

## **THE AUSTIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE CHILDREN'S LABORATORY SCHOOL**

Welcome to the ACC Children's Lab School. We believe that families and child care centers can and should work together to provide an environment that facilitates the growth of a child into a physically and emotionally healthy individual.

Our center's professional staff were selected for their knowledge of child development and practical experience with children and adult learners. Whenever you are visiting the center, please take the time to listen, watch, and learn from this unique group. Our staff is one of the many strengths of our program and it is our role to facilitate the learning of children, families, and child development students.

This handbook has been developed to help strengthen the relationship between caregivers and parents by providing you with specific information about our school. It is our hope that this handbook will help you feel more familiar with and comfortable in our program.

***The Parent Handbook Acknowledgement form on page 38 must be completed, signed, detached and returned with your enrollment paperwork. Please keep this handbook to refer to throughout the year.***

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## **I. Program**

### **A. Purpose**

The ACC Children's Lab School is a preschool that also serves as a demonstration school for the ACC's Child Development Department. The Children's Lab School offers an early childhood program and is designed to support the growth and development of young children in a warm and creative environment.

### **B. Licensing and Accreditation**

The ACC Children's Lab School is licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS). The program is also accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs (NAECP), a division of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

### **C. Children Served and Hours of Operation**

The Children's Lab School serves children six months through five years of age in four classrooms. Low staff-child ratios (1:4 infants; 1:5 toddlers; 1:6 or 7 mixed age preschool) are designed to allow teachers to develop relationships with children and their families as well as to assess and plan for children's development.

Children are placed in classes according to their age on September 1 of each academic year. Children who enter in the infant room stay with their caregivers for two years as the children and caregivers move-up together to the toddler room after a year in the infant class. In the older classes, the children typically remain in the same class with the same group of children throughout the entire year. Because of the mixed age groupings in the older classrooms, children may stay in one of those classrooms for more than one year. Moves to a new class generally happen at the beginning of the fall semester.

The school operates Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 5:45 pm. The program offers only a full day, year round option. Two nutritious snacks are served daily and the children bring their own lunches.

#### **D. Discrimination Statement**

Employment at the college and access to its programs or activities shall not be limited on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or physical disability.

## **II. The Philosophy and Goals**

### **A. Philosophy**

The guiding principle of the ACC Children's Lab School is a respect for each child's unique characteristics and abilities. In partnership with the family, the program strives to nurture each child in a relaxed atmosphere that promotes the growth and development of the whole child.

### **B. Program Goals**

The program strives to be a model of quality child care for our diverse community by:

- Providing a responsive environment where children and adults feel supported and free to explore materials, ideas and feelings;
- Fostering healthy self-esteem in each individual by respecting the individual's needs, abilities, personality, and culture;
- Fostering the development of each child's social-emotional, cognitive, language, physical, and creative abilities through the use of developmentally appropriate activities and practices;
- Providing a safe, clean environment that promotes safety, healthy practices, and an appreciation for nutritious food;

- Working in partnership with parents to ensure that children are receiving the highest quality of care; and
- Working closely with the child development department to ensure that adult students are developing the skills needed to provide quality care for children.

## **C. Goals for Children**

### **1. Infant-Toddler Loop**

We understand that infants and toddlers are sensorimotor learners (Piaget), using all their senses, moving their bodies, and manipulating objects to find out about the world around them. We also understand that growth, development, and learning happens in a holistic fashion during the first three years of life – with each experience and every exploration all developmental domains are affected. We expect that the infants and toddlers in our care will:

#### **Learn about self and others**

- Learn to trust one’s self, other people, and the world around them
- Develop a positive sense of self, aware of being a separate, unique, valued and respected individual
- Develop a positive sense of belonging, within one’s family, school group, and wider community
- Develop self-regulation skills
- Learn respect for one’s self, for others, and for their surroundings
- Develop trusting relationships with adults and other children outside their family circle
- Develop autonomy and independence
- Learn to own and express feelings in acceptable ways, and to acknowledge and understand the feelings of others

- Learn basic social interaction skills – waiting, turn-taking, enjoying being with others, respecting others’ bodies and personal space, helping, etc.

**Learn about communication, language, and literacy**

- Develop ways to communicate their needs and wants, express their feelings, and share their thoughts and ideas – nonverbally and verbally
- Begin learning their home language and using that language to communicate, developing fluency and increasing their vocabulary over time
- Begin learning other languages and using those languages to communicate (especially if languages other than the home language are used often at school)
- Develop a familiarity with books and the written word
- Begin to develop a repertoire of creative expression for thoughts and feelings through exposure to and experiences with art, oral language, storytelling, poetry, books and the written word, singing, music, creative movement, dance, pretend play, and drama

