cannot be contained in the diaper). Diarrhea in preschool children that is not contained in the toilet and/or in excess of two liquid stools in an eight-hour period is also not a normal response in healthy children. Also, children with blood in the stools, not explained by dietary changes, medications or hard stools, will be excluded. Children need to be excluded until diarrhea is gone for 24 hours.
- **Conjunctivitis/Pink Eye** is defined as pink or red conjunctiva (i.e. whites of the eyes) with white or yellow eye mucus drainage (signs of bacterial infection), often with matted eyelids or skin around the eye. Children must be restricted until treatment has started. (Viral conjunctivitis usually has a clear, water discharge that may not require exclusion).
- **Lice.** Children with lice will be excluded until after treatment.

**Notify the Learning Center when you are keeping your child at home because of a contagious illness.** This allows us to post a notice for other parents to watch for symptoms in their children should the illness happen to spread. Also, notify us whenever **your child is on any medications** or has had **any immunizations, so we can provide appropriate care for your child.**

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## Early Childhood Alliance

Early Childhood Alliance (ECA) is a non-profit, United Way agency, committed to meeting the needs of children and families. **The mission of ECA is to build better futures for young children by promoting and providing quality early childhood education and services for families, early child care professionals, and the community.**

We believe that achieving this mission is a shared responsibility, and we will work with others by providing leadership and access to comprehensive information for community decision making. Our partners include parents, employers, child care providers, social service organizations, neighborhood and religious groups, educators, funders, and policy makers.

Throughout 60+ years of service, we have established a tradition of responsiveness to community needs, collaboration with other service providers, and advocacy for children and families. These **values** are the foundation on which the philosophy of our programs is formed:

- Commitment
- Empathy
- Integrity
- Respect
- Innovation

## Learning Centers

ECA assists families in providing their children with the foundations for success in school and life. To support this effort, ECA operates two state-licensed and nationally accredited Learning Centers in Fort Wayne. A parent/guardian may ask to see a copy of the Indiana Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers at any time. At each Center, children are provided with a high-quality, comprehensive early childhood education program in a healthy, caring environment.

The purpose of the Learning Center program is to help children reach their full potential. Based on principles of child development, our program fosters in children an understanding of self, others and community.

In this warm and caring environment, each child is encouraged toward self-motivation and self-discipline. Our Learning Centers provide opportunities for confidence-building and success. Activities are planned to help children learn through their senses, acquire problem-solving abilities, and develop language and motor-perceptual skills.

Our Learning Centers are licensed by the State of Indiana through Family and Social Services Administration, Bureau of Child Care.

Our Centers are on Paths to QUALITY™ Level 4, the highest level of quality. Paths to QUALITY™ is Indiana's quality rating and improvement system. Each Center is also accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). To meet the strict standards of

## Food and Nutrition

All food served at the Learning Center is carefully planned to meet the nutritional requirements of young children. Menus are posted in each room. We follow state guidelines and those set by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). We use the Healthy Kids Initiative as a guide when creating the menu.

We are also a peanut-restricted center. If your child has food allergies or other special dietary restrictions, we can make arrangements for appropriate substitutions. Children requiring special diets (i.e. allergies, food sensitivities, supplements, or other changes outside state guidelines) must have a note from the physician. Special considerations are made for religious reasons. This, too, requires documentation from a parent.

Parents of infants may also make changes to their children's feeding plans. A written order from your physician is needed to make these food substitutions (this note must be updated as dietary changes are made by the physician) and changes to feeding plans when they do not meet state guidelines.

Birthdays are special occasions. You may arrange with your child's teacher to bring a **NUTRITIONAL** treat and/or party favor, and you are invited to join the group at celebration time. Please refer to the *Healthy Snack Ideas* sheet included in your enrollment packet. If there are other celebrations or special days throughout the year, please see your child's teacher to sign up for items needed. **These foods need to be commercially prepared and must be kept in the original container when brought to the Learning Center.** Other than special occasions, food may not be brought into the Learning Center. If your child is finishing a snack when he/she is on the way to the Center, please have him/her finish it before entering the Center.

## Hand-Washing Practice

Hand washing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of illness and disease not only for children, but also parents and caregivers. At ECA, hand washing is an important activity to teach and to model. State licensing regulations include hand washing information for staff and children to follow. These also serve as good guidelines for families.

