



**PARENT  
HANDBOOK**

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## GOALS & PHILOSOPHY OF OUR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The purpose of Austin Children's Academy (ACA) is to provide an environment in which your child will grow in knowledge and confidence based on the philosophies of the "Montessori Method of Education." The student experiences a well-defined social system operating within the class. The classroom is a miniature society where children work and learn together in harmony while retaining their individuality.

With the teachers' support and direction, the students strive to become responsible for their own behavior and help the community by observing rules necessary for peaceful living. Your child will become secure, happy and curious here at ACA. He or she will become a learner, a self-confident thinker, and a creative problem solver. Each child learns the importance of self-respect, respect for others, respect for the environment and respect for their work. In addition to Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, ACA students are taught respect, responsibility, reasoning, resilience and resourcefulness.

Our philosophy is based on the educational precepts of Dr. Maria Montessori. The foundation of Dr. Montessori's educational theory was based on her observation that children have an innate desire to explore, discover, and learn about their world. She observed that children learn best within a social environment that supports personal development. Dr. Maria Montessori's method of education focused on the development of the child in all areas of life. With this philosophy in mind, we believe that:

1. The Montessori approach succeeds because it draws its principles from the natural development of a child.
2. Children have a natural urge to explore, discover, and learn about the world around them.
3. Children learn best when they are active participants in the education process.
4. The inherent flexibility of the Montessori approach allows the method to adapt to the needs of an individual regardless of his or her level of ability, learning style or social maturity.
5. The role of the teacher is to assist the child in developing physical and mental independence while fostering the "joy of learning."
6. Active parent involvement through conferences, parent evenings, and participation in our Parent – Teacher Organization (PTO) is essential. (The better a parent understands their child's classroom experiences, the better they are able to reinforce them at home.)

## WHAT TO EXPECT THE FIRST FEW WEEKS OF SCHOOL

During the first few weeks of school, do not be alarmed if your child:

- ♦ Is extremely shy or clings to you
- ♦ Is aggressive with others or refuses to share
- ♦ Cries or is easily emotional
- ♦ Is reluctant to talk about what happens at school
- ♦ Becomes upset with you for leaving them.

These are all related symptoms of stress and tension in a new situation and will gradually disappear as the child becomes familiar with the teachers, the classroom routine and their new friends. During this time, be sympathetic and supportive. Some things you can do to help your child adjust to school are:

1. Let your child bring in a favorite security object that they could keep in their cubby (blanket, family photo, etc. NO TOYS or electronics)
2. Allow your child to stand and observe others, as this is one way of learning.
3. Do not put pressure on your child to produce something at school to bring home.
4. Do not push your child to conform to routines without time to adjust.
5. Allow time for personal routine, such as a nourishing breakfast and a safe ride to school.
6. Have a positive, friendly attitude when parting with your child.
7. Encourage specific talks about school by asking questions, such as “What did you learn during circle time today” or “What did you eat for snack today? Rather than “What did you do today?”
8. **Remember that being relaxed will help your child relax.**

## SIGN-IN/SIGN-OUT

Parents are required by Texas DFPS to sign their child in and out of school every single day. If another authorized person will be responsible for dropping off or picking up your child, please make them aware of our sign-in/sign out policy. This is a Texas DFPS mandated State Law in which everyone must comply.

There is a “Parent/Student Sign-In/Sign-Out” binder at the reception desk. Each student will have their own designated sign-in/out sheet organized alphabetically by last name. You are required to sign in and out at the reception desk during both arrival and dismissal. Please be sure to complete all necessary fields on your child’s attendance sheet. Photo Identification is required.

Note: It is important to check your child's take home materials and projects for any letters or bulletins from the teacher, ACA administration and/or Parent Advisory Committee.

### **ARRIVAL**

Upon arrival, you may enter the building using the security access card provided for you. **(Fees apply for all misplaced and additional cards. Please make sure to notify the ACA administration if a card has been lost, stolen or misplaced so it may be deactivated immediately. This is for the security of our children and staff.)** There will be a sign-in sheet at the reception desk as you enter the facility. Please make sure to go to your child's designated sign-in sheet.