**Learn about moving and doing**

- Develop comfort with their own bodies and confidence in their physical abilities
- Develop locomotion, strength, coordination, and control over their own bodies
- Learn a wide variety of ways to move and take action with their bodies, purposefully and skillfully (including self-help skills such as feeding, dressing, and toileting)
- Develop an understanding about how to keep one’s body safe, finding a balance between too much caution and too much risk-taking

- Engage with and explore the world around them by: using their senses, moving their bodies and moving through space, manipulating objects, and acting upon their surroundings

### **Develop thinking skills and learn about the world**

- Actively participate in their physical and social environments
- Engage in independent exploration of their surroundings, experimenting with the space, objects, and people they encounter
- Develop object permanence and people permanence
- Begin to develop an understanding of physical cause and effect
- Begin to connect actions with consequences
- Develop problem-solving skills (observation, waiting, choosing, focus, effort, persistence, etc.)
- Engage in pretend play (imitation, role play, pretending with props, alternate representation, pretending without props, etc.)

## **2. Preschool**

We understand that learning happens across developmental domains. Play is the context for learning, both reflecting and contributing to children's language-cognitive, social-emotional, and physical-motor skills. As children actively engage in play and interaction with their physical and social environment, symbolic thinking grows, mental reasoning emerges and the use of concepts increases, preparing children for the transition to more formal schooling. We will support children in:

### **Social-Emotional**

- Achieving a positive sense of self
- Learning about differences and similarities among people

- Taking responsibility for themselves and others
- Behaving in a pro-social way, including; building empathy, labeling and managing emotions, respecting their environment and others
- Developing self regulation and sensory organization

### **Cognitive**

- Learning to solve problems
- Learning to ask questions
- Organizing ideas
- Having experiences with units of measurement
- Learning quantitative concepts – more, less, same
- Learning one-to-one correspondence
- Developing recognition of numerals and counting skills and understanding sets of objects
- Developing symbolic/representational thinking by using materials and their imagination to explore abstract ideas

### **Physical**

- Developing small/fine motor control
- Developing large/gross motor control
- Refining and mastering self help skills

### **Self Expression and Imagination**

- Feeling valued and respected as they express themselves creatively
- Experimenting with varied, open-ended materials that encourage self expression
- Exploring the art of other children and adults
- Expressing themselves creatively through art, music, drama and dance

### **Language and Literacy**

- Developing verbal and nonverbal communication

- Developing listening skills
- Gaining knowledge of the alphabet
- Responding to questions
- Practicing conversation
- Using language to solve social problems
- Making sense of written language
- Having exposure to a variety of languages (both home and other)
- Developing concept of story through experiences with books, storytelling and poetry

An overall goal for all children leaving our program is that they are socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively prepared to make the transition to kindergarten

### **III. Curriculum**

Our curriculum is based on our knowledge of the developmental process, the individual child's needs and interests, and the child's family culture. Our curriculum is "play based" and is integrated into routines and transitions; planned and spontaneous activities; indoor and outdoor play; interactions between children and between children and adults; child led and teacher directed activities; and implemented individually and in small groups and large groups. The curriculum focuses on the development of the "whole child", that is, it considers all areas of development-physical, language, social-emotional, and cognitive. The curriculum also teaches concepts and develops skills that are meaningful to the child's developmental understanding.

Teachers use a planning process that includes observation, assessment, developmental goals, developmentally appropriate practice and reflection. Based on this information, the curriculum emerges overtime and guides how we set up the environment; the activities, experiences and interactions provided

and the routines and schedules within the classroom.

Our daily schedules allow for blocks of time for indoor and outdoor free-choice activities; small and large group activities; snacks and lunch; clean-up, toileting and other routines. Classrooms are arranged in interest centers. Most of the day children are encouraged to move around the classroom at their own pace and select activities of interest. During this time, teachers interact with children to extend or enhance their play by asking questions, supporting problem-solving, offering ideas or materials and observing or assessing what children know. Depending upon the age, some of the activities each day may be more teacher-directed or guided.

Sometimes teachers plan their weeks around a topic or issue in which the children have shown an interest; a current event in the family, school or community; or a developmental task or skill that our experienced teachers recognize as important to that age group. Interest areas, activities and materials may reflect this theme. Other topics, concepts and skills may also be integrated into the plan for that week. Often topics or themes may extend over several weeks as children's interest continues to cause a theme to evolve. Teachers act as facilitators of the child's natural interest and urge to learn, not as a "teacher" of specific lessons.

#### **IV. Guidance (Discipline)**

One of the main objectives of the Children's Lab School is to help children develop a greater self-responsibility for and self-control over their actions while at the same time fostering the children's self-esteem.

