



## Welcome to CONNECT Christian Academy

Dear Parents,

We welcome you and your child to CONNECT Christian Academy! We are an outreach ministry of Community Life United Methodist Church, whose mission is to love God, love our neighbor, and connect people to Jesus because we believe Jesus is the source of life.

CONNECT Christian Academy (also known as CCA) provides a nurturing environment filled with warmth and encouragement. Excellent learning resources and our dedicated staff combine to allow your child's physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual development to progress smoothly and naturally. Our developmentally appropriate programs support imagination and a natural love of learning. Your child will discover friendship and sharing while developing a positive self-image.

We strongly believe that open communication between parents and school staff is essential to fully meeting your child's needs. We look forward to developing a positive relationship with you.

The purpose of this handbook is to share information and ideas with parents, to promote understanding of our program, and to foster a spirit of cooperation between parents and our staff. We hope you will find it useful as an orientation to both our policies and services. Please feel free to contact us at any time with questions, concerns, or ideas to enhance our program. Thank you for choosing CONNECT Christian Academy. We look forward to an amazing year together.

Sincerely,

*Kristen McGrew*

Director of Children's Ministries

## **Introduction**

CONNECT Christian Academy is an outreach ministry of Community Life United Methodist Church. We provide a safe and nurturing environment for children ages 8 weeks to 4-year-olds. We are open Monday – Friday, 7:00am – 5:00pm with primary instruction from 9:00am – 1:00pm. We offer both full-time and part-time enrollment with extended care opportunities for all enrolled students. Our academic calendar follows the Santa Rosa County Schools calendar and can be found on our website at [www.clc.life/academy](http://www.clc.life/academy). We are a non-profit organization. Our State of Florida license number is C01SR0046.

## **Philosophy and Purpose**

Our preschool is a Christian school and therefore, emphasizes Christ-centered teaching. The Bible is the integrating factor in which all activities and subject matter are correlated. We will be introducing your child to God, so they might discover Him as a real and vitally personal part of their young lives. We believe the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God and acceptance of Jesus Christ as our personal savior is the only way to enter Heaven.

We believe children are naturally curious and eager to learn. We believe children learn best through play and we encourage imagination and hands-on experiences. We place emphasis on whole-child development. Your child will discover friendship and sharing while developing a positive self-image.

## **Values**

As a ministry of Community Life UMC, the academy's core values align with the church's vision of Loving God, loving our neighbor, and connecting people to Jesus. We strive to provide a quality, Christian environment where children and families feel safe and loved. CONNECT Christian Academy is devoted to:

Loving God by...

- pursuing God-honoring excellence and creativity in all aspects of the school
- cultivating spiritual growth and discipleship
- igniting a lifestyle of worship

Loving Others by...

- viewing everyone as important, being made in the image of God
- identifying and celebrating the unique giftedness and heritage of every child
- valuing relationships and adhering to principles that promote respect and unity
- providing a safe, positive learning environment

Connecting people to Jesus by...

- introducing and enhancing the spiritual development of children, staff and parents
- loving each other through our words and actions
- living our lives in such a way that others can see Jesus in us

## **Staff**

The director provides the leadership, is responsible for the hiring, training, retention, and evaluation of the teaching, administrative, and support staff. The director is responsible for the implementation of the budget, payroll of all employees, and the approval of furnishings, equipment, and supplies. The director, along with the program coordinators, are responsible for curriculum selection and implementation. Program Coordinators are responsible for day-to-day operations.

The teaching staff are all trained and committed to the early childhood education. Each staff member has completed background screening, drug testing, and required training for the State of Florida. All staff maintain CPR and First Aid certifications. Each classroom has a lead teacher and at least one assistant teacher. The lead teacher plans activities and develops lesson plans while partnering with parents by keeping them informed about the lessons, their child's progress, and planned activities.

