



# Family Handbook

January 2022

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# Welcome

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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. Our hours of operation are 7:30 am- 5:30 pm Monday –Friday. We are closed for all major holidays, trainings and conferences as well as a 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. This configuration encourages self-constructed learning by students of all ages.

Highlands Academy has developed a continuous quality improvement plan that is updated annually by the owners and administration, goals which are shared with staff and families. These updates include goals, timelines, and outcomes that are included in newsletters to parents. Our Quality Improvement Plan On-going cyclical quality improvement is a process which is used to identify a program's strengths and opportunities for improvement and is a key part of high-quality early learning and care programs and services. Continuous quality improvement is a process which ensures that an organization and its partners are systematic and intentional about improving services and practices and increasing positive outcomes for families and their children. We send out an annual Parent Survey that advises us on elements to

improve. We send out the results of this survey and new goals to the parents each year in newsletter format. This process is valued and used here at Highlands Academy.

## *Admission and Tuition*

When you choose Highlands Academy as your school, we require a non-refundable application fee to place your child on the list. When a space opens for your child you will be asked to pay a deposit, the first month's tuition, to hold the space for up to 30 days.

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 fifteenth of the month. Families who have not paid tuition in full by the end 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 based on special needs if a safe, supportive environment can be provided.

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

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

Families with children with special needs are welcome to apply for enrollment. Highlands Academy is an environment that strives to accommodate the needs of all children. In some cases, the administrative staff in consultation with the family, the nurse consultant, and/or other

specialists may determine if we are able to meet the child's needs and the child will benefit from the program. If it is determined that we are not able to appropriately meet the needs of the child and the family, we will work closely with specialists to refer the family and the child to a more appropriate placement.

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

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

## *Translation Services*

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

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

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

## *Confidentiality*

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released except for 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 always supervised. All caregivers receive scheduled breaks which reduce fatigue and help to ensure alertness. Highlands Academy has implemented a plan to improve teacher to child ratios by employing a third teacher in each classroom throughout the school. Each classroom has a lead teacher and two assistants that are assigned to your classroom for the year. Ideally, your child will be assigned a classroom for the year and move up transitions to the next oldest class will be discussed and scheduled the following summer or fall. These transitions could occur at different times if opportunity arises.

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

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

## *Complaints*

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

All licensing reports are available for review in the office, or you can view them through the licensing website through Colorado Human Services.

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 Director of Admissions and Parent Liaison at Highlands Academy, as well as a parent. Claire joined Highlands Academy in April of 2013. Claire has been working with preschool age children for over 20 years. She started out working as an assistant in a Reggio Emilia inspired preschool in Boulder while finishing her undergraduate degree in humanities from CU Boulder. She began working as a teacher in a privately-owned school while finishing her MA in Educational Psychology with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education. She later worked at The Rise School of Denver when it was first moving into a bigger 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.

## *HA 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 CDA, director's license, associates, or bachelor's degree. Our teacher assistants are either ECTA (Early Childhood Teacher Assistant) certified or are currently enrolled in classes for that certification.

## *Professional Development and Planning time for Teachers*

Each year, we set aside time for professional development for our teachers to maintain our high-quality staff. Our goal is to develop and elevate each ECE professional's skills and techniques. These trainings and workshops allow our teachers to better assist families and students in their early educational experiences. We 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.

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

To make sure that your child is receiving excellent childcare and education services, we evaluate each teacher's performance annually. The results of those teacher evaluations also are seen in our Quality Improvement Plan. Teacher evaluation refers to the formal process a school uses to review and rate a teacher's performance and effectiveness in the classroom. Ideally, the findings from this evaluation process are used to provide feedback to teachers which they can use to guide and inform their professional development and their Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

## *Parent Teacher Conferences*

Daily reports are provided through the Bright Wheel system. This will provide you with detailed specific information regarding naptime, meals, diapering/toilet training, and activities.

Developmental evaluations and parent conferences for all age groups are conducted twice a year. Conferences will be held in the fall and spring of each school year. Conferences are highly encouraged for all families. Sign-ups are made available for these age groups and parents are strongly encouraged to attend either in person or virtually if needed. The conferences will be verbal in nature and will be accompanied by a written report to be filed in the child's portfolio. The evaluations will be discussed with the parents, and a copy of the report will be made available to the parents. If a child is having behavior/physical concern the parent's will be notified and a meeting may be necessary.

If parents have additional concerns or questions, conferences are available anytime upon request. Teachers will request to have a conference with you within 90 days of starting if you are missing these conference dates because of enrollment timing.

## *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 use our Brightwheel Application to record all of these incidents. We will work together with the families to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change. Highlands Academy is NOT a zero-tolerance school. We work with each case individually.

