



Family Handbook

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Welcome

Welcome to Highlands Academy! Highlands Academy, affectionately known as HA, is a premiere preschool 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 academic environment where infants through prekindergarten age children will grow, develop and thrive. This Parent's Handbook is intended to acquaint newly enrolled families with center management, programs and policies.

About HA

Highlands Academy holds a Permanent Child Care License for children aged 6 weeks to 6 years. We are Qualistar rated with a three star rating. The new Colorado Shines Rating will be completed summer 2016.

Our hours of operation are 7:00 am- 6:00 pm Monday –Friday. We are closed for all major holidays, trainings and conferences as well as a short fall, winter, spring and summer break. Each Parent is provided a calendar showing the specific closure dates.

We follow the Denver Public School's decisions should severe weather or other conditions (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, or blizzards) occur. If Denver Public Schools announce closure, Highlands Academy will also be closed. Parents will receive an email before 6:00 am. In other emergency situations (i.e. power outages, water flooding or loss of water, gas leaks, etc.) if it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. Your child's early pick-up is your responsibility to arrange.

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, music and movement, with the incorporation of cooking and computers. This configuration encourages self-constructed learning by students of all ages.

Admission and Enrollment

When you choose Highlands Academy as your school we require a non-refundable waitlist fee to place your child on the list. When a space opens for your child you will be asked to put a deposit of \$250 that will then be credited to your first month tuition.

To enroll your child, you must complete the Enrollment Packet and provide certain medical forms for your child. You must complete and sign all forms before your child may attend. These forms as well as the registration fee need to be renewed each fall.

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 fifth of the month. Families who have not paid tuition in full by the fifteenth of the month will be asked not to return until all tuition is caught up.

Tuition fees are not subject to pro-rating for illness, holidays or emergency closures of the center. Family discounts will apply to families having two or more actively enrolled children each month. The child with the lowest tuition charge for the month will receive the discount.

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

Enrollment is based on classroom availability. We have full time and part time 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.

If you should need to leave our center, we require written notice *thirty days* before your child's last day in the classroom. The last months tuition will be prorated and due the first of the month.

Inclusion

Highlands Academy believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in child care. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs.

If your child is receiving services for a developmental delay or there are concerns about the child's development, teachers are here to partner with the families to make referrals to and/or work with therapists to ensure that your child is successful at our school and in the future.

In the event you or child speaks another language at home and your family needs interpreting services, please let management know so that we may make the proper arrangements.

Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released with the exception of that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

Child to Staff Ratios and Primary Caregiving

All Children are supervised at all times. All caregivers receive scheduled breaks which reduce fatigue and help to ensure alertness.

Each classroom has a lead teacher and two assistants that are assigned to your classroom for the year. Your child will be assigned a classroom for the year and move up transitions to the next oldest class will be discussed and scheduled the following summer or fall.

We maintain 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>
12-36 months	<u>[5 to 1]</u>	<u>[10]</u>
24-36 months	<u>[7 to 1]</u>	<u>[14]</u>
30 mo- 6 years	<u>[10 to 1]</u>	<u>[20]</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 # is 1030106

Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care
1575 Sherman St., Denver, CO 80203
Tel: (303) 866-3755 Fax: 303.866.4453

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 Child Care 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 Child Care 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 Center Director at Highlands Academy. Claire has been working with preschool age children for over 10 years. She started out working as an assistant in a Reggio 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 school and was there for several years where 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.

Our Teachers

Each classroom has a three teacher team with a lead teacher and two assistants. Our lead teachers hold an ECT (Early Childhood Teacher) certificate and either have or are working toward a Director's License, Associates, Bachelor's or Master's degree. Our Teacher Assistants are either ECTA (Early Childhood Teacher Assistant) certified.

Professional Development

Each year, we set aside time for professional development for our teachers and 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 have two days in the spring and two days in the fall. These dates correspond with Parent Teacher conferences and are marked on the Highlands Academy calendar as classrooms are closed.

Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent teacher conferences are a very important part of your child's early education experience. Conferences will be held twice each year and all parents/guardians are encouraged to attend and actively participate. Teacher and parent observations, developmental milestones and achievements will be highlighted. Acting as partners, parents/guardians and teachers will create a plan for next steps for each individual child.

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. Children will not be put in a time out, and they will only be allowed "space" from the group in extreme instances. 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 her or him 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

Challenging behavior is a part of the preschool 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 and documentation will be written for families and the school records. We will work together with the families to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

When there is a repetitive challenging behavior with a child, there are steps that we take as teachers and staff to ensure the child is getting all the support that is needed to be successful and progressing in the classroom.

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

Stage 2: Meeting with parents about new strategies, talk about the need for referrals to outside resources (therapists, etc) that may or may not be necessary, and writing a formal behavior plan around positive behavior strategies

Stage 3: Environment change, try a new classroom or teachers if available

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

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 biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the child who bit learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting.

There are times when biting or other behaviors are more severe and need to be addressed in a different way. Highlands Academy takes these behaviors seriously and has a protocol in these situations. These stages can go quickly and sometimes can take time; we may see the situation get worse before it gets better; however as teachers we look at the child and want to do what is best for him/her. 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. Please see the above stages for managing this behavior.

Educational Programs

Infants 6 weeks up to 18 months

Your child 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 little one 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
- Baby Yoga stretching
- Baby Music Together

Toddlers 18 months up to 36 months

Your toddler's fine motor development begins to become a focus as she is introduced to toys and games that develop grasping strength and pinching with the thumb and forefingers. Your youngster will also be introduced to our yoga program through gentle stretching and yoga stories. Your little one 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 letter and number shapes. Our highly qualified teachers promote your little one's autonomy as well as parallel play in an environment that offers options for both. As your curious toddler develops, teachers will set up opportunities to expand on his 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.

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
- Zoo Phonics
- Radiant Beginnings Toddler Yoga program
- Music Together
- Early Spanish Instruction
- Little Sluggers sports program

Early Preschool 24 months up to 36 months

This classroom is designed for the older toddler to focus on skills such as potty training, lining up, recognizing names and social emotional vocabulary. This classroom continues the yoga, Spanish and Music program while also providing more opportunity for language and interpersonal skills. Zoo Phonics becomes more prevalent in this class while the children are starting to recognize the letters and their names. Potty training is a large part of this classroom as the children are getting ready for Preschool.

Program Features Include:

- Daily small group instruction with small and large groups
- Potty Training
- Radiant Beginnings Yoga
- Zoo Phonics
- Music Together
- Early Spanish Instruction

Preschool 30 months up to 4 years

Your preschooler is provided with a rich, academic environment. We lay a solid foundation of math, science, literacy and friendship in our Preschool classroom. Drawing from Creative Curriculum and Zoo Phonics, the classrooms delve into studies of buildings, trees, community, clothes, balls and reduce reuse recycle. Teachers will follow the classrooms lead and let 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. Zoo Phonics introduces capital letters and beginning reading lessons as the students are ready and showing interest in more advanced literacy. Handwriting is introduced as part of Zoo Phonics as the children learn the letter shapes.

Program Features Include:

- Creative Curriculum studies in 6-8 week increments
- Play based experiences to develop cognition and problem solving skills
- Zoo Phonics with more reading and handwriting involvement
- Observation
- collections that reflect your child's progression
- Radiant Beginnings Yoga
- Social Emotional Coaching
- Music Together
- Spanish Instruction
- Little Sluggers

Pre-K 42 months up to 6 years

The downstairs classrooms are our Pre-K classrooms. Most of the students in these classrooms are close to going to Kindergarten the following fall, but some may spend two years in this part of the program. The Pre-K program has the same curriculum as the Preschool; however these teachers are going to be preparing your child for Kindergarten. This means a larger focus on handwriting, arithmetic and pre-reading.