### **Staffing and Supervision**

We operate under Safe Sanctuary procedures and abide by all required staff-to-child ratios at all times, with a minimum of:

- 1:4 - Children under 12 months
- 1:6 - Children 12-23 months
- 1:11 - Children 24 -35 months
- 1:15 - Children 36-47 months
- 1:20 - Children 48 -59 months

### **The First Few Weeks**

The first few weeks in any new environment can cause anxiety for your child. Our staff is sensitive to these feelings. We are trained to be alert and aware of your child's reactions to this new environment and we will make every effort to help your child adjust as easily as possible. Here are some things you can do as a parent to help ease the adjustment period:

- Take time to get to know our center by reading the parent handbook, touring the facility, talking with the staff, and understanding our mission and values. The more comfortable you are, the more comfortable your child will be.
- Talk positively with your child about the center and the things he/she will be doing there.
- Assure your child that you will always come back. Use phrases like "have a great day, I'll be back in a little while" or "I love you, have a great day, I'll be back soon"
- Use a quick, happy, pass-and-go approach to drop off. The quicker the transition, the quicker we can help your child settle in.
- We understand that this may be an adjustment for you, just as much as it will be for your child. Loving, caring for, and teaching your children in a safe and positive way is our #1 priority. Feel free to talk with your teachers, program coordinators, or the director about any concerns you may have.

### **Program**

Our preschool program has a well-written, researched-based and comprehensive curriculum. Each classroom has planned activities geared to the interest and level of that particular age group. We provide a wide variety of activities to enhance each child's opportunity to play and learn. The atmosphere is nurturing, where a child's self-worth is strengthened, and opportunities are given to promote independence and success. Your child will be exposed to the following areas:

- Chapel: To help children develop a love for God and others. Also, to teach them that Jesus is God's son and how much He loves them. An age-appropriate Biblical curriculum will be interwoven through weekly chapel time, Bible stories, life application stories, prayer, Godly character traits, Bible DVD's and a Bible memory verse program.
- Circle Time: To encourage the development of language skills, socialization between groups of children, appreciation for literature, increase attention span and vocabulary, expressive

language, introduce concepts, acquire facts and knowledge, group singing, movement, group games and sharing.

- Free Play: To encourage creativity, self-motivation, independence, problem solving, math grouping, spatial relations, dramatic play, social development cooperation, and hand/eye coordination.
- Recess: Toys and playground equipment are used to develop muscular coordination and control, dexterity, balancing, and experimenting with a wide variety of equipment like tricycles, scooters, swings, sandbox, slides, balls, running, climbing, jumping, etc.
- Music, movement and dramatics: To develop and encourage appreciation of music, singing, rhythm, and experimenting with rhythmic instruments. Music appreciation is developed through listening to tapes, CD's, musical games, self-expression, group singing and chapel worship. Dance is encouraged through chapel worship and class activities.
- Math, Science, Literacy, Technology: To learn the concepts of how many, one-to-one correspondence, counting, less or greater, adding and subtracting, patterning and number recognition, encourage thinking, problem solving, observation, predictions, balance, nature, love of literature, age-appropriate technological training (age 3-5) to complement development.

## **Learning Domains**

We are established to promote preschool education with a spiritual dimension for children. Our primary goal is to provide a safe, loving, and positive environment where children can grow in the understanding that there is a creator, God, who loves them and desires a personal relationship with them. We also want to provide a supportive, educationally rich environment, and programs consistent with the highest standards that will allow your child to develop to their maximum potential.

We teach children how to learn, not just in preschool, but all through their lives. We do this by creating purposeful and productive play experiences that help children grow in four areas of development:

- Physical well-being, health, and motor development. This domain encompasses your child's physical health and ability to engage in daily activities.
- Social and Emotional Development: This domain addresses the emotional competence and ability to form positive relationships that give meaning to children's experiences in the home and school.
- Cognition and General Knowledge: This domain includes children's ability to understand and think about the physical and social worlds. In particular, this domain focuses on children's knowledge of objects in the world around them, their logic and mathematical knowledge, their knowledge of agreed-upon social conventions such as numbers and colors, language and their understanding and appreciation of the arts in their lives.
- Spiritual Development: This domain encompasses children's awareness that there is a loving God who created all things and desires a personal relationship with us. It focuses on key concepts such as who God is (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), the Holy Bible as God's word to us, how to best live our lives (moral development), the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, and the promise of Heaven/eternal life in Him.