**All classes begin promptly at 8:30 a.m.** It is important that your child is on time so he/she does not miss the circle time activities, demonstrations and instructions on how to use the learning materials. Please keep traffic in consideration and allow time for other unexpected delays. In order to reinforce independence, the students are to be escorted to class by an ACA staff member.

\*\*PLEASE SAY YOUR GOOD-BYES AT THE RECEPTION AREA. \*\*

In the case that you are running late please notify ACA immediately by making a phone call. If your child is not present at school after 10:00am then the student will be marked absent. You may not drop off your child after 10:00am unless there was prior communication and arrangements made with the Director.

Note: Through our experience and observations we find it is best for everyone (parent, teacher, child and classmates) that you quickly say good-bye and exit the facility after signing in. Your child may cry every morning during their first few weeks of school. In most cases, the crying will stop very soon after the parent is out of sight. Remember, crying may reoccur if your child has been absent from class for several days. This is common among children this age.

### **DISMISSAL**

When you arrive to pick up your child there will be a sign-out sheet at the reception desk. At that time, the receptionist will call and alert the teacher. Please be patient as your child may need time to clean up their area and gather their belongings. He/she will be escorted to the reception area by an ACA staff member. Keep in mind, children will sometimes wander off if unsupervised, so please make sure that he/she is by your side at all the times. If you are late to pick up your child, then you will be charged a fee. (Please refer to Late Pick-up Policy.)

At ACA, we are particularly concerned about the safety of every child. Your child may not be picked up by anyone other than a parent/guardian or emergency contact unless ACA is provided with written consent from all responsible parties of your child. (Please refer to Alternative Pick-up Procedures.)

### **PARENT/TEACHER COMMUNICATION**

You may expect a parent/teacher conference after the initial month of enrollment. If at any time you have questions or concerns and would like to schedule a meeting, please alert the receptionist, and an appointment will be made with the teacher and/or Director. We ask that all parents refrain from engaging in detailed conversation with our teachers while dropping off and picking up their children. To ensure safety to all students, teachers must direct their undivided attention to the class.

### **A Framework for Family Involvement**

ACA supports a framework for family involvement built upon comprehensive and meaningful partnerships to meet the needs of the students, parents, and the community.

### **Communication**

Communication is the foundation for effective partnerships connecting parents, students, faculty and staff, and the community. ACA establishes regular and clear modes of communication about important information regarding school success. Strengthening school-family partnerships is an essential investment that supports school and home activities for life-long learning, and promotes advocacy, collaboration, and a community for the school and student progress. Parents are encouraged to join our PTO (Parent – Teacher Organization). This is a great way to express your thoughts and make suggestions towards school events and fundraisers.

ACA's approach to communication assumes many forms including: oral communication- informal conversations; parent-teacher conferences; PTO; parent education meetings; and written communication- notices and newsletters, email, database, website, bulletin boards, and handbooks. Throughout the year there are regular scheduled events and programs for parents and families. (Refer to the *ACA Gazette* for details).

### **Email, Database & Website**

ACA will send news and notices to parents' email addresses. Each staff member has their own personal Austin Children's Academy email. This is used for any school related communication that needs to be addressed to an individual teacher or parent. Please ask the Director for the staff email addresses.

Parents are encouraged to update their email information with the administration as necessary. The ACA website contains information for all members of the school community. Parents are encouraged to frequently refer to the website and their email for information and news.

ACA parents and staff will have access to the database profile, which contains personalized information about their students and family. Parents may review their students' attendance records, billing info, photo gallery, performance updates, and online chat. The personal info will remain confidential to that particular parents' profile and each parent will be able to disclose any personal data they would like to share with the ACA Family such as your email address, phone number, personal bio, etc. Authorized information will be used for this community networking website as this will be a mode of communication between the entire ACA Family. Each parent will be provided a personal user name and password for access to the database.