Our Guidance and Discipline Guidelines are as

follows:

1. Guidance and discipline must be:
  - individualized and consistent for each child;
  - appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and
  - directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.
2. A caregiver may only use positive methods of guidance and discipline that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include:
  - identifying and accepting children's feelings while encouraging emotional expression of those feelings;
  - modeling and reinforcing positive behavior by using praise and encouragement of appropriate behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
  - anticipating children's behavior and gently enforcing consistent limitations;
  - reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
  - redirecting children's inappropriate behaviors to a more acceptable alternative;
  - encouraging social problem solving with peers;
  - following through on logical consequences when appropriate; and
  - as a last resort using brief supervised separation from the group.
3. Behavior problems are dealt with at school rather than parents being asked to discipline their child for events that occur at school. When behaviors continue to be a problem, parents will be involved in creating a guidance plan that will be implemented and evaluated over time. In some

cases, a referral may be made or a consultant may be used to assist with solving the problem.

4. There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of guidance and disciplinary actions are prohibited:
  - corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
  - punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
  - pinching, shaking or biting a child;
  - hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
  - putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
  - humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting or yelling at a child;
  - subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
  - placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed; and
  - requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

All adults are expected to follow the above guidelines while in the center. This includes staff, faculty, volunteers, lab students, parents, family members and others authorized to drop off or pick up a child.

## **V. Program Staff**

Each classroom has a full-time Teacher and Assistant Teacher. Questions about your child's development, curriculum, daily schedule, routines, and other classroom information should be directed to these full-time teachers. Questions about tuition, paper work, or other general question should be directed to the Administrative Assistant. Any ques-

tions or concerns that cannot be answered by the above staff should be directed to the Director. In addition to the full-time staff, hourly and work study employees assist throughout the center in the classroom, kitchen, and at the front desk. Some classrooms also have a Foster Grandparent volunteer who works with the children under the supervision of full-time staff. A current list of employees is posted on the parent board near the front desk.

## **VI. Adult Learners**

The Children's Lab School is alive with adult learners studying Child Development at Austin Community College. Through field work experiences in the Lab School setting, the students observe the principles of child development and gain practical experience with young children. Some students are observers. Other students assist teachers in the planning and implementing of the daily activities for the children. Background checks are submitted on all lab students. These students are supervised by the classroom teachers and faculty.

## **VII. Guidelines and Procedures**

### **A. Calendar**

The ACC Children's Lab School follows the Austin Community College official calendar. You will be provided with a calendar at the beginning of each academic school year that lists school closings. The calendar will also list several dates when the program is closed for staff development throughout the year. This is a time for staff to participate in training and make environmental changes and for the college to attend to maintenance that cannot be performed when the program is in operation.

## **B. Scholarships/Tuition**

The Children's Lab School has a limited number of tuition scholarships available to families. To qualify a family must meet income guidelines and provide the school with proof of income. Tuition scholarships are available on a first come/first served basis with priority given to ACC students. Families receiving scholarships may also be required to complete paperwork with an outside funding source.

Tuition is due on or before the first of each month throughout the school year. Tuition plans may be made with the director, but tuition must be paid in advance. We ask that all tuition payments be made by check or money order. Please make checks payable to the ACC Children's Lab School and include Texas Drivers License number and telephone number on them. Deposit check or money order in the tuition slot found at the front desk. Cash payments must be given to the director or the administrative assistant. Payments can also be made at the cashiers office on any campus, where they accept credit card payment. The center is unable to provide change. Returned checks will result in a charge of \$25.

Tuition is not pro-rated for vacation or other absences. Tuition may be pro-rated for winter break and spring break. Tuition may be pro-rated for withdrawal with 2 weeks written notice.

## **C. Attendance**

Regular attendance is important to the children's development. Arriving on time ensures the smoothest daily transition for your child and the other children in the classroom. Children can begin arriving at 7:30 am. We encourage all children to arrive no later than 9:00 to ensure they have an opportunity to participate in all of the daily activities with their

friends. Parents should talk with their child's teacher or call the center if their child will arrive after 9:00 am.

Because we serve as a learning lab for the Child Development Department, it is important that our students have an opportunity to observe and practice in a realistic classroom setting. Most of our lab students are scheduled between the hours of 9:00-12:00 and 3:00-5:00, so it is important that children be here at those times also. Children will not be accepted after 9:30 am on a consistent basis. In addition, children must attend at least 75% of the time (except in the event of documented illness or family emergency).

Upon arrival children must be signed in and out in the attendance book at the reception area each day. Parents are encouraged to share with the teacher any relevant information that might effect their child's day at school. Please say good-bye to your child so your child knows that you are leaving and will return at pick-up time. If you know that your child is going to be absent please notify the teacher or the Children's Lab School office. Notification assists us with staffing and keeps us informed about illnesses which may be contagious.

When picking up your child, it is important to talk with your child's teacher so s/he can inform you of any significant events of your child's day. This also ensures that staff know which children are still in their care.

For safety reasons children must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Please walk with your child from the car into the building and all the way to the classroom at arrival. If you have more than one child please keep them under your supervision while you escort each child to their classroom. At pick up time keep your child with you in the building while

you gather belongings, pick up siblings or visit with other parents. Make sure that a teacher is aware that you are dropping off or picking up your child. Remind your child never to leave the building without you.