The goal of CCA is to partner with parents to spiritually, socially/emotionally, physically, and cognitively prepare children for school readiness and the plan God has for his/her life, as well as to support parents in their role to raise their children as God desires.

## **Daily Schedules**

Daily schedules are developed by the classroom teacher and will include time for arrival/greeting, small group time, circle time, free time, outdoor activities, chapel or large group rotations (which may include STEAM, foreign language, music), and lunch. Infant/Toddler schedules will include time for diapering, naps, and snacks. Full-time children, and those who are in extended care will have nap/rest time each afternoon. Classroom schedules will be posted for your review and are subject to change at any time. Children will go outside every day except in extreme weather conditions. In the event we cannot go outside, alternate space will be provided for indoor recess. Daily schedules are subject to change.

## **Assessment and Screening**

Assessment is naturally integrated into the course of every day as ongoing teacher observation of group patterns and individual development is used to adjust the program to better support group and individual progress. If concerns about individual children's development arise; and are not readily remedied via classroom adaptations, teachers will initiate a dialogue with colleagues and parents to plan approaches to try at both home and school.

We use a combination of informal classroom observation and ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) for all children. Bright Beginnings assessments are also used throughout the year for our VPK program. Teaching teams work together to conduct assessments, though the child's primary teacher will take the lead in summarizing the findings. Assessments obtain information on all areas of children's development and learning, including cognitive skills, language, social-emotional development, approaches to learning, health and physical development. This information along with pictures, selected work, antidotal notes, and other collections are put together into an individual portfolio. These descriptions and representations are shared with parents, both in writing and via personal conferences.

## **Licensing**

CONNECT Christian Academy is licensed by the State of Florida, license #C01SR0046, through the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Semi-annual inspections are conducted by DCF.

## **Confidentiality**

Because the staff of CONNECT Christian Academy work together as a team, each staff member may have information on observations and other assessment data. Information about family situations, special needs, and other sensitive issues is shared on an as needed basis. Staff, substitutes, and volunteers working within the school are only informed of such sensitive issues when they are a part of keeping the child safe, supporting the child's inclusion, or when the information might impact their school day. All CCA staff members sign the following confidentiality agreement:

"As an adult working, observing, conducting research, and/or regularly volunteering at CONNECT Christian Academy, I may become privy to confidential information regarding children and families. It is of utmost importance that I realize that such information is strictly personal and confidential. This information can only be shared within the confines of CCA. I will only discuss children's behavior out of hearing distance of the children, and I will discuss the families, children, and staff for professional purposes only. When I encounter families, children, or staff outside the school, I will be courteous but use discretion. I understand that written authorization is required before disclosing any information regarding a child to an outside agency or individual. I know that confidentiality is an ethical obligation

and that it is a requirement for my continued involvement at CONNECT Christian Academy. By signing this statement, I agree to understand and practice the CCA confidentiality policy at all times.” In accordance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines, official written records for each child are kept in locked cabinets at CCA. These files include enrollment forms, final conference reports, health assessments provided by physicians, results of health screenings conducted at school after parent authorization, reports of diagnostic assessments, and staff documentation regarding children’s behavior and development.