ACA reserves the right to use any pictures, videos and documents pertaining to students and families, faculty and staff from school events and classroom activities for promotional use on advertisements, newsletters, bulletins, website, social media websites, database and commercial videos.

### **Newsletters**

ACA publishes a monthly newsletter, *The ACA Gazette*, which features a review of special events, articles of interest, and school community news. It may include information such as a summary of classroom activities, upcoming events, and snack schedules. The newsletter will be emailed and copies may be found at the reception desk and on the website.

### **Parent Input**

Parents have many opportunities to make suggestions or comments throughout the year. Open communication with the teacher during parent/teacher conferences is an opportune time for discussing the children's classroom experiences. At any time, a parent may drop-off a written suggestion via the office mailbox. Parents are welcome to schedule appointments with teachers, the Director, and the administration at any time.

The Parent – Teacher Organization is designed for parents to have their voice heard. Parents are encouraged to attend the PTO monthly meetings.

### **Phone Calls**

The faculty is not available to take phone calls during the school day. Parents are welcome to leave a message and they will return calls at their earliest convenience.



## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

### **Class Parents**

Each year, the classroom teachers ask one or more parent(s) to represent the class. The class parents support classroom activities and serve as classroom liaisons between the teachers and families regarding classroom events. Class parent job descriptions are available at the reception desk.

### **Classroom Participation**

Parents who have a talent, career, or hobby of interest to the children are encouraged to make arrangements with the teachers to schedule a time to share with the children. Parents are also encouraged to share specific materials, books, and photography related to the classroom curriculum. ACA appreciates all parent chaperones. Without them, the children would be unable to participate in community learning programs and activities. Prior to chaperoning an event, parents must complete the necessary forms with the ACA administration.

### **Observations**

Parents may observe the classrooms by making an appointment with the receptionist to make the proper accommodations. The easiest and least disruptive way to observe the class is through the glass window that looks into each classroom. It is beneficial if the child does not know that the parent will be coming to observe. The best time to observe the students is before naptime.

### **Parent - Teacher Organization**

The ACA Parent – Teacher Organization (PTO) was established to help involve parents in the school community. In partnership with the administration and faculty, the PTO organizes community events, fundraising activities, and out-reach programs. The PTO's goal is to have 100% participation from all families. Volunteering is one way to participate. The PTO has monthly meetings at ACA with child care provided. New members are welcome and encouraged to be involved with your child's education. A monthly update on PTO activities can be found in *The ACA Gazette*.

### **Volunteers**

Parents are a vital part of the ACA organization as a whole. Volunteers offer essential support in many aspects of the ACA community. Parents are encouraged to speak with the Director, faculty, and/or office staff regarding parent interests and school support functions. Parent volunteers should approach the Director or attend a PTO meeting.

## **Parent Education**

ACA holds several parent education meetings during the school year. Professional videos of the Montessori philosophy, at all levels, may be available for review. Program Directors invite parents to group meetings where they may share information about Montessori pedagogy, child development, home activities, academics, and the curriculum. ACA invites parents and community members to group meetings to share information about school operations and improvements.

## **Parent Orientation**

Parent Orientation is an evening event (parent/guardians only) for all new and returning families. During this orientation, there is an address from the Director, introduction of the faculty and staff by the Program Directors, a brief overview of procedures and policies to help with first day of school transitions, and a time to discuss the principles of the program with the Directors and faculty at each level in their respective areas of ACA.

## **DRESS CODE**

Students should come to school prepared to participate in all activities, both indoor and outdoor. Upon entering school, students should be properly dressed and well groomed. Please do not send your child to school wearing open-toed shoes. The Director will monitor the days' weather conditions and make decisions related to outdoor playtime. During the winter season, please ensure that your child comes with clothing appropriate for the weather.

Independence in every area, including putting on coats and hats, is encouraged. Please avoid dressing your child in belts, suspenders, or one-piece outfits, as they often cause unnecessary accidents and embarrassment to the child. The clothing should be easily accessible for the restroom. Children should be independent in using the bathroom if potty trained.