Program Features Include:

- Creative Curriculum studies in 6-8 week increments
- Play based experiences to develop cognition and problem solving skills
- Zoo Phonics with more reading and handwriting involvement
- Portfolio collections that reflect your child's progression
- Radiant Beginnings Yoga
- Social Emotional Coaching
- Music Together
- Spanish Instruction
- Little Sluggers

Transitions

Transitions are an exciting time at Highlands Academy. While children are often eager to move into the classroom, the actual move can be a little intimidating whether from home or from a previous classroom. Our teachers are well versed in making transitions a pleasurable experience. Children will have opportunities to visit their new classrooms for short periods before moving full time. If you are a new student we encourage you to come and visit the classroom a few times to get to know the routines and the teachers. You can also set up meeting with the teachers to ask questions and learn the classroom culture. Transitions from room to room typically happen each September, possibly earlier if there is a special circumstance. When the transition time is close, we email families to inform the change is coming, info about the new classroom and the teachers' bios. The child visits the new classroom for at least two weeks before the actual date of transition and parents can set up meetings with the new teachers to ask questions and learn about the new classroom. This allows the child to get to know the teacher and the teacher to get to know the child. If we find that the child is not ready to transition, we will revisit the situation and see if we can find a better fit and time.

Preschool children that are graduating to a new school are supported by the teacher talking about the new school, what that change might be like, and encouraging the child to be excited about the change. We will partner with families to get to know the new school the best we can so that we can best provide this support.

Ancillary Programing

Yoga

The yoga program at HA is integrated in every classroom every day. We live in a busy world and our kids are aware of the stress and pressure in one way or another. Yoga offers an opportunity to learn about self-health, relaxation, body awareness and cooperation. Physically, yoga will enhance flexibility, strength, coordination and spatial awareness. In addition, your child's concentration and ability to calm and relax will improve. Teachers use a multitude of strategies to make yoga a natural part of your child's day: stories are acted out using yoga stretches, songs are taught to accompany particular poses, and alphabet concepts are solidified through kinesthetic memory with yoga stretches.

Spanish

Beginning in the Toddler classroom, Spanish instruction is integrated into daily activities including music, art, story time and dramatic play. Our Spanish teacher also holds weekly whole and small group instructional lessons in Toddlers, Early Preschool, and Preschool.

Music

Music Together is an internationally recognized early childhood music and movement program for young children. Research based and developmentally appropriate, this program is more than just an opportunity to sing and play instruments. *Music Together* is a curriculum which supports cognitive, social and emotional development.

Social Emotional

In the Preschool and Pre-K classrooms, social emotional development is a primary focus. As an additional support and resource a neighborhood play therapist comes to lead a large group focusing on interpersonal skills, emotional vocabulary and strategies that a child can use when resolving a conflict.

Little Champs

On Friday afternoon, weather permitting, Coach Casey brings baseball or soccer equipment to the toddler and preschool playgrounds. The students are given opportunities to improve balance, coordination and learn the rules of team games while developing good sportsmanship!

Child Care and Health

Food and Nutrition

HA strives to offer an organic menu for children to enjoy and parents to feel good about. HA has a full kitchen with a wonderful chef and restaurant grade equipment. We serve breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. 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 see center management and chef for accommodations.

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.

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.

Breastfeeding

As a nursing mother, you are encouraged to visit anytime and are welcome to stay in the classroom. All bottles must be pre-made and clearly labeled with the child's name. Teachers will also be labeling the bottles with the child's name and what is inside, breastmilk or formula and the date. 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.

Clothing

Each child in attendance must provide two full changes of clothes, including socks. If your child is potty training, please partner with your teachers to make sure you are providing enough clothing for the day. 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. Be sure that shoes are comfortable for school indoor and out. All walking children must have shoes. 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.