## Policies and Procedures

- **Enrollment:** A non-refundable registration/supply fee is payable per child each year at registration time. This registration fee covers the application process, insurance, curriculum, and supplies. This fee is non-refundable.
- **Tuition:** Tuition is based on an annual fee and divided equally between 10 months. Tuition is payable whether the child is present in school or not. Tuition is automatically billed through Brightwheel on the third business day of the month.
- **Account Changes:** Any changes to student accounts must be made in writing before the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the month to be effective the following month. This includes the addition of Lunch Bunch, changing requested days to attend, and/or a change from part-time to full-time status. Requests to change enrollment are not guaranteed and based on availability, class size, and other factors.
- **Withdrawal:** All withdrawals must be made in writing with as much notice as possible. No refunds of paid tuition will be paid upon withdrawal. If a child should withdrawal from the program in the middle of a billing period, tuition will be charged for the remainder of that month.
- **Enrollment changes:** If you would like to change your child’s schedule, please submit a written request to the front office. If space is or becomes available, we will make the change and pro-rate tuition. Changes are not guaranteed and dependent on availability.
- **Arrival/Departure:** We want to ensure safety for all children. Parents/guardians are asked to enter the parking lot through the main church entrance and exit via the loop road on the south side of the building. Please hold hands from the parking lot to the building. Enter the building through the children’s ministry entrance located on the north side of the building. Walk your child to the classroom; sign your child in with time of arrival and legible signature (this is required by the State of Florida); sign your child out with time of departure and legible signature. Please only have one adult per child in the building for drop off/pick up. Note: Community Life UMC is a public facility and used for multiple purposes. Please be mindful of traffic and use common courtesy.
- **Hand Washing:** Because hand washing is the #1 way to prevent the spread of disease, we explicitly teach and monitor hand-washing procedures that involve the use of liquid soap and running water, with vigorous and thorough rubbing for at least 20 seconds, followed by paper towel drying. We will wash hands upon entry, before and after snacks/meals, after toileting/diapering, after contact with bodily fluids, after play, after messy activities, and after handling garbage.
- **Toilet Training:** Children are toilet trained when they are ready to use the toilet on their own within their physiological and emotional time and needing little assistance from adults. A child is truly toilet trained when your child can tell you what they need to do and not what they have already done. Children must be fully toilet trained to participate in our three-year old and VPK

classes. When children are ready, the staff in our two-year old classes will provide the support and nurturance to help them master this important developmental milestone.

- **Diapering:** We will follow the state licensing requirements for the sanitary disposal of soiled diapers (i.e. soiled diapers are held in a closed container out of the reach of children and the diaper changing area is disinfected after every use). For sanitation reasons, we do not allow the use of cloth diapers.
- **Dress Code:** Comfortable, washable, play clothes that are easily taken off are the best clothes for participating in the preschool. Closed toe shoes that fasten are required every day. No flip flops or slide-on shoes are allowed for safety reasons. Children are active learners and we will provide multiple opportunities for hands-on learning. Clothes are likely to get soiled or damaged by art supplies or messy activities. Each child should have at least one full set of seasonally appropriate clothing that is left at school, including socks and underwear.
- **Birthdays:** We enjoy being a part of your child's birthday and like to recognize birthdays at CCA! Parents are welcome to provide a special snack for the day (individual class requirements are set by the classroom teacher). All snacks must be store-bought and brought in their original packaging. No homemade treats are allowed. Creative, healthy snacks are encouraged.
- **Holidays:** Holidays are viewed as educational opportunities that give us the chance to learn about our diverse school community. As part of our emphasis on family identity and respect for diversity, we encourage children to talk about their family traditions and share stories related to the meaning of Christian holidays. We plan age appropriate activities to involve children in preparing for simple school celebrations and help them contribute to family events. **We limit our school celebrations to very brief spans of time during the day, attempt to maintain our regular school routine, and as always, pay extra attention and comfort as needed.** Because the children may prepare their own snack related to holidays and because many children have dietary restrictions (especially related to candy and other sweets), please check with your teacher before sending any food gifts into the classroom.
- **Storm Days:** We will follow the recommendation of the Santa Rosa County School District regarding school closure due to storms or inclement weather. Our tuition is an annual fee evenly divided over 10 months; therefore, tuition reimbursements are not given for days off school. Our teachers will continue to be paid on days we are not able to have school.
- **School Closures:** We are required to abide by the rules set forth by the Department of Health. If a school closure is required by the DOH, tuition refunds are not given. If a school closure creates a financial strain on your family, you may apply for tuition assistance through the Community Life UMC Care Ministry.
- **Toys from Home:** We ask that children not bring toys from home. Toys can be easily lost or broken, and most preschool children have not reached the age where sharing personal items is comfortable. Toys that are brought from home will remain in the cubby for the duration of the school day.
- **Rest Time:** All children who spend a full day with us, and those in extended care past 2:00pm will be required to rest in accordance with the Department of Children and Families childcare handbook. Infants/toddlers will rest throughout the day as children's schedules require. CCA will provide, store, and sanitize nap mats for all children in extended care.