When 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. Again, each case is an individual case and may be treated differently depending on the child and situation. These stages are a guideline, but timelines are not definite.

**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 strategy.

**Stage 3:** Environment change, try a new classroom or teachers if available (this is not always an option).

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

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

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### *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

- When ready, Breakfast, Lunch and Snack
- Baby Yoga stretching
- Baby Music Together
- Baby Spanish exposure

## *Toddlers 12 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.

Toilet learning is implemented in the toddler classroom when your child turns 18 months. As a parent we require you to participate in the toilet learning parent education night that is provided each year. We will let you know when these are happening for you to sign up.

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
- Breakfast, Lunch and Snack
- Toilet Learning
- Radiant Beginnings Toddler Yoga program
- Music Together
- Early Spanish Instruction
- Lil Champs sports program

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

Program Features Include:

- Creative Curriculum studies in 6-8-week increments
- Play based experiences to develop cognition and problem-solving skills
- Observation collections that reflect your child's progression
- Radiant Beginnings Yoga
- Social Emotional Coaching
- Music Together
- Spanish Instruction
- Little Champs sports program

## *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
- Teaching Strategies Portfolio collections that reflect your child's progression
- Radiant Beginnings Yoga
- Social Emotional Coaching
- Music Together
- Spanish Instruction
- Little Champs sports program

## *Transitions*

Transitions refer to the process of a child moving from one program or setting to another, for example, the transition from home care to formal care, to a new classroom within a program, or from one program to another. Highlands Academy recognizes that stability and consistency are important for a child's development and acknowledges that young children accomplish different developmental milestones at different rates. Smooth transitions support children's

academic and social success and contribute to the well-being of the child and their family. At HA we support intentional and thoughtful transition practices for children and their families.

HA uses the following strategies that support children's transition into a new program: Families are invited to set up a tour with the Admission Director to view the facility and prospective classroom of their child to familiarize themselves with the program. Together the Admissions Director and the family will review the handbook and any questions the family may have will be answered. If the family is committed to having their child attend the program, an appointment will be set up to have the child come visit the program with one family member for a short visit. This will allow the child to get acquainted with his/her new teachers and peers. After an hour or so, the parent can wait for the child in another room while the child plays in the classroom for an activity. This process will make for a smoother transition when the child begins attending for the first time on their own. Families are welcome repeat this process several times as a child needs, so the child is fully comfortable with being left on their own.

Children also may transition to a different classroom at different times during the year within the program but there is typically a larger group transition once during the year. Any child that is changing classes will have a transition time sufficient for a successful integration into the child's new class. Before the change occurs, children will have an opportunity to visit the new classroom and spend some time there to get familiar with the classroom, their new peers, and teachers. Typically, if other children from your child's class will also be moving to the new classroom, we move them together to help make that change easier for all concerned. Parents with their child are also invited to visit the new classroom before or any time after the change and are encouraged to talk with their child's new and former teacher about any concerns or questions. To help teachers become familiar with their new student, the new and old teacher meet and go over assessment data, portfolio information, and share insights on the child's learning style, and other important information about the social, emotional, and cognitive development of the child.

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

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

# Ancillary Programing

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## 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 Infant classroom, Spanish instruction is integrated into daily activities including music, art, story time and dramatic play. Our Spanish teacher also holds weekly whole 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. Ms. Sonya has helped the school integrate this program and added her own music curriculum for learning through the years.

## 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

One day a week, weather permitting, Coach Casey works on sport fundamentals with the toddler and preschool students. The students are given opportunities to improve balance, coordination and learn the rules of team games while developing good sportsmanship!

# Child Care and Health

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## *Food and Nutrition*

HA strives to offer a healthy and varied 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 morning snack, 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 contact the center director and chef for accommodations. We may not be able to supply substitutions for all dietary preferences.

Bottles are provided by the families for the infants while they are still primarily bottle fed. These bottles cannot be poured into new bottles, they should be premade in the appropriate amounts for each feeding. The infant teachers will have consistent communication with the families as these amounts need to be adjusted. Breast milk or formula that is not finished in the required time limits cannot be used again.

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 toilet 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 bring a blanket for rest time. We provide sheets for all the classrooms. 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 before your first day in order for us to supply the appropriate substitutions. The written notification should list appropriate food substitutions and must be updated annually. Please keep our director in the know, they will notify and work with the cook for substitutions.

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

## *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 free 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](http://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. Highlands Academy is in process of requiring all children enrolled to be immunized or be in the process of being fully immunized, therefore we do not accept non-medical exemptions. As we have infants in the school, their safety is important, and we are working to incorporate this regulation. Brightwheel will have these attachments available in your child’s profile.

### *Physicals*

Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://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 childcare licensing guidelines in partnership with our nurse. We recommend that parents/guardians administer medications outside of school hours. When medication must be administered at Highlands Academy, 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.