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

Diapering and Toilet Learning

Children requiring diapers will be checked for wetness or feces at least every two hours, or 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 Child Care Facilities

Potty time is a very collaborative process between teachers, parents/guardians and children. Children best learn potty skills through consistent, positive encouragement from all the adults who care for them on a daily basis. We are committed to working with your family to make toilet learning a developmentally appropriate process with as little stress as possible.

Parents are responsible for providing diapers, wipes and diapering cream. There is an ointment/lotion consent form if you would like teachers to apply diapering cream as a preventative measure; this form is part of the enrollment packet. Children in diapers and those transitioning to the potty must have a minimum of two complete changes of clothing at the center at all times, including socks. An additional pair of shoes kept at the center is also recommended.

Rest Time

Children of all ages require time each day to rest. At our center, your child will rest in the afternoon for one hour at minimum, 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. Parents/guardians are required to provide a crib sheet and blanket for rest time. Please remember to label all items with your child's first and last name. Bedding will be laundered a minimum of once a week.

Allergies

If your child has a food allergy, you must notify us in writing so that we can make appropriate substitutions. The written notification should list appropriate food substitutions and must be updated at least annually. Please keep our chef in the know. You can directly email the chef through the link on our website.

Food allergies can be life threatening and each child with a food allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician.

Hand Washing

Teaching your child 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.

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 your child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.
- Fever (above 100°F) accompanied by other symptoms.
- Diarrhea – stools with blood or mucus, and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet.
- Vomiting – green or bloody, and/or 2 or more times during the previous 24 hours.
- Mouth sores caused by drooling.
- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Head lice, until treatment and all nits are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.

- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:
 - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious, and;
 - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.
- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

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 of the recommended immunization schedule. Our state regulations regarding attendance of children who are not immunized due to religious or medical reasons are followed. If your child is not immunized or you are on a delayed schedule, you will be required to sign the immunization waiver. [Highlands Academy is in process of requiring all children enrolled to be immunized or be in process. As we have infants in the school, their safety is important and we are working to incorporate this regulation].

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 physical should be received before but must be received no later than 30 days after your child begins the program. Every well child visit requires an update for the school records. Families are responsible for assuring that their child's physicals are kept up-to-date and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to the program.

- ❖ If you are in need of finding 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.

Medication

Medications will be administered in accordance with Colorado state child care 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, HA requires a physician's orders with the original prescription label and a medication or health plan on file. Medication will be in a locked box while at the center. Please speak with center management to coordinate medication administration.

Community Resources

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 the family to discuss the observations and suggestions about next steps and outside support and assessments that might be available in the area.

Safety and Security

Child Supervision

Children entrusted to our care will be supervised by qualified teachers and staff at all times. Teachers will meet or exceed state licensing requirements for the care and education of young children. Our teachers are all trained in CPR/First Aid and Standard Precautions (Bloodborn Pathogens) Teachers will conduct name to face supervision checks on a regular basis, and maintain proper adult to child ratios at all times.

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 supervising teacher and hand delivered to parents/guardians at the time of pick up. Parents/guardians will be asked to sign the report and can request a copy at any time. If a child is involved in an accident involving the head or face, HA staff will contact the family as soon as possible. Scratches and bumps, not involving the head, will be communicated to parents/guardians at pick up unless otherwise requested.

Emergency Response Procedures

Highlands Academy has an Emergency Response Plan for all cases of emergencies in detail. Highlands Academy practices monthly emergency drills, including fire and tornado drills. Other drills include “Lock- Out” and “Lock-Down and Hide”. In the event of an actual emergency, parents and 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 and local authorities will be notified as soon as possible.

Security

Keeping your child safe and secure is a top priority at Highlands Academy. In addition to built-in security features, such as the key code entrance and the video monitoring system, we strictly follow arrival and departure procedures. All children must be signed in and out each day by parents/guardians. Upon enrollment, each family will complete an Enrollment Agreement which includes primary and emergency release contact information. It is the parent/guardian’s responsibility to update these forms 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.