ACA students are to acquire a green ACA t-shirt for security measures when going on field trips and attending school events. ACA's school events would include school spirit days, special guests, fundraisers, group pictures and overall ACA support.

**Note:** Jewelry and clothing accessories should be avoided because they are choking hazards and may cause disruptions in the learning environment.

## PERSONAL BELONGINGS

An extra set of clothes, socks and underwear are required to keep in your child's cubby at all times in case of any spills or other emergencies. Please replace spare clothing when necessary, while keeping seasonal changes and weather conditions in mind. All personal belongings must be clearly labeled with a permanent marker. ACA is not responsible for any misplaced or unlabeled belongings.

To prevent any students from taking home the wrong lunch boxes or belongings we ask that you acquire an ACA tote bag which will be used for daily purposes, such as carrying lunch box, nap items on Monday's and Friday's, extra clothing and any of your child's school work. Your child's name will be written in large letters in the designated area on tote bag to help our ACA Staff identify each child's bag when they go home.

**Note:** If your child requires diapers then you must supply ACA with the necessary items, such as diapers and baby wipes each week.

## TOYS

It is understood that for children aged 18 mos - 6 yrs, a security item may be necessary during the beginning stages of a school experience. However, small toys and hand-held devices, such as action-figures and electronics, are distracting to the class and are prohibited. A blanket, picture of the family or educational items, such as books, are always encouraged and appreciated.

## SNACK

ACA will provide each student with two snacks including a beverage (water, apple juice or orange juice) every morning and afternoon. ACA promotes a healthy diet and educates students about daily nutrition. Our snack items include graham crackers, fresh fruit, applesauce, goldfish, oatmeal cookies, etc. A copy of the snack schedule may be provided upon request.

**If your child has any known dietary restrictions, please provide two snacks a day in their lunchbox and alert the administration of any specific requests.**

Although ACA provides a morning and afternoon snack, be sure to prepare breakfast routinely. Please provide extra healthy snacks if enrolled in the Extended Day Program. Due to their growing appetites and healthy metabolism, children may grow an appetite towards the end of the day around 5:00pm.

**Note:** **Be sure to record any dietary restrictions and/or allergies on the proper registration forms provided.**

## **LUNCH**

Please provide a packed lunch that includes a beverage for your child. Do not send any beverages in a glass bottle. We suggest you place student lunches that you wish to keep warm in a thermos. Foods that you want to keep cool should be placed with an ice pack in an insulated lunch box. Lunch boxes should not exceed the size of the assigned cubby, and students should be able to carry their lunch box to class themselves.

Please remember that a child's stomach is only as big as his/her fist. Often children are packed too many choices and huge portions. To avoid any choking hazards, please prepare their food in small portions. Some lunch suggestions include: sandwiches (cold cuts, cheese, turkey and chicken,) yogurt, soup, fresh fruit (sliced and peeled,) fresh vegetables (carrots, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes,) cheese and crackers, granola bars, 100% juice, etc.

Overly processed foods or food containing large amounts of sugar, salt or oils should be avoided. We encourage parents to provide wholesome lunches and include your child in the planning and packaging of his or her own lunch.

In the case that you forget to pack your child's lunch, ACA can provide a lunch for \$5.00. To avoid any confusion during monthly invoices, please keep note on the days administration notifies that there was no lunch provided.

## **FOOD RESTRICTED CLASSROOMS**

All of our classrooms are "Nut-Free" and all nut products are strictly prohibited. The purpose of a "Nut-Free" classroom is to provide a safe environment for students with allergies to nut products. We ask that all students be provided with lunch that is "Nut-Free."