The Children's Lab School closes promptly at 5:45 pm every day. At 5:40 pm children will gather personal belongings and accompany their teacher to the foyer to wait for parents. Failure to pick up on time will result in a **late fee of \$5 for 1-5 minutes and \$5 for every 5 minute increments after that.** This late fee will be added to your monthly tuition balance. Your promptness allows our staff to attend to their evening commitments. Arriving a few minutes early allows you time to touch base with the teacher about your child's day.

If you know you will be late, please call the school to inform staff of your expected arrival time. If children are not picked up by 5:45 pm and the parent has not called, staff will begin calling emergency contact numbers to arrange for someone to pick up the child. Child Protective Services will be called for children who have not been picked up by 6:30 pm, if staff has been unable to reach the parents or other emergency contacts.

Chronic late pick up may result in loss of child care services.

#### **D. Authorized Release of Children**

Children will be released ONLY to parents or guardians or those persons authorized by the parents or guardians on the Admission Record. There must be at least two alternate pick-up people on the form in the event that you are unable to pick up your own child.

Under the laws of the state of Texas both parents have the right to pick up their child, unless a court document restricts that right. An enrolling parent

who chooses not to include the child's other parent on the authorized pick-up list must file an official court document (for example; current restraining order, sole custody decree, etc.) with both the center and the ACC Eastview Campus police. Absent that document, the center may release the child to either parent, provided that parent documents his paternity/her maternity of the child.

Special arrangements must be made for any unauthorized adult to pick up your child. To ensure that your child is going home with his/her appropriate ride please follow this procedure:

a) Permission must be given in writing on an Information Change Form to the teacher and/or the Lab School office if someone other than the parent/guardian or authorized persons will be picking up your child. The full name and phone number of the designated adult should be provided on the form.

b) Upon arrival of the designated adult, the teacher and/or office staff will ask for the adult's name and to see a picture ID. Children will not be released to anyone under the age of 18 years or to anyone appearing to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

## **VIII. Enrollment**

The ACC Children's Lab School is open to ACC students, staff and faculty as well as the greater community. Siblings of current children are given priority depending upon available slots. The school's enrollment reflects the rich diversity of cultures found in the Austin community.

### **A. Waiting List**

The ACC Children's Lab School strives to enroll children from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups; we also strive for gender and economic

diversity in each classroom. A diverse student population is maintained in order for ACC Child Development student to receive a rich educational experience.

- Approximately 30% of the child care spaces will be reserved for children from the greater Austin community. Approximately 30% will be reserved for children of ACC staff and faculty. The remaining spaces are reserved for children of ACC students who are currently enrolled and registered for college credit courses. Siblings of children currently enrolled in the program receive priority for available openings.
- Sliding scale scholarships will be offered first to the children of ACC students, meeting the income eligibility requirements and whose backgrounds match the enrollment goals of the program. Other families will be eligible for any remaining sliding scale scholarships in order to help achieve our desired family diversity.
- Enrollment is based on availability of slots. Child care slots are not guaranteed to anyone.
- Child care spaces funded by grants designated for the children of ACC students are not guaranteed when the parent is no longer enrolled or graduates from ACC.

## **B. Registration**

Registration usually occurs once a year during early summer. Registration packets will be sent out for all current students and siblings eligible for enrollment. Enrollment forms must be returned by the stated deadline to guarantee a spot for the upcoming school year. Children may not attend until a completed enrollment packet has been received. Any spaces available after in-house registration has been completed, will be filled from our waiting list.

## **IX. Health**

### **A. Emergency Contacts**

It is important that we be able to contact parents or other designated contacts in the event of emergency or illness. Please keep contact information up to date by completing an Information Change Form when this information changes. Parents will be reminded to review and update emergency contact information quarterly.

### **B. Handwashing**

We strive to maintain a healthy environment and to keep the spread of illness to a minimum. Handwashing is the best way to keep from spreading germs. Hands must be washed by all children and adults entering the classroom (indoors or outdoors). We also encourage you to have your child wash his or her hands before going home. Adults modeling proper handwashing help children develop this important habit.

### **C. Illness**

#### **Children may not attend school if:**

1. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in child care center activities, including outdoor play
2. The illness results in a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in care
3. The child has one of the following, unless medical evaluation by a health care professional indicates that you can include the child in the child care center's activities:
  - Oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher or 99.4 under the arm accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or

symptoms of illness

- Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, two or more vomiting episodes within 24 hours, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavioral changes or other signs that the child may be ill (for example, chicken pox, lice, or conjunctivitis)
4. Or a health care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate the child is no longer contagious.