## Security and Emergency Procedures

We monitor the building with security cameras. Only authorized parents/guardians will be allowed into the secure, licensed area. We have a silent alarm system in place. Our staff is trained in lock down

drills, fire/severe weather drills, and missing child drills. These drills are practiced regularly to acquaint children and staff with evacuation procedures. Our center is equipped with fire alarms, smoke detectors, and sprinkler systems.

## Health and Safety Guidelines

At all times, health and safety are top priorities at CONNECT Christian Academy. Each individual's vigilance regarding health and safety issues contributes significantly to our effectiveness. If a child is sent home from school with symptoms of illness, the child may not return to school until they are symptom free, without medication, for 24 hours. Please see our COVID-19 policies and procedures for additional information.

## Illness and Injury

We rely on the adult family members thoughtful assessment of each child's health before sending him/her to school. Even if your child begs to come to school, please keep them home if they have any of the symptoms listed below. A child who becomes ill during the day will be isolated, the parents will be notified and expected to come, or make arrangements for the child to be picked up, immediately. If your child will not be at school, please notify your teacher [via your class Facebook page](#), or their school email. Any of these items may indicate the beginning of an illness, which might be easily communicated to other children:

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher
- 2 or more loose stools within 24 hours
- Rash
- Vomiting
- Itchy, runny or pink/red eye
- Lice or nits
- Colored discharge from eyes, nose, or ears
- Persistent cough
- Sore throat
- Any other sign or symptom of illness

Your child may return to school after\*:

- 24 hours fever free without medication
- 24 hours after the first medication is administered for strep throat
- 24 hours after insecticidal shampoo has been applied and all lice, nits/eggs, and egg cases are removed for lice
- No colored discharge from eyes, nose or ears
- A doctor's release is required to return after positive result of coronavirus, measles or mumps; and, may be requested for other communicable diseases.

\*If a child is sent home with similar symptoms within 48 hours of returning to school, a doctor's note or negative COVID test result will be required before the child may return to school.

Young children often experience falls or bumps during the course of the day, especially at recess. Usually, these incidents do not result in an injury and are handled with simple comfort (sip of water, hug, band-aid, ice pack for comfort). When children sustain a cut, bruise, or other injury, staff members will provide treatment according to the procedures specified in our pediatric first aid training. We will document injuries, communicate with parent/guardian/caregiver, recommend



treatment by a medical professional (if necessary), and keep the injury report on file. Parents or guardians will be notified immediately in case of a more serious accident and prompt action will be taken by contacting 911. If necessary, we will accompany the child to the nearest hospital by ambulance. In these cases, injury reports are supplemented by the EMS reports.

CCA staff is not available to supervise children indoors while the remainder of the class is outdoors, so please keep your child home until they are well enough to participate fully in all activities. We cannot administer medications at school unless they are medically necessary with written notice from a physician. Any medically necessary medications should be clearly labeled and must be accompanied by a medication authorization form (available in the preschool office).

## **Family Responsibility**

As part of the enrollment process, parents must complete an Emergency Information form and give permission for staff members to administer basic first aid treatment to their child. Parents/guardians should contact the school any time there is a change in the emergency contact information.