Be sure to read the labels for all foods to be sure of "Nut Free" ingredients. To help you identify foods that contain PEANUTS or PEANUT PRODUCTS, below is a list of some ingredients/ products that indicate the presence of PEANUT PROTEIN:

- ♦ Peanut oil
- ♦ Mixed nuts
- ♦ Peanut butter
- ♦ Hydrolyzed plant protein
- ♦ Plain and peanut M&Ms
- ♦ Nature's Valley granola bars
- ♦ Jelly Beans
- ♦ Peanuts
- ♦ Nougat
- ♦ Nu-Nuts
- ♦ Hydrolyzed vegetable protein
- ♦ Some chocolate chips
- ♦ Low fat Cheese Nips
- ♦ Little Debbie treats

To help you identify foods that DO NOT contain PEANUTS or PEANUT PRODUCTS, below is a list of some PEANUT-FREE snack ideas:

- ♦ Triscuits
- ♦ Wheat Thins
- ♦ Nabisco Ritz (original)
- ♦ Saltines
- ♦ Graham crackers
- ♦ Goldfish
- ♦ Teddy Grahams
- ♦ Cheerios
- ♦ Pretzels
- ♦ White corn tortillas
- ♦ Soy peanut butter
- ♦ Fruit roll-up
- ♦ Fruit-by-the-Foot
- ♦ Fruit cups
- ♦ Oreo cookies
- ♦ Vanilla Wafers
- ♦ Pop-Tarts
- ♦ Pudding
- ♦ Yogurt
- ♦ Jell-O
- ♦ Nutri-grain bars
- ♦ Raisins

We appreciate your cooperation in preparing meals for your child that are “nut-free” in order to reduce the risk of a student having a life-threatening reaction in school.

### **REST/QUIET TIME**

Students will enjoy time to rest on their own cot provided by ACA. Naptime is in accordance with the students’ age and the DFPS Minimum Standards regulations. Students who are in Pre-K and Kindergarten that do not desire a nap will need to rest for an allotted amount of time designated by DFPS and will then continue to work on the accelerated curriculum developed for them.

Note: A small, clearly labeled pillow, blanket and/or small cot cover must be sent in every Monday in a bag and taken home to launder every Friday. It is very important to maintain good hygiene and encourage your child in helping you fold and complete their laundry.

### **EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM**

Extended day programs are available for all students. The school day begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m. However, ACA provides an extended day program that includes care for students from 7:30am - 8:30am (before school) and 3:30pm - 6:00pm (after school). During registration, you may choose this program and enjoy the extended hours of operation. Please notify the receptionist at least two-weeks before the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month if you chose to change your program.

## **ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS**

ACA will provide extracurricular activities for the students. Upon availability, you will be able to register your child for various enrichment programs where they will be taught the basic fundamentals of several concentrated activities. Please consult the receptionist for a list of available programs. These programs are usually during extended day hours after school. If so you must either choose to enroll your child for the extended day program and keep them at the school until the end of the class or you may take them home during your scheduled pick up and return them 5 minutes before the beginning of class.

**\*\*LIMITED AVAILABILITY, ADDITIONAL CHARGES APPLY\*\***

## **BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS**

All student birthday celebrations will be held in their classroom. Parents are welcome to bring their child's favorite food on their birthday. Birthday celebrations can be held during morning snack time, lunchtime or afternoon snack time. Please avoid bringing any junk food. The Director should be notified a week before the child's birthday, so she can notify their teachers.

## **POSITIVE DISCIPLINE POLICY**

One of the primary efforts of ACA is to guide children towards acknowledging their actions and behavior. Proper development of the inner discipline (or self-discipline) of each child is achieved with the guidance of the teacher who responds with a non-judgmental approach that engages the children in the evaluation of their own actions and emotions. The children develop responsibility, self-worth, and accountability through self-correction. ACA's approach to positive discipline is exemplified in the following:

1. The classroom environment is organized in an orderly, logical manner.
2. The students are given freedom of choice with the materials provided for them in the classroom.
3. The children are free to participate in any activity for as long as they need without interruption.

Learning to express emotions verbally and honestly is a normal part of childhood. The children are encouraged to express themselves verbally and resolve minor disputes amongst themselves. These methods of discipline develop inner-discipline through natural consequences and are never as a form of punishment, but as a means of correcting misbehaviors.