Please inform the center if your child is ill. A brief health check will be conducted upon arrival and the child will be sent home immediately if symptoms of fever, contagious diseases or illness are present. Should a child become ill at school, he or she will be isolated from the other children, made comfortable and supervised while the parent is notified. If staff is unable to reach a parent, an emergency contact person listed on the child's admission record will be notified. The center does not have extra staff to care for a sick child. **The parents/guardians or designated adult must pick up the child within one hour of being notified or the late pick up fee will be charged.**

A child will be sent home if any of the following symptoms are present:

- Fever
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Discharging eyes
- Painful ears
- Evidence of a contagious disease
- Dramatic change in child's overall appearance or behavior

A child who has any of the above described symptoms may not return to school until 24 hours after the child is symptom free. If your child is seen by a health care provider for symptoms of illness that do not exclude him/her from care, please request a note to share with the school.

Note: Head lice is a common problem in group care. If your child or another child has head lice a note with specific procedures to follow will be posted or sent home. The program reserves the right to implement a “no nit” policy in the case of sequential (one child with one case after another) or multiple cases of head lice in a classroom.

#### **D. Medications**

In order for medication to be given:

- The parent or guardian must complete and sign the *Authorization for Dispensing Medication* form.
- Medication must be in its original container, labeled with the child’s full name and the date the medication is brought to the center. Parents may want to ask the pharmacist for two separate containers - one for school and one for home.
- All medication must be given directly to a staff member upon arrival at the center
- Medication can only be given in the doses recommended on the label. If no dosage is listed for a particular age or weight, the parent must request written instructions from the physician.
- An accurate measuring device that measures the dosage specified on the instructions must be provided by the parent and labeled with the child’s name.
- Medication will only be given up to two times

per day, between 11 am-12 noon and between 3-4 pm (except in special circumstances as documented by a physician). Parents should administer the initial dose to allow the center to give doses at one or both of these times.

- Unless a doctor's note states otherwise, over the counter medication will be administered only up to 3 days each month. A break of ten calendar days must take place before the medication is administered again.
- A standing order, available at the front desk, authorizing medication for chronic medical conditions may be completed in special situations.

Only staff who have received special training will administer medication.

#### **E. Immunizations and Vision/Hearing Screening**

Each child must be immunized according to the requirements of the Texas Department of Health. A copy of the current immunization records must be on file in the office before your child can attend the school. Additionally, it is a Texas State Law that all four-year-olds be screened for vision and hearing. The Children's Lab School will provide screenings or refer families to appropriate community resources annually. Parents are responsible for providing the result of outside screenings to the center so they can be reported to the Texas Department of Health as required by law. **Please see Immunization and Health Record for the required immunizations for the current school year.**

#### **F. Accidents/Emergencies**

While every effort is made to ensure children's safety, accidents with young children will occur. Staff are trained in CPR and First Aid procedures. In the event of a minor injury (i.e., scrape, bump,

bruises, etc.) a staff member will administer appropriate first aid and comfort the child. An accident report form will be completed and sent home with your child explaining the nature and treatment of the injury. If the injury is major (i.e., broken limb, requiring stitches, etc.) a parent is immediately contacted. Should a parent be unavailable, alternate names on the child's health form are contacted. When no one can be reached, the child's physician is contacted to determine what action should be taken. Should immediate medical attention be needed, EMS will be called to transport the child to an emergency room accompanied by a staff member. The staff witnessing the accident will complete an accident report.

## **X. Child Assessment**

### **A. Developmental Screening/Assessment**

A developmental screening will be administered by a trained professional within three months of enrollment. Results will be shared with parents if there are concerns or at the parent's request. In addition, the Portage Developmental Assessment will be used throughout your child's enrollment in our program to collect information about your child's growth and development. This developmental assessment becomes part of the child's portfolio which also contains work samples, photos and observations. This information will be used for the purpose of informing parents and planning for the child.

### **B. Special Needs**

If your child has special needs and/or is receiving services from another entity we request that you share a current Individual Education Plan (IEP) so that we can best meet your child's needs. If an IEP is not available, we will work collaboratively with

other organizations providing services to your child to develop an IEP.

## **XI. General Information**

### **A. Naps**

Each classroom has a designated rest period of 2-2 1/2 hours as part of their schedule (except the infants at the beginning of the year when individual sleep schedules are followed). Children who do not nap or who rise early are offered alternative quiet activities after one hour of rest time. Parents are responsible for taking nap items home at the end of each week and returning them clean at the beginning of each week. All nap items must be stored in an individual pillowcase to prevent cross-contamination.

### **B. Holidays**

Holidays are celebrated by incorporating child-centered, hands-on concrete activities into the children's daily routines. The emphasis is on recognizing and appreciating diversity while introducing the children to family customs and traditions found within and between cultures. School-wide celebrations are held each year when families are encouraged to share their own traditional foods, symbols, or customs with each other.

### **C. Cell Phones**

Our classrooms are 'cell phone-free zones'. We believe this helps maximize parent-child as well as staff-parent communication at arrival and departure times.