Hand washing is needed before and/or after: preparing meals/snacks; feeding children; eating; bathing children; wiping noses; diapering and assisting with toileting; handling bodily fluids; coughing into hands; and handling pets. It's also important: after taking out the trash; when coming in from outside; after arriving at the child care center and before leaving; after sensory play with sand, water and other similar materials; before and after giving medications.

The most effective hand washing procedure includes making a good soap lather under running water, scrubbing for 20 seconds on both sides and around fingernails and rings, and drying with a clean disposable towel or wall-mounted drying device.

response that harms a child or is known to be ineffective.

We give immediate attention and, if necessary, first aid to children who are bitten. We offer to put ice on the bite if the child is willing. If the skin is broken, we clean the wound with soap and water. If children are bitten on the top of their hands and the skin is broken, we recommend they be seen by their health care provider.

When children bite, their parents are informed personally and privately the same day. When children are bitten, their parents are informed personally and given a copy of our incident form. When we experience ongoing biting in a toddler room, we share the written plan we have developed with all parents of children in the room.

Biting is always documented on our standard incident report form, which is completed and signed by a teacher and an administrator. It must also be signed by the parent. One copy is given to the parent, and the other copy is kept in the child's file.

We keep the name of the child who bit confidential. This is to avoid labeling and to give our teachers the opportunity to use their time and energy to work on stopping the biting.

Toddler caregivers attend a training session on biting. In addition, we have current resources on biting available for staff and parents. We encourage parents to bring their concerns and frustrations directly to the teachers.

## Expulsion Policy

Exclusionary measures will be taken with a child when a serious safety threat exists and can't be addressed with reasonable modifications and/or the use of positive behavioral supports. A child cannot be expelled due to behavioral challenges unless the procedures outlined in the suspension and expulsion policy have been followed. The policy clearly defines the steps that must be followed when a child engages in challenging behaviors that cannot be resolved using ordinary classroom strategies. Action steps are:

- A meeting is scheduled with the parents, the Center manager, the child's teacher and possibly ECA's inclusion specialist.
- The group sets up a written plan of action, specifically stating which parties are responsible for what and the specific dates that the actions must be accomplished by each party.
- Teachers will continue to document how the child is doing in the classroom, and all parties will meet again on a specified date to re-evaluate the situation.

If parents do not follow through with their part of the plan or if the child still does not thrive in this learning environment, the child may be referred to an alternative child care program.

NAEYC accreditation, a Center must be in substantial compliance with approximately 177 criteria.

We also meet the Indiana Afterschool Standards in our Centers' school-age classrooms.

## Hours of Operation

**ECA Learning Centers are open 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday-Friday, except holidays when the Centers and main office will be closed:**

- |                          |                            |                                   |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Martin Luther King Day | • Independence Day         | • Christmas Eve & Christmas       |
| • Good Friday            | • Labor Day                | • New Year's Eve & New Year's Day |
| • Memorial Day           | • Thanksgiving & day after |                                   |

**Learning Centers are also closed:**

- Professional Development Days in February and August.
- Some days during Christmas and New Year's weeks.

*If the holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, we will observe it on a Friday or Monday.*

## Admission Policy

To maintain the standards of quality education to which we are committed and to adhere to state licensing guidelines, we must limit the number of children in the Learning Center. Our license from the state of Indiana determines the number of children we can accommodate.

**All enrollment forms and an orientation interview must be completed and returned with registration fees and tuition before your child can begin attending the Learning Center. We also encourage a pre-enrollment visit for the parent and child in the designated classroom.** At that time, you will have the opportunity to talk with your child's teacher regarding the developmental/physical needs of your child.

Because we cannot fulfill all requests for service, a waiting list has been established for each age group. When an opening occurs, parents with the earliest request date will be contacted about enrollment.

Children are accepted regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, national origin, disability or any other barriers to participation. If it is determined that the Learning Center cannot make reasonable accommodations for your child, we provide parents/guardians information about ECA's Resource and Referral program to assist you in finding a program to fit your needs.

## Tuition Policy

There is a nonrefundable registration fee of \$50 per family when the enrollment application is turned in and again each August at the time of re-enrollment for the school year. Your enrollment fee and vacation days will be pro-rated if you enroll after June 1.

Weekly tuition is based on family income. Proof of income must be provided; the Learning Center Manager must be notified immediately of any change in income. Parents whose tuition is subsidized must provide the required verifications based on previous month's pay, or pay full tuition.

Weekly tuition must be paid in advance. If the tuition is not paid by the Friday before each new week, a 10% late charge will be added. If, after two weeks, tuition continues to be unpaid, the child will not be allowed to return to the Learning Center until the tuition is paid to date. There will be no reduction in tuition for absent days or holidays. All families receive two weeks of vacation per year to be used at their discretion.