In the event that a child repeatedly experiences difficulty with behavior, the teacher will address the child in a quiet and calm manner. When necessary,

the child is offered time and a safe, peaceful place to collect his/her thoughts and regain composure. If these methods are ineffective and the child's behavior is extremely inappropriate, the child is removed from the classroom. All inappropriate behavior will be documented and discussed during a parent/teacher conference.

With regard to unacceptable behavior, ACA reserves the right to suspend and/or terminate a child's enrollment if it is unable to staff or support the child's social and/or emotional needs.

### **HEALTH & SAFETY**

If a child exhibits any signs of illness, they will be monitored by a staff member. Parents are required to pick up children with any one of the following symptoms:

1. Fever
2. Vomiting
3. Rash
4. Diarrhea
5. Persistent cough or wheezing
6. Sore throat
7. Runny nose
8. Discharge from eyes or ears
9. Appearance of unknown illness or complaint
10. Acute fatigue
11. Contagious diseases (strep throat, chicken pox, etc.)
12. Parasites (head lice, worms)

Parents are expected to arrive as soon as possible or within one hour of notification. To prevent the spread of illness at ACA, please keep your child at home if signs of illness are present. Do not send your child to school on mornings when he/she has any symptoms.

Children with these symptoms or any illness should be kept at home until they are well. Your child must maintain a normal temperature (98.6 degrees) and be free of all symptoms for at least 24 hours before returning to school. All communicable illnesses must be reported to ACA as soon as possible.

### **CARE OF A SICK CHILD**

If, during the course of the day, a child manifests any symptoms requiring exclusion from participation in school activities, the parents will be notified. If the parents are unable to be reached, the child's emergency contacts are notified. Food and liquids are offered if the child's condition can tolerate them.

The teacher will take the child's temperature, note any present symptoms and notify the Director, who will immediately notify the parents. A staff member will closely monitor the child, and parents will be informed by phone or in writing of any care given. It is imperative that ACA have all available means for reaching parents and emergency contacts throughout the day.

If children continue to show any of the above symptoms, they may only return to ACA with a physician's note stating that the child is in good health, no longer communicable, and may return to school. ACA reserves the right to refuse children with any of the above symptoms notwithstanding a physician's note.

After any communicable disease is confirmed, ACA notifies parents of all children of the school as soon as possible.

### **IMMUNIZATION POLICY**

Each child enrolled in Austin Children's Academy must meet all applicable immunization requirements by the Texas Department of Health Services. This requirement applies to all children in care.

### **VISION AND HEARING SCREENING**

The Special Senses and Communication Disorders Act, Texas Health and Safety Code, requires a professional examination for possible vision and hearing problems for children age 4 on or before September 1<sup>st</sup>. To access this information online, visit <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/vhs>.

### **MEDICATION**

No prescription or over-the-counter medication will be given without a properly completed "Medical Release Form" and "Authorization for Dispensing Medication Form." The appropriate forms must be signed by the parent/ guardian and a physician before any medicine will be stored and given to your child. The proper forms can be obtained at the reception desk.

Medications may only be administered when written authorization is complete including: name of medication, dosage (amount, frequency and duration), and storage recommendations. Medication authorizations are valid for one year and are non-transferable. Any medication administered is recorded including: name of the child, medication, date, time, dose, and the name of the person administering the medication and is filed appropriately.

Please make sure that you administer the first dose of the medication yourself before bringing your child to school. Parents must give the medication directly to the administration in its original container and must be clearly labeled. Do not send any medications in your child's backpack or



lunchbox. The medication will be stored safely in a secured location. Medications requiring refrigeration are stored accordingly. Children are administered medication by authorized ACA faculty only. All medications are kept out of reach of the children.

### **Prescription Medication**

Prescription medication requires written parental authorization (see above) and the medication to be delivered in its original labeled pharmacy container to the administration. This complete pharmacy label will suffice as the written order of the physician.

### **Non-Prescription Medication**

Non-prescription medication requires written parental and physician authorization (see above) to be delivered in its original container to the administration. Non-prescription medication includes: Tylenol, Benadryl, Motrin, cough suppressants, cough drops, etc.