### **D. Birthdays**

Birthdays are very special days for children.

Each classroom has its own method of honoring the birthday child. Children are welcome to bring a special food treat to share with their class. Birthday treats should be consistent with the program's healthy nutritional goals. Acceptable treats would include muffins, unfrosted cupcakes, banana bread, fruit kabobs, etc. For safety reasons, balloons, candy and certain party favors are not allowed at the center. Please discuss your plans ahead of time with the teacher. This allows us to plan for food allergies or restrictions. If you wish to distribute birthday party invitations at school, please bring enough invitations for all of the children in your child's class or mail out the party invitations instead.

### **E. Clothing**

Children should wear comfortable, washable clothing that is suitable for active and messy play. Please bring a complete change of clothes for your child (suitable to the season) to keep at school in the event that accidents or spills occur.

Children go outside every day unless it is raining. We ask that you dress your child appropriately for the seasonal weather (e.g. cool, light clothing for summer; jackets, mittens, hats, and leg covering during colder months). Sturdy footwear will ensure the safety of your child both inside and outside. Children's shoes must have rubber or other non-slip soles. Closed-toe shoes are preferred. Flip-flops are not allowed. If a child's shoes appear to present a developmental issue or safety hazard (for example, poor fit; difficulty running or climbing) we will ask you to substitute another pair of shoes.

### **F. Toilet Learning**

Toilet learning is a process that requires strong

parent/teacher communication and planning. If you feel your child is showing readiness signs, talk with your child's teacher.

### **G. Field Trips**

Field trip notices are posted at least 48 hrs. in advance on your child's classroom door. Parents are encouraged to accompany their child on field trips. The program rents a private bus for trips. The field trip location and activity determines adult-child ratios. Emergency forms, cell phone and first aid kit are taken on all field trips. In the event of an emergency or transportation problems, staff will contact the center. Permission for field trip participation is included in the enrollment packet. Volunteers must read and sign a field trip orientation form.

### **H. Inclement Weather**

If Austin Community College announces closings due to severe weather the Children's Lab School will also be closed. In the event of bad weather, watch or listen to the local news or call the center. If severe weather develops during the school day and you are delayed in picking up your child, rest assured that your child will remain in the program in the care of a staff member until you arrive. In the event of severe weather, tune into local news or contact the center.

### **I. Emergency Relocation**

If an emergency situation develops that requires that children or staff be relocated away from the building or off-campus the point of contact for parents is the ACC Police dispatch:  
222 (campus phone) or 223-7999 (any phone).

### **J. Outdoors**

1. Outdoor air quality is checked daily. In the

event of unhealthy air quality, outdoor time will be adjusted according to government recommendations.

2. During summer months we ask parents to apply bug repellent and sunscreen prior to or at arrival in the morning. School Staff will reapply in the afternoon.

3. Sometimes parents ask if their child can remain inside during our outdoor play time due to health concerns. If a child is well enough to be at school, the child is assumed to be well enough to go outside. Except in extreme weather conditions, children go outside every day. Our child-staff ratios rarely allow us to stay inside with one or two children while the rest of the children go outside. We understand that parents naturally have strong feelings about keeping their children healthy, which we share. But health experts agree that when children are properly dressed, cool weather is rarely harmful to children and that being outside in the fresh air is essential.

If you have questions about whether or not your child can participate in outdoor play you might want to consider keeping your child home until you feel your child is ready to fully participate in our daily program, both inside and outside.

#### **K. Items from Home**

Your preschool child needs to bring the following items to school:

1. extra clothing marked with your child's name
2. a sheet, blanket and comfort item (optional) for naptime (crib size)
3. a nutritious lunch; Milk will be provided by the school at lunchtime (see lunchbox suggestions)

4. a drinking cup and eating utensils

Your child teacher will give you a list of any additional items needed. Infant and toddlers parents receive additional supply lists during orientation.

Please leave the following items at home:

1. candy, chewing gum, junk food
2. toys from home (special arrangements may be made in the case of an item that benefits the curriculum such as books, cassette tapes or science items. In such cases, the parent and classroom teacher will agree on the conditions under which the item may be used)
3. money
4. guns and other toy weapons
5. pets, without prior arrangement with the classroom teacher

#### **L. Nutrition**

1. The Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards require that children in full time care receive half of their daily nutritional needs while in child care.

2. The school provides a morning and afternoon snack served family style. Snacks are nutritious , low in sugar, fat and salt and reflect the diversity in our program. Our snack menu is posted and copies are available near the front desk.

3. Parents must provide a lunch that meets the daily food needs as outlined in the ACC Children's Lab School *Food Guidelines and Lunchbox Suggestions*. The school will provide milk for the children at lunch time. Items which do not meet nutritional guidelines will be returned. Staff is also happy to share suggestions for lunches. Parents will be contacted if the child does not have a lunch or if lunches

consistently do not include the required components.