A LATE FEE of \$25 per 15 minutes will be charged when your child is not picked up by 6 p.m. For instance, there will be a \$25 fee added to your account when your child is picked up between 6:05-6:15 pm, \$50 between 6:16-6:30 pm, and so on. A call will be made to Child Protective Services if staff have not heard from you by 7:00 p.m.

## Withdrawal Policy

Two weeks' notice is required to end the enrollment of your child at our Learning Center, or the parent/guardian is responsible for two weeks' tuition. When a parent/guardian withdraws a child, he/she will be asked to complete an evaluation form which will help us continue to improve our services.

## Arrival and Departure

We encourage that children arrive at the Center by 9:30 a.m. This consistency provides children with the benefits of our educational curriculum.

**It is important that parents sign their children in and out of the Learning Center each day.** This helps us keep an accurate record of hours in the Children's Center, allows the staff to have daily contact with you and ensures that your child is carefully supervised.

Children cannot be dropped off and allowed to enter the Learning Center alone. Please do not ask staff to sign children in or out.

**We will not release a child to anyone for whom the parent/guardian has not given written permission for us to do so.** Anyone picking up a child is required to have a photo ID.

If the adult authorized to pick up a child seems disoriented or displays impaired judgment, staff has the right to call an emergency contact to pick up the child for his/her safety. If attempts to keep the child safe from the disoriented authorized adult are unsuccessful, the police will be contacted.

- Remove children from situations they can't handle. If a child is too young to understand or there is no way to change the cause, it may be possible to change the situation.
- Redirect the child's behavior. Often there is a way to let children do something in a better place or a safer way.
- Let children learn the consequences of their actions when appropriate.
- Recognize and encourage positive behavior.
- Allow children to participate in the problem solving process when discipline issues occur.

Learning what is appropriate behavior in a group setting is an important part of any child care program. **No punitive action toward children (slapping, spanking, etc.) is allowed in the Learning Center.**

The return of negative behavior, such as biting back, is also not allowed. Children do not like those moments when they are out of control. At those times, they need adults who firmly but gently exert control. Returning negative behavior only deepens frustration, while firmly holding and gently verbalizing restores and fosters control.

The goal of the ECA program is to provide a positive environment in which children can succeed. Parents and all components within our program have a role in making this goal a reality. Every step should be taken to support the success of both the children and the families that make up the program.

The parents/guardians must be involved in attempts to address concerns with their child. Without parental cooperation, there is very little we can do to help the child reach his/her full potential. ECA will assist in seeking outside resources if deemed appropriate. Failure by a parent/guardian to be involved in interventions as requested can result in a child's exclusion from the ECA program. Verbal and physical abuse toward other adults or children are not tolerated on ECA's premises.

## Biting Policy

Our program recognizes that biting is, unfortunately, not unexpected when toddlers are in group care. We are always upset when children are bitten in our program, and we recognize how upsetting biting is for parents. We know that toddlers bite for a variety of reasons, most of which are not related to behavior problems. Our program does not focus on punishment for biting, but on effective techniques that address the specific reason for biting. When biting occurs, these are our three main responses:

1. Care and help for the child who was bitten.
2. Help for the child who bit so that he or she learns other behavior.
3. Examination of our program to stop the biting.

Our teachers express strong disapproval of biting. They work to keep children safe and to help the child who bit learn different, more appropriate behavior. When there are episodes of ongoing biting, we develop a plan of specific strategies, techniques and timelines to address it. We do not use any

## Dress Code

Children spend part of their time engaged in outdoor activities. Please insure that your child is dressed in appropriate and safe attire. Sneakers are the best choice. **Open-toed sandals, flip-flops and strapless shoes are not allowed at any time.** Coats, gloves, and hats must be worn for outdoor play in colder weather (snow boots are highly recommended since the children like to play with snow). **Remove strings from outerwear as they pose a choking hazard.** Be aware that we make every effort to engage the children in outdoor activities as long as the weather permits, including play in the snow. All items should be labeled with your child's name.

## Toilet Training

Routine tasks, including diapering and toileting, are handled in a relaxed, reassuring and individualized manner based on developmental needs. Readiness on the part of the child is the most important factor in successful toilet training.