Prior to the child's first day of school, parents are required to submit current Florida school entry health and immunization forms. These are available from your pediatrician or county health department. You will be notified when required immunizations are due and you will need to bring a copy of the updated immunization form to the preschool office.

## **Discipline Policy**

Our discipline policy begins with prevention. CCA staff pay careful attention to arranging the physical aspects of the classroom for spatial arrangement to allow children to interact appropriately. For example, large open spaces are generally avoided to help children save their large muscle activity, such as running, for recess. Teachers are careful and attentive observers of the children in their classroom such that they are finely attuned to each child's uniqueness. At CONNECT Christian Academy, our rules and expectations are designed to help children learn to manage their behavior for effective interaction and cooperation. All staff members guide and support children by clearly communicating in a positive manner and tone. For example, "let's keep the sand in the sand table so we have a lot to pour". Typically, the children are eager to act appropriately and are recognized for doing so. We design activities that are age appropriate in both task and duration to maximize positive interactions. Our teachers carefully monitor the children's activities to anticipate and diffuse problems before they begin. A child who is losing interest in one activity or getting too loud may be redirected to another area that can spark renewed engagement and positive behavior.

Knowing and meeting expectations encourages independent action and fosters self-esteem. The following are examples of tools and rules we may use in the classroom. Signals: lights off means stop; look and listen; bell or music means clean up and find the teacher. Rules: Be a kind friend; listen the first time; follow the routine; stay in your own space; use words to communicate; use quiet voices inside; walk inside the building; use materials appropriately; put everything in its place.

Because each teacher is unique, there is no one style that will work uniformly with all teachers. Conversely, given the individualized temperaments of children, there is no one style that will work uniformly with all children either. Our teachers are committed to these principles:

- Show love for the child with eye contact, physical hugs, and focused attention by spending individualized time with the child
- Know the age characteristics of children; behavior may be typical of a stage that children are going through

- Praise desirable behavior. Effective praise must be immediate, sincere, specific and related to the event, not the character of the child.
- Extinguish unacceptable behavior by stating your expectations (keeping in mind the developmental age of each child) beforehand. Remind the child of acceptable behavior without focusing on the negative.
- In the case of willful disobedience, deliberate defiance, or deliberate destruction and aggression, the child will be sent to the office and the parent will be notified. If a child becomes a frequent discipline problem, a conference with the parent, teacher, and program coordinator will be arranged. If behavior does not improve, withdrawal from the program may be considered.

### **Persistent and Serious Behavior**

Occasionally, there will be a child whose behavior is excessively disruptive to the classroom environment, and/or who is harmful to themselves or others. If a child becomes a threat to his/her own safety, or the safety of other children/staff, a teacher will gently hold the hand of the child until he/she is able to gain control and feel safe/calm again. If a child has frequent episodes or has persistent behavior issues in which he/she is a threat to others, and the center is unable to meet the child's needs, the family will be asked to remove the child from the center by the Director/Program Coordinator. If necessary, the child will be withdrawn. If you have a concern about a child other than your own, please discuss your concern(s) with the lead teacher and/or the Director/Program Coordinator.

### **Biting**

Experts in the field of child development tell us that biting occurs primarily as a result of the child's inability to communicate. Many preschool children are not yet verbal and may become frustrated by a new experience, such as another child taking away their toy, or suddenly being around other children. In the case of a biting incident, we will: comfort the child who was bit, clean the area to prevent infection, document the incident on an accident report, and communicate the event with the parent/guardian. The identity of the child will be kept confidential. The biting child will be redirected to appropriate activities. The parent will be notified, and an accident report will be placed in the child's file. The teacher will carefully assess the classroom environment to minimize frustration and closely supervise the biting child. Most children stop biting soon after these actions have been taken. In cases of children who continue to bite, it may be necessary to remove them from the program for either a short period, or permanently.