4. Lunches that include perishable items must be packed with a cold pack.

5. Parents are responsible for sanitizing lunch boxes at least weekly.

### **M. Animals**

Some classrooms have small animals such as, guinea pigs, birds, fish, hamsters, or hermit crabs. Children assist in the care of animals with adult supervision, and must wash their hands after handling animals. Animals are examined by a veterinarian prior to being placed in the classroom. Outside animals may not be brought into the center without prior arrangements and examination of current vaccination records. Please let us know if your child has allergies or fears related to animals.

### **N. Childcare Services Outside of Center**

It is not the mission of the center to provide child care in any location other than the center during regular operating hours or for special programs. Any arrangement for child care outside the center is strictly a private arrangement between parents and the staff member. These arrangements should be made away from the center and cannot interfere with the operation of the center or the individuals' job duties. Parents also understand that staff members are free to accept or reject such requests from parents.

### **O. Security**

Visitors to our program must check in at the front desk when they arrive. When someone cannot be at the front desk the door may be locked for periods of time. Parents or visitors may ring the

door bell located to the right of the door to communicate with someone in a classroom and/or be admitted to the building. ACC Police are located on our campus and make rounds from 6:30 am—10:30 pm. Campus police will respond immediately upon contacting police dispatch.

#### **P. Parking**

Parent parking is designated by blue signs in the parking lot on the north side of the building and are not required to purchase or display a parking permit if they park in these spaces. Parking in “handicap” designated parking is only allowed with a handicap permit. Parking is not permitted in the fire lane, which is designated by a red curb. If you park in these or other non-designated spots you may be ticketed by ACC campus police. During special family events, staff will work with campus police to allow parking in non-designated spots.

### **XII. Parent Communication**

Open parent-staff communication is one of the cornerstones of quality child care because it is only through open communication that we can work as partners to provide children with the highest quality care possible. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions and/or share any concerns. Translator or interpreter services are available upon request.

#### **A. Parent Involvement**

Parents are encouraged to be active participants in their child’s educational experience here at the Children’s Lab School. Parents are always welcome to observe and volunteer in their child’s classroom. Parents are encouraged to

share a special talent, hobby or family tradition with the school. Throughout the school year there will be opportunities for parents to go on field trips, attend parent meetings and participate in special school activities. Annually parents are asked to complete a parent survey.

Additionally, all parents are members of the Parents' Association. The Parents' Association meets monthly and sponsors fundraising projects, special school events, parenting workshops and provides a forum for parent feedback and ideas.

### **B. Daily Communication**

The most important way for parents to be involved is through regular communication with staff about your child. Please briefly share with us your child's experiences since we last saw him/her. Knowing anything unusual that has taken place will help us better understand your child's behavior and needs. It is also helpful if you let us know if there are any major events occurring in your family life- visits to or from special people or places, changes in family status (weddings, divorces, birth, death, etc.), vacations, special happenings, etc.

Knowing this type of information also helps us better provide for your child's needs. Please ask to speak with the teacher away from the classroom if you are more comfortable sharing information privately. There are usually sufficient staff members present for teachers to accommodate these requests, but sometimes due to schedules or staffing the teacher may have to ask that you schedule a special time to speak with each other.

We will share information with you about your child's day with us. For younger children there will be written information concerning eating, sleeping, and toileting. For all children there will be verbal exchanges of pertinent information. There is also

information posted in each classroom about the day's planned activities. This information is often useful in helping your child tell you about his/her day. Questions such as "Did you enjoy the nature walk?" or "What was it like to paint with a feather?" may elicit more information and conversation than a simple "How was your day?"

If your child will not be at school, please call to let us know. If your child is ill, please let us know what they have so we can be alert to similar symptoms in other children.

#### **C. Communication about Accidents or Illness**

We will always provide you with written information about any accident your child has at school. We will usually give you written information about any symptoms of illness that we observe. If an injury or illness is unusual or serious, we will call you to inform you.

#### **D. Periodic Written Information**

At initial enrollment and at the beginning of each school year thereafter, parents are asked to complete new enrollment information. This information helps us provide care that is consistent with the child's background and needs. Parents will be notified of any policy changes in their beginning of the year enrollment packet. If changes occur during the year parents will be notified in writing.

Each teacher is responsible for the written information s/he provides to parents about their individual children. Please check with your child's teacher to see what written communication s/he will be using.

#### **E. Parent-Teacher Conferences**

All parents are encouraged to participate in

twice-yearly parent-teacher conferences. The 30-minute conferences offer teachers and parents the opportunity to discuss a child's progress, share concerns, and plan together to meet a child's developmental needs. The conferences help increase consistency between home and school, and this helps us provide the best care possible for your child.

The need for extra parent-teacher conferences may arise from time to time. Sometimes staff who have concerns about behavior that we are seeing at school may request these. At other times these are requested by parents who have questions about their child or about things that are happening at school. We are always willing to meet with parents to discuss your child and/or our program.