- Children are to be introduced to using a potty at home, not the Center.
- Children not showing signs of readiness are not expected to use a potty.
- In the initial stages, plastic/rubber pants or pull-ups must be worn over training pants as a sanitation precaution.
- Children will not be punished or shamed for accidents.
- Children not responding to toilet training will use diapers or pull-ups until further signs of readiness are evident.

## Discipline

Discipline means learning. It does not mean punishment, tears, or humiliation. It means a chance to learn how to live in a social world. **Discipline is not something adults do to their children; it is something they do with their children.**

The goals of discipline are self-control and responsibility. Teachers and parents are most likely to achieve these goals when they respond to the causes of behavior, as well as to the behaviors themselves. The teachers of the Learning Center silently observe a child's behavior before reacting and responding to them.

Teachers may use a variety of discipline techniques to meet the needs of different situations:

- Let children make some decisions and choices. One good way to teach responsibility is to give the child the opportunity to make choices.
- Give reasons for rules. Understanding the reasons for rules makes it easier to remember and follow them.
- Be consistent in language and behavioral response to children. Adults' consistent behavior helps the development of inner control through modeling.

## Health and Safety

The State Board of Health requires all children to have a physical examination before attending the Learning Center. An annual physical is required up to age 3. We will provide a form for your family doctor to complete at the time of the exam. In addition to the physical, complete immunizations must be documented and updated regularly.

The ECA Learning Center is a smoke-free campuses. No smoking is allowed anywhere on the property.

For the health and safety of our infants, we have a no-shoe policy. We ask that you either remove your shoes or place a foot covering over shoes before entering the classroom.

Also, for the health and safety of our infants and toddlers, please do not allow older siblings into the infant and toddler classrooms.

## Safe Sleep

Providing your infant with a safe environment in which to grow and learn is extremely important to us. To that end, our child care facilities have implemented policies and procedures to create a safe sleep environment for your infant.

We follow the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Safety Commission for safe sleep environments to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). SIDS is "the sudden death of an infant under 1 year of age, which remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation, including performance of a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the clinical history." Our written policy is as follows:

- All infants will be placed on their backs in a safety-approved crib unless an alternate sleep position is needed for a medical reason and a written note from the infant's health professional is provided. This note needs to include the medical reason and to what degree the mattress needs to be inclined in centimeters/inches.
- Infants will not sleep on water beds, sofas, soft mattresses or other soft surfaces.
- Soft materials, such as pillows, blankets, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys and loose bedding will not be placed in infants' sleep environments.
- Infants will not share a safety-approved crib with other children.
- Supervised "tummy time" will be observed while the infant is awake.
- No smoking will be allowed in infants' environments.

Since the start of the 1994 national campaign that provided guidelines for parents, health professionals and other caregivers to place infants on their backs to sleep, the number of infants dying of SIDS has decreased more than 70%.

## Emergency Closing Procedures

In the event of an emergency closure, we will make every effort to reach each parent to make them aware of the situation. No messages will be left; if the parent cannot be reached, the child's emergency contacts will be called in the order they are listed. We will also notify parents about the closing and reopening via Brightwheel. This will help to prevent parents from arriving after we close, expecting child care. Parents are responsible for making sure that ECA has the most current and up-to-date contact numbers.

Any schools that drop off children to the Learning Center will be contacted and made aware of the closure. Parents/guardians are responsible for arranging transportation for their child to be picked up from the school.

## Safety Lock Down Procedures

**What is a lockdown?** A lockdown is a precautionary measure in response to an alert from law enforcement that there is a threat in an area near or at the Center. ECA Center staff is prepared to respond quickly in the rare event of a lockdown and will work with law enforcement to keep everyone safe.

For the safety of the children and staff, procedures during a lockdown include: 1) Prohibiting children and staff from using outside play areas; 2) Not allowing anyone to enter or to exit the building until an all-clear is given.

During the lockdown:

- Parents are encouraged NOT to call the Center to check on a child; staff are busy maintaining a safe and calm environment.
- Parents should refrain from arriving at the Center to take a child home; doors will be locked until an all-clear is given.

**How will I know if the Center is on lockdown?** Once a lockdown is in place, our first priority is to ensure the safety of everyone in the Center. Depending on the severity of the lockdown, parents will be notified by text message, email, Brightwheel notification, or paper notice after the all-clear is given. In more serious emergencies, parents can call a special emergency line at **260-579-4443**, to hear a pre-recorded message detailing the emergency and providing information as needed. When the emergency is over, the default message will indicate the all clear.