### **Prohibited Practices**

If any staff member or person from a child's family, while in the vicinity of Community Life UMC, engages in a practice prohibited by the program, the Director/Program Coordinator will take necessary steps to assure there is no reoccurrence of the practice. Prohibited practices include, but are not limited to:

- Corporal, or any type of physical punishment. This includes hitting, spanking, beatings, shaking, pinching, or other measures that produce physical pain
- Withdrawal or threat of withdrawal of food, rest, or bathroom opportunities
- Abusive, profane or derogatory language, including yelling and belittling
- Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment
- Any form of emotional abuse, including rejecting, terrorizing, isolating, or corruption of a child

All observations or suspicions of child abuse or neglect will be immediately reported to the child protective services agency no matter where the abuse might have occurred. We will follow the direction of the child protective services agency regarding completion of written reports. If the parent or legal guardian of the child is suspected of abuse, we will follow the guidance of the child protective agency regarding notification of the parent or legal guardian.

A staff member who is accused of child abuse may be suspended or given leave without pay pending investigation of the accusation. Such caregivers may also be removed from the classroom and given a job that does not require interaction with children. Parents or legal guardians of the suspected abused child will be notified. Parents or legal guardians of other children in the program will be contacted by the Director if a caregiver is suspected of abuse so that they may share any concerns that have had. However, no accusation or affirmation of guilt will be made until the investigation is complete. Caregivers found guilty of capital child abuse will be dismissed and relieved of their duties.

### **Children with Special Needs**

Our staff will make every effort to include children with special needs. Staff will assess each child on a case-by-case basis in cooperation with the parents/guardians and other professionals as appropriate. Every effort will be made to make accommodations and adaptations that are reasonably achievable. For children with special needs, only staff who need to know are informed of the child's condition. The parents/guardians will be responsible for any expenses needed for observation and/or testing.

### **In-house Field Trips**

We will occasionally take "in-house field trips" to areas outside of our licensed area but within our church property located at 4115 Soundside Drive, Gulf Breeze, FL 32563. These in-house field trips include but are not limited to the gym, butterfly garden, labyrinth, children's ministry rooms, kitchen, and around the loop road.

### **Lost and Found**

Please make sure everything that comes to school is clearly labeled with your child's first and last name. Any personal belongings that cannot be identified will be placed in a lost and found box and kept for no more than 14 days. At the end of that time period, items will be discarded or donated.

### **Enrollment and Placement**

Enrollment in our program begins in February of each year for all currently enrolled CCA families, followed by members of Community Life UMC before opening to the public on March 1 on a first-come, first-served basis. Enrollment forms are available on our website: [www.clc.life/academy](http://www.clc.life/academy). Submission on an enrollment form does not guarantee placement. Placements are made based on availability for each class. In the case that your child is placed on a waiting list, the non-refundable registration/supply fee will not be charged.

### **Attendance and Tardy Policy**

Regular attendance in the preschool program is very important for the child to become comfortable with a regular and consistent schedule. Our instructional hours are 9:00am – 1:00pm. Children are expected to be in school no later than 9:15am as to not disrupt the learning environment. In order to provide services to families who have the greatest need and who may be on the waiting list, services to families may be discontinued if a student has excessive absences not verified with a medical excuse, or

excessive tardies within the school year. Withdrawal from the program which is determined to be in the best interest of the class/center is up to the discretion of the Director/Program Coordinator.