### **Non-Prescription Topical Treatments**

Topical treatments require written parental authorization (see above) to be delivered in its original container to the administration. Non-prescription Topical medication includes: sunscreen, sun block, bug repellent, diaper rash ointment, etc.

### **Epi-pens**

In case of emergency, the use of Epinephrine (Epi-Pen) for severe allergic attacks is permitted – parents must supply two (2) doses of medication. One is kept behind the reception desk and the other is kept in the child's classroom. Parents must file written authorization including clear and specific directions. Teachers who come in contact with the children are trained in the proper use of this medication.

### **SPECIAL CONDITIONS**

Health records and all registration forms are required by law. Please make sure that you have completed all appropriate forms in its entirety prior to registration. These forms must be turned in before the student can attend their first day of school. It is extremely important that ACA has record of custodial arrangements, emergency contacts, behavioral patterns, and any medical conditions your child may have. If we do not have this information on file, ACA has the right to deny the child's admission to the school.

**Note:** Please notify ACA of any changes to you or your child's personal information (address, contact numbers, medical records, conditions and/or emergency contact information).

## MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

ACA faculty has been trained in First-Aid and CPR. In case of a serious emergency, we will contact 9-1-1, and the parents will be notified by phone of the emergency details. If required, your child will be transported by ambulance to the nearest hospital. We will make sure he/she is accompanied by a member of ACA staff. If an ambulance is not required, you will need to pick up your child immediately.

## SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

- ♦ New Year's Day
- ♦ Good Friday
- ♦ Independence Day
- ♦ Thanksgiving Day
- ♦ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- ♦ Memorial Day
- ♦ Labor Day
- ♦ Christmas Day

Note: Please refer to the Academic Calendar for all school holidays, teacher work days and school days off. ACA observes Spring Break during the month of March. Full tuition is still due for this month and any month regardless of Spring Break and/or any off days.

## SCHOOL SEMESTERS

The academic calendar can be found at the reception desk and on the ACA website. Please mark all calendars for closed school days so there will not be any schedule conflicts. ACA's Fall/Spring semester is from August 1<sup>st</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup> and ACA's summer semester is from June 1<sup>st</sup> to July 31<sup>st</sup>.

## TUITION

Tuition is due on the first day of each month. A late fee of \$25.00 will be charged each day for payments received after the third day of the month. If the third falls on a weekend then the tuition is due the Friday before the third otherwise late fees will apply as of the following Monday. ACA can suspend the child from attending school if any financial commitments are not met. In the case of a returned check, there will be an additional \$35.00 processing fee and a cashier's check or money order must be used for payment of tuition.

Note: If two or more siblings are enrolled in ACA simultaneously, the oldest child will receive a 5% discount on their tuition rate.  
**Full tuition must be paid regardless of any absenteeism.**

**\*\*ALL FEES AND TUITION PAYMENTS ARE NON-REFUNDABLE\*\***

## PROGRAMS

ACA offers a variety of programs accommodating various schedules and ages. There are part-time and full-time programs. Tuition fees are subject to change for any program. For the 3-day and 2-day programs, parents are able to choose the (2-3) days they would like their child to attend ACA at registration. If they would like to change the (2-3) days or the program your child is enrolled for then a written notice must be submitted to the administration one-calendar month prior to the change. Please notify the Director when the change is submitted.

## VACATION

Please notify the Director and the teachers at least one-month prior to when your family is planning to take a vacation or when you anticipate your child missing school for a significant amount of time (more than 2 days).

All financial obligations must be satisfied prior to departure. If you intend on returning to school after vacation or family obligation then the tuition must be paid in full and on time. The failure to satisfy any payments will result in immediate suspension from attending school.

If you intend on taking an entire calendar month (1<sup>st</sup> of the month to the last day of the month) off from ACA then you will be responsible for 50% of that month's tuition to secure your child's position in their class. You will only be allowed to take advantage of this vacation discount for only one-month per academic year. This discount will not be prorated and will only account for those students that are absent for the entire calendar month. Coming to school for a couple days out of the month will not be discounted nor prorated and you will be responsible for the entire month's tuition in full.