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 the records without your written authorization or court order. As a parent/guardian you may request access to your child's records. 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.

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. All children must be signed in and out each day by parents/guardians. Additionally, families are asked to make personal contact with your child's teacher at drop off and pick up each day by personally escorting your child to and from his or her classroom. A late pick up fee of \$1 per minute per child will be assessed when a child is left beyond 6:05pm. The late pick up fee does not constitute an agreement to provide afterhours service, nor will the late fee be applied toward tuition. Chronic lateness at closing time may be grounds for termination of service.

If your child is going to be late to school or absent, please call the center to let us know before 9:00 am. If your child's class is out of the building for a field trip and your child arrives late, the child will be placed in an alternative classroom of the same age range or spend time with the director in the front offices. If your child can not arrive at the time of the field trip, we encourage you to stay with your child until the class arrives back at school.

Transportation

Highlands Academy will not provide transportation for any enrolled child at this time. In the event of a field trip, a private third party transportation service will be hired by HA. They will provide proof of insurance and other documentation to parents prior to transporting children. Additionally, parents will sign a permission form allowing their child to participate in third party transportation.

Visitors

All visitors must present photo identification upon entering Highlands Academy and sign in to 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. 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 (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.

Drop-off and Pick-up

We open at 7:00 AM. Please do not drop-off your child prior to the opening. The caregiver that is dropping off is required to accompany their children and sign them into the classroom.

We close at 6:00 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.

Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick-up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

In the event that a child has not been picked up by 6:00 pm, HA staff will attempt to contact parents/guardians. If parents/guardians cannot be reached, HA staff will contact emergency contacts listed on the child's Enrollment Agreement. Should HA staff be unable to make contact with 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.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you, and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after hours we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency.

Obligation to inform Law Enforcement or when we have to inform Police

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. Reoccurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

Family Communication and Involvement

Communication Tools

Highlands Academy strives to make sure 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 once a month on the 1st of the month. Announcements from the Administration that includes information on special dates, staff birthdays and anniversaries, policy changes and calendar notices will always be in the monthly newsletter.

Weekly Updates

The teachers send out weekly updates every Monday that will keep you informed of the week ahead. This includes schedule changes, special activities and lesson plans. Parents should feel connected and prepared for the classroom.

Daily Notes

Daily notes are sent home at pick up time with the essential information about your child's day and some pictures included. These are sometimes sent in email, depending on the classroom.

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. Also, you are welcome to schedule a conference with your child's teacher and/or center management at any time outside of the bi-annual conference time.

Highlands Academy wants to hear from you. We have an annual survey that we send out in the spring as well as family nights in the fall and spring. Newsletters will let you know about dates and times that these are scheduled as well as the yearly calendar.

Parent Night Out

Each month (respectively) Highlands Academy Teachers organize and offer a night of childcare for enrolled parents at the school. Teachers sign up to be the "babysitters" and families can pay a reasonable fee for a night out. Pizza and a movie is provided for the toddlers- Pre-K students and infant care is also provided.

Please see the teacher in charge of the PNO for more details. This is an event outside of Highlands Academy operating hours and is cash paid directly to the teachers.

Babysitting Policy

The teachers at Highlands Academy are permitted to babysit outside of scheduled hours at the school. We do provide a list for parents and please utilize our teachers over breaks and vacations.

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 being threatened. Highlands Academy reserves the right to terminate services as deemed appropriate at our sole discretion, with or without notice.



Acknowledgement of Receipt and Release of Liability

By signing below I acknowledge that I have received and read Highland Academy’s Parent Handbook.

I consent to the participation of my child, _____, in all HA center activities.

Highlands Academy is well child-proofed and the children are consistently well supervised. However, accidents do happen. By signing below, I assume all risk of injury or harm to my child associated with participation in the center activities and agree to release Highlands Academy and its employees from all liability with respect to death, injury, loss or damage to the child, or by the child, howsoever caused, arising during the child's attendance at Highlands Academy.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date