#### **F. Home Visits**

Home Visits are strongly encouraged for children new to the program to help create a circular connection between home and school for the child. They help establish relationships with families and give the teacher information that will help him or her better support and understand the child. Home visits last about 30 minutes and focus on letting the child share what is important to him or her at home. Home visits may also be offered when children are moving to a new classroom.

#### **G. Confidentiality**

Families share detailed information with us as they complete and submit forms for their child's file. We understand that your privacy is important to you. Children's files are kept in a locking file cabinet at the front desk. The director, administrative assistant and [teachers](#) are the only individuals with free access to the files. Parents have access to their child's file. Practicum students may review general information in the file with staff supervision. Except in the case of regula-

tion authorities, we only share information with other professionals with written parent permission.

#### **H. Dealing with Problems**

If you have questions or concerns, they should be addressed first with the teacher in your child's class. If you are not satisfied with the information the teacher provides (or if you are not able to speak with the teacher), please contact the director. Hopefully all problems and concerns can be resolved with either the teacher or the director.

However, if you have concerns which the director does not adequately address, or if you have concerns about the director, please contact the ACC Program Coordinator for Child Development. If he/she is unable to help resolve the problem, the next point of contact is the Dean of Applied Technology Multimedia and Public Services.

Parents have the right to contact TDFPS at 512/834-3195, 14000 Summit Drive, Austin, Texas 78728 if they have complaints about violations of Minimum Standards for licensed child care facilities or allegations of child abuse. Parents may also view a copy of the Minimum Standards and recent licensing reports located at the front desk of the center or on the TDFPS website at [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us).

#### **I. Child Neglect/Abuse**

Texas State Law requires the staff of this child-care facility to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (Child Abuse Hotline 800-252-5400) or a law enforcement agency. As outlined in the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct staff is oriented and trained regarding symptoms of child abuse and reporting policies and procedures. When staff has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect they are required to report to Child Protective Services.

When appropriate, parents or guardians are informed that a report has been made.

**J. ACC Center Address and Phone Numbers**

phone: 223-5200  
fax: 223-5220

**ACC Campus police  
(for emergencies only)**  
222 (campus phone)  
223-7999 (any phone)

**Mailing address:**  
ACC Children's Lab School  
3401 Webberville, Bldg. 5000  
Austin, TX 78702

**K. Mutual Agreements between Parents and the Children's Lab School**

The ACC Children's Lab School program provides an enriching opportunity that is designed to complement the lives of children and their families. Both the Children's Lab School staff and the families we serve must recognize that the school and home environments should be connected with one another. This beneficial and continuous relationship is defined by mutual trust, respect, clear communications, and commitment to efficient conflict resolution. Through the relationship between school and the families we serve, we are able to provide a setting that best meets the children's needs within the context of group care. The following guidelines clarify the roles and expectations of the caregivers in our program and the families that we serve:

1. Parents and staff will recognize the potentials for growth in the children's development, the parent's

development, and the staff's development.

2. There will be an appreciation of and respect for individual differences in parenting styles and care-giving styles by both families and staff.

3. Teachers will provide a stable environment that maintains necessary routines but allows for flexibility in routines to most appropriately meet the developmental needs of each child.

4. Families and teachers will respect the need for daily, open communication between staff and parents regarding pertinent information about their child (e.g., illnesses, change in eating or sleeping habits, social interactions, play patterns, etc.)

5. Teachers will be facilitators of communication between parents and the program.

6. Staff and parents will maintain confidentiality about each child and his/her family.

7. Parents having any concerns about their child are encouraged to discuss these with the child's teacher first and then with the director.

8. Concerns or problems should be addressed directly with the person(s) involved. If the issue is not resolved, then another person may be brought into the conflict resolution process.

9. Teachers and parents must try to understand each other's perspectives on an issue and will remain open and supportive with one another during emotionally charged times.

10. Teachers will be child advocates. They will represent the child's best interest in the center, the family and the community. They will bring concerns to the attention of the appropriate people.

11. Parents should use the program as a resource. Staff members are trained professionals in the field of child development and can provide families with invaluable information about children.

12. The program works to serve the needs of all children including those with special needs. If necessary, outside consultation may be sought to help meet the needs of some children. Parents will cooperate with staff efforts to provide early intervention and guidance. If the staff, the outside consultant and the parents determine that the program is unable to meet the needs of a child, staff members will work closely with the family to find an appropriate placement for the child.

13. Parents and staff agree to follow the policies and procedures as outlined in this Parent Handbook.

# **ACC Children's Lab School Parent Handbook Acknowledgement**

I have received and read the ACC Children's Laboratory School 2008-2009 Parent Handbook. I understand all the Lab School's guidelines and agree to follow them. I understand that not following guidelines may result in loss of child care services.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please complete, sign, detach and return this form with your enrollment paper work.**