If you choose to take more than one-calendar month off, you will still be responsible for the tuition in full to secure your child's position at ACA. No discounts will be provided in case of vacations exceeding one-calendar month within that academic year. No tuition payments will be prorated.

## PROVISIONAL PERIOD

Students enrolled at ACA for the first time will be given a 4-week trial period. The student may be removed from the school program if ACA feels that it cannot meet the child's needs. A meeting with the parents, administration and the child's teacher will be held to discuss any problems, and attempts will be made to resolve the issues before final action is taken. The collaborative efforts from all parties involved will be exhausted prior to further action takes place.

## WITHDRAWAL

All parents of ACA students enrolled must provide a completed ACA Withdrawal Form at least one-calendar month prior to the date of withdrawal and are obligated to satisfy all fees and tuition upon withdrawal including the last month's tuition in full.

If you fail to provide the administration with the proper notification and withdrawal form at least one-calendar month prior to withdrawal then you will still be responsible for the next month's tuition in full.

Proper withdrawal procedures include at least one-calendar month's written notice using the ACA Withdrawal Form located at the reception desk along with the last month's tuition payment in full. There will be no prorating for the last month's tuition.

Failure to comply with these procedures will result in forwarding the debt to an accredited collection agency and indefinite suspension.

## RE-ENROLLMENT

Re-enrollment for current students for the Summer Semester begins on March 1st, and re-enrollment for the following Fall/Spring Academic Year begins on May 1st. Non-refundable registration fees along with a signed registration form are required to hold a place for your child during that particular academic semester.

Note: Due to limited availability and high demand, please keep in consideration all registration deadlines. After the deadline, if you have not re-enrolled then your child's position will be forfeited.

- ♦ Re-enrollment deadline for Summer is March 31<sup>st</sup>.
- ♦ Re-enrollment deadline for Fall/Spring is May 31<sup>st</sup>.

## SCHOOL HOURS

ACA is open from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

## LATE PICK-UP POLICY

If you have an extreme personal emergency and cannot pick up your child on time, please call us as soon as you are aware of the problem. We will help you make alternative arrangements with your emergency contacts with the proper authorization.

**Note:** The fee for late pick up is \$5.00 for the first five minutes, and then \$1.50 per minute thereafter. Continued abuse of the late pick-up will result in indefinite suspension.

### **ALTERNATE PICK-UP PROCEDURES**

Pick-up procedures have been developed to keep your child safe while attending ACA. In order for any person other than the legal parent/guardian to pick up the child, their name must be listed as an emergency contact person. The following actions should be taken:

1. Notify ACA no less than an hour before the pickup will take place.
2. Complete the Emergency Pick-up Form and provide ACA with a copy as written authorization for your child to be picked up.
3. Inform the individual to bring a picture ID with them as proof of identification.
4. Have the individual call the school before arriving to pick up your child.

### **EMERGENCY DAY CARE**

ACA provides day care for children that are not enrolled in the Extended Day Program. There will be \$1.00 per minute and a \$30.00 per hour charge for supervision during any additional hours between 7:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

### **HIRING OF ACA EMPLOYEES**

If you hire any current or former ACA employee, you will be liable for a \$3,000.00 finder's fee.

### **TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES**

Austin Children's Academy and all licensed child care centers are in compliance with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). ACA's annual inspection report is located in the reception area. Parents can find more information about the minimum standards rules at the Texas DFPS website: <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us>. The child abuse hotline phone number is 1-800-252-5400.

# Austin Children's Academy

## PARENT HANDBOOK AGREEMENT FORM



I, \_\_\_\_\_ acknowledge receipt of the ACA Parent Handbook. I have read each section completely and agree to abide by all policies and procedures of the Austin Children's Academy.

I understand my failure to comply with the rules and regulations set forth in this handbook may result in suspension or expulsion of the student.

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Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

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Director of Operations' Signature

Date