Community-based services can provide families and children with needed resources and information. Services may focus on children's developmental needs, for example early intervention screenings, or family needs, such as housing, job, and food assistance. If you need

support locating a particular resource or service, we can help you connect with those supports. Please let us know how we can support you. You can contact us any time by speaking personally with your child's teacher or the Directors, or you can phone or email us. Also, a binder with a list of resources, as well as a variety of pamphlets, brochures, and other materials, are located in the front and are accessible any time.

## Safety and Security

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### *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 (Bloodborne 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 sent through Brightwheel to parents/guardians at the time of the incident. Parents/guardians are able to access these reports at any time. If a child is involved in an accident involving the head or face, HA staff will contact the family as soon as possible. Scratches and bumps, not involving the head, will be communicated to parents/guardians through Brightwheel.

### *Emergency Response Procedures*

Highlands Academy has an Emergency Response Plan for all cases of emergencies in detail. Highlands Academy practices quarterly emergency drills, including fire and tornado drills. Other drills include “Lock- Out” and “Lock-Down and Hide” that are in response to active shooters that may be in the immediate vicinity. Highlands Academy follows the Denver Police twitter feed as well as all news bulletins to stay informed of any emergencies in close locations. In the event of an actual emergency, parents 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.

### *Extreme Weather Policies*

Highlands Academy follows 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.

If temperatures are extreme, either hot or cold, classrooms will spend the day inside. If children have proper clothing in the winter, the classroom may spend a short amount of time on the playgrounds, but not their full outside time. In hot conditions, the classrooms will provide water play to help the children stay cool and may also spend a shorter span of time on the playgrounds.

If lightning is spotted, all children are kept inside.

## *Security*

Keeping your child safe and secure is a top priority at Highlands Academy. In addition to built-in security features, such as the 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 and be prompted to join Brightwheel where they can enter primary and emergency release contact information. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to update these contacts and keep them current. Persons not listed on these forms will not be authorized to pick up your child without prior written notice from you. This notice can be in the form of an email or a Brightwheel message and include the persons full name so we can ID them upon arrival.

## *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. Only emails will be shared as a directory in the classrooms. If you are not wanting to share your email with the class, please let your teachers and the administration know so we can remove you from any of the classroom directories.

## *Mandated Reporting*

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

## *Arrival and Departure*

We want to make sure your child's day begins and ends on a positive note. We open at 7:30 AM. Please do not drop-off your child prior to the opening. The caregiver that is dropping off is required to accompany their children and sign them into the classroom. 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 if possible. We may have to adjust this policy when extraneous circumstances occur (i.e., a pandemic).

Late arrivals need to be present in the school by 12pm. Arriving after 12:00pm can cause your child to be off schedule, resulting in an unsuccessful day along with disrupting our school day. Should your child need to be picked up during the morning for a scheduled appointment, s/he must return to school no later than 1:00pm. We must have accurate numbers for staff to child ratio while honoring the individual child's routine. If your appointment goes beyond the 1:00 pm time, s/he will not be admitted into the classroom environment but may return the following school day.

If your child is going to be late to school or absent, please message the center through Brightwheel to let us know before 9:00 am. If your child's class (school age) 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.

We close at 5:30 PM. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time. Again, the person picking up is required to sign the child out of the classroom. A late fee of \$1/minute is assessed after 5:40 pm. 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 via email or Brightwheel. 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.

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

### *Obligation to inform Law Enforcement or when we must 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.

### *Transportation*

Highlands Academy will only provide transportation for those students enrolled in aftercare program and summer camp. Parents will provide permission forms for these programs. The drivers of the vans will be covered by insurance and only those covered will be able to drive the vans.

## *Visitors*

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

## *Media Policies*

Preschool age children may occasionally be exposed to digital video content and technology media for educational purposes. 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. Only school age children go on field trips at this time.

# Family Communication and Involvement

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## *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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

### *Brightwheel*

Brightwheel is our daily communication for parents from the classroom. This app provides the essential information about your child's day and some pictures included. We use Brightwheel to make announcements and reminders as well as send out billing invoices and contracts each year.

### *Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies Gold*

Creative Curriculum has an app that will keep you connected with the teachers about your child's learning and development. This tool is used by the teachers to send out lesson plans, activities and updates on goals created at the parent teacher conferences.

## *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.

## *Babysitting Policy*

The teachers at Highlands Academy are discouraged from babysitting outside of school. However, we understand that this is a need from parents occasionally for breaks, weekends, and vacation times. Teachers and parents are asked to sign policy agreement for these services.

## *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.

In the case of family deciding to disenroll, we require a 45-day notice. The final month is prorated if necessary.

**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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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