**Can I come to the Center and take my child home?** To ensure every one's safety during a lockdown, no one is allowed to enter or exit the school. If you arrive at the Center during a lockdown, depending on the severity of the emergency, you may not be able to enter the building. In this case, a red sign will be placed at the front door informing you of the lockdown. Once the all-clear is given, the red sign will be removed and the front door unlocked.

**Parents: Be sure the Center has your most up-to-date emergency contact information.** In the event of a lockdown or other emergency, staff will use that information to contact you. If you did not receive a message regarding the lockdown, please check your contact information with the Center.

## Teachers

All children enrolled in the Center will be assigned to a teacher who is primarily responsible for their daily care and for planning an individualized program. All teachers in your child's classroom work together as a team, however, and are available to meet the needs of all the children in their care. Center teachers have backgrounds in early childhood education and participate in continued in-service training and professional development. All primary teachers have or are working on an early childhood credential and are required to have a minimum of 20 in-service training hours/professional development per year.

## Grievance Procedures

Any parent/guardian who believes that he/she has a justifiable request or complaint should discuss the concerns with the teacher caring for his/her child. If the issue is not resolved, it should be discussed with the Center directors. Every effort will be made to reach a mutually satisfactory solution of the matter. If the resolution is not reached through the above process, the CEO may be contacted. It is the commitment of ECA to resolve conflicts in a timely manner.

## Child Abuse and Neglect

The state of Indiana requires that we IMMEDIATELY report to Child Protective Services (CPS) any suspected or known incidents or evidence of child abuse or neglect. Annual training is required for all staff.

## A Child's Belongings

A wide range of activities are planned each day, so it is recommended that children be dressed in washable, comfortable clothing. Children go outside each day for outdoor activities. Please dress your children appropriately for the weather.

ALL CLOTHING SHOULD BE MARKED with a child's name. It is suggested that you leave a change of clothing at the Center, clearly labeled with the child's name. If wet or soiled clothes are sent home, please return a clean set the next day in case a change is needed.

Children should bring a small blanket to use at nap time, and may bring a small comfort item, such as a stuffed animal. Please leave other toys at home to prevent loss or damage. We are not responsible for any personal property, including jewelry.

Parents of infants, toddlers and two-year-olds are asked to provide an unopened package of diapers as needed. Parents of children that are not yet potty trained are asked to provide an unopened package of diapers/pull-ups and wipes as needed.



## Family Engagement

Children learn and have success in school when early education educators build strong relationships with families. ECA recognizes the importance of building strong family provider partnerships and will focus on strengthening, assisting, empowering and supporting families.

The goal of each Learning Center teacher is to become your partner, so together we can offer the best growing environment for your child. Your child's teacher in the Center can help you learn to listen to, talk to, and play with your child in ways that nurture development.

We offer two conferences yearly during which the teachers share observations and assessments, and work with parents to set goals.

In addition, we offer open houses, parent in-service programs and classroom activities as opportunities for parents/guardians to be involved in the world of their child at the Center. Classroom doors are always open to parents/guardians, and your child's file is also always available to parents/guardians.

Check with your Center managers for information about ways you can be involved and help support your child and our organization. After your child is enrolled, you will receive a parent participation form to complete. This parent participation form will show a list of ways that you can be involved in your child's school success, either from home or helping at the Center.

To this end, our daily communications and interactions will be with that parent/guardian who provides authorization for all matters involved with the child. Therefore, when families experience conflicts at home that may extend to our centers, our primary responsibility is to safeguard the children and our staff. ECA does not get involved in any parental discourse, and we would take direction from the parent/guardian with whom we have been working.

**Please recognize that our foremost responsibility is to ensure quality care and safety for all children under our care.**

## Brightwheel Technology

Brightwheel is a free, easy-to-use mobile app that allows real time connections between parents and teachers at ECA's Learning Centers. Brightwheel offers many benefits in time management, security, documentation and peace of mind. Teachers use Brightwheel for recording and tracking daily events and activities in the classroom while parents get private, real-time updates on their phones throughout the day.

- Daily updates
- Photos/videos
- Digital check-ins
- Messaging
- Calendar reminders/updates

Available on iPhone, iPad, and Android devices.



## Transportation

We offer limited transportation through CTN (Community Transportation Network) for children enrolled in Before/After School care to two select schools for each Center. An ECA staff member rides the bus with the children so that your child is supervised during transportation. There is a minimal charge for this service.



## The HighScope Educational Approach

ECA uses the HighScope curriculum at its Learning Centers. HighScope has been well-documented through leading research for four decades of implementation in early childhood programs across the nation. HighScope aligns with the Foundations for Young Children to the Indiana Academic Standards, developed to bridge the transition from preschool to public schools.