### **Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)**

CONNECT Christian Academy offers VPK for children age 4 by September 1 of the current school year. Florida's state funded VPK program offers 540 instructional hours that meet the educational standards developed by Florida's Department of Education. Our VPK program is scheduled 9am – 12pm. Lunch time is part of the daily schedule on instructional days that go until 1pm. VPK Eligibility and application information can be found at [www.floridaearlylearning.com](http://www.floridaearlylearning.com). Enrollment with CONNECT Christian Academy does not automatically enroll your child into the State of Florida VPK program. Parent/guardians must apply and be certified to enroll through the Early Learning Coalition of Santa Rosa County. The VPK program has an additional attendance policy which can be found on our website at [www.clc.life/academy](http://www.clc.life/academy)

### **Lunch Bunch**

Lunch time is not part of the daily schedule for VPK except on instructional days that are scheduled from 9:00am – 1:00pm. Lunch Bunch is available for VPK students for a small monthly fee. Lunch Bunch is a time for your child to enjoy a packed lunch from home with friends and additional free play time from 12:00pm – 1:00pm. Please see the Tuition Information sheet for more information.

### **Programs and Grouping**

Children are typically placed according to his/her age as of September 1 of the current school year to maintain consistency with the public schools in Florida and transitions usually occur at the beginning of school in the fall. The development level of the child, availability of space, overall group needs, and assessment by the professional staff and Director of the center determine changes in center or classroom placements. Each decision is made on a case by case basis. Class changes may be made during the year if the professional staff feel that the move is in the best interest of the child.

### **Emergency Closings**

In the case of severe weather, please watch local news coverage regarding school closures. We will follow the Santa Rosa County school's recommendation for school closures. We reserve the right to make independent decisions specific to CCA. We encourage parents/guardians to exercise good judgement about whether the roads in your area are safe to bring your child to school.

### **School Communication**

We will use email, [school/class Facebook pages](#), and the [REMIND app](#) for primary school communications. To join our school REMIND group, send a text to: 81010, text this message: @k9gb43

### **Partnering with Parents**

We understand the value of the family relationship as you serve as your child's first teacher and the bonds you share are crucial to healthy development. A strong partnership between parents and teachers helps us maintain a quality early learning environment for your child. We have an open-door policy and welcome your thoughts, concerns, or ideas. Please feel free to contact your classroom teachers, director, or program coordinator to schedule a time to meet. We request that you help us to limit conversations at drop-off/pick-up to information necessary only for that specific day.

## **Infants/Toddlers**

Due to the dietary restrictions and differences in eating habits for infants and toddlers, the parent should provide all meals and snacks for their child. All food/snacks should be brought in new, unopened containers, clearly marked with the child's first and last name. Bottles are only permitted in Infant and One-year old classrooms. Spill-proof sippy cups are preferred beginning at age one.

## **Bottles and Feeding**

We will follow the recommended and required guidelines from the State of Florida Department of Children and Families for the care of infants.

- All formula and food must come in a new, unopened, clearly marked container with your child's first and last name. Prepared bottles (formula or breastmilk) that are not consumed within one hour must be discarded.
- Prepared bottles must be immediately refrigerated and used within 48 hours.
- A bottle can only be warmed once. A warmed bottle cannot be returned to the refrigerator or re-warmed.
- All breastmilk and infant formula left in bottles after feeding must be discarded within one hour after serving an infant.
- Unused breastmilk may be returned to the parent in the bottle or container provided.
- Due to the extreme risk of choking, solid foods, including cereal, may not be given in bottles or with infant feeders to children with normal feeding habits unless authorized by a physician.
- Solid foods may not be fed to an infant younger than 4 months unless directed by a physician.
- Solid foods must be of a safe consistency and must be developmentally appropriate for the age and developmental ability of the infant.

## **Car Seats**

By law, children under 4 years of age are required to use a child restraint device. The rear seat is the best seat for children age 12 and under. Please be sure that anyone who picks up your child from our facility has a car seat. Car seats can be kept at the school office for convenience on an as needed basis only. We do not have adequate storage to store car seats on a regular basis.

## **Termination of Enrollment**

The preschool may terminate a child from the program if the parent fails to comply with any of the school policies and procedures, or if the school is unable to meet the needs of the child. Some of those policies include:

- Tuition payment has not been received by the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the current month.
- Behavior causing a significant risk of harm to the health and safety of other students or staff.
- Late too often – our extended day ends promptly at 5:30pm.