Central to the HighScope approach is the connection between high-quality early childhood education and children's success in life. The elements of quality include a curriculum which actively involves children in their own learning.

ECA classrooms ensure active learning by:

- Providing an environment which promotes decision-making, cooperation, creativity, and problem-solving.
- Establishing a daily routine which allows children to plan many of their activities, carry them out, and reflect on their experiences with supporting adults.
- Planning for children's individual needs and interests by careful observation and documentation of children's progress.
- Working with families to ensure each child's success.

As a result of this HighScope educational approach, children in the Learning Centers:

- Gain knowledge and skills in social and emotional development, physical development and health; language, literacy and communication; mathematics; creative arts; science and technology; and social studies.
- Become independent, responsible, and confident—ready for success in school.

## Sample Daily Schedule

6:00 a.m.	Center opens; quiet play
7:30 a.m.	Snack
8:00 a.m.	Greeting Circle
8:15 a.m.	Planning Time
8:30 a.m.	Work Time
9:15 a.m.	Recall Time
9:30 a.m.	Breakfast
10:00 a.m.	Small Group Activities
10:20 a.m.	Outdoor Activities
10:50 a.m.	Large Group
11:30 a.m.	Lunch
12:00 p.m.	Nap/Rest Time
2:30 p.m.	Snack
3:00 p.m.	Large Group
3:15 p.m.	Plan-Do-Review
4:30 p.m.	Outdoor Activities
5:00-6:00 p.m.	Quiet play; Center closes

## HighScope for Infants and Toddlers

ECA uses the HighScope Infant/Toddler approach with infants through 2-year-old children. The HighScope curriculum is a well-documented approach, based on infant and toddler needs for active learning opportunities. Adults caring for infants and toddlers at ECA support children's development **by building trusting relationships with children and families, by carefully observing children in their development, and by providing materials and activities to support their development.**

Each child has a primary caregiver who provides individualized care, plans daily for the child, and records observations. In order to ensure a good match between child, caregiver and parent, each child is given time to display a preference before assigning a primary caregiver. The HighScope Infant/Toddler key developmental indicators provide caregivers with a framework for their observations. The key developmental indicators are organized around six areas of infant and toddler learning: approaches to learning, social and emotional development, physical development and health, communication, language and literacy, cognitive development and creative arts. An important part of infant and toddler care is the trusting relationship and effective communication with the family. Infant and toddler teachers seek and share information with families regularly to build and enhance that relationship.

## Assessment

Child and program assessments are an integral part of measuring child development and evaluating quality. The results are shared with parents and to appropriate professionals with parental permission. Within three months of enrollment, each child is assessed using the **Ages and Stages Questionnaire**. This assessment tool obtains information on all areas of children's development and learning, including cognitive skills; language; social and emotional development; approaches to learning; and health and physical development, including self-help skills.

Additionally, each child's primary teacher records ongoing observations using the **HighScope Infant/Toddler or Preschool Child Observation Record (COR)**. Key Developmental Indicators provide teachers with a framework for their observations. Pre-kindergarten children are also assessed using the Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA), which assesses skills in the area of **comprehension, alphabetic principal, phonological awareness and concepts about print**. In accordance with state guidelines, we also use the Indiana Standard Tool for Alternate Reporting of Kindergarten Readiness (ISTAR-KR).

## Classroom Transitions

When your child's age and stage of development indicates that it is appropriate for a move to another classroom, we will begin the process of transitioning your child. To support you and your child during this transition, we will provide a schedule outlining the process. This includes a time for families to meet with the new teacher(s) to get to know one another and learn about the classroom. Your child will begin visiting the new classroom (with a teacher if needed) for short periods during several different parts of the day until she/he is comfortable. You will be informed when your child can be dropped off in the new classroom, completing the transition.

## Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

Early Childhood Alliance accepts children with special needs and will make adaptation to ensure full inclusion of the children in everyday routines and activities. Guidance about recommended adaptations and any procedures necessary to ensure the children's health, safety, and inclusion will be solicited from the child's family and medical and/or educational service currently providing services to the child and his/her family. A release of information must be signed by a parent before consultation with any services or individuals other than family occurs. Within one week of enrollment, a special care plan and emergency information plan will be completed by the child's family.

All staff that have contact with the child with special needs will receive training to facilitate inclusion. Referrals to school and /or community programs that may provide additional support for children with special needs and their families will be made.