



## Welcome to CONNECT Christian Academy

Dear Parents,

It is an honor to welcome you and your child to CONNECT Christian Academy. CONNECT Christian Academy (also known as CCA) is an outreach ministry of Community Life Church whose mission is to love God, love our neighbor, and connect people to Jesus because we believe that Jesus is the source of life. Our trained and dedicated staff, combined with the excellent learning resources we utilize, encourage your child's physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual development to progress smoothly and naturally. We foster an environment that supports your child's imagination and helps them to develop a natural love of learning.

We are the proud recipients of the Best of Florida state-level award for Best Pre-K programs for the last two years in a row! Our top-notch facility is well-kept, clean, and safe. At CCA, your child will discover friendship, creativity, and learning in a hands-on, interactive environment, while also learning about God and developing a positive self-image.

The purpose of this handbook is to share information with parents, promote understanding of our program, and foster a spirit of cooperation between parents and our staff. We strongly believe that open communication between parents and school staff is essential to fully meet your child's needs. We look forward to developing a positive relationship with you. 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*

Kristen McGrew

Director of Children's Ministries

## Introduction

CONNECT Christian Academy is an outreach ministry of Community Life Church. We provide a safe and nurturing environment for children aged 8 weeks to pre-Kindergarten 5-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 options. Our academic calendar closely 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 private, non-profit organization, licensed by the State of Florida through the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Semi-annual inspections are conducted by DCF. Our license number is C01SR0046.

## Philosophy and Purpose

Our private, Christian preschool emphasizes whole-child development through Christ-centered teaching. We will be introducing your child to God through weekly chapel and integrated within our classroom curriculum, with the hope that they might discover God 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. Your child will discover friendship, creativity, and learning while also developing a positive self-image during their time at CCA.

## Mission and Values

As a ministry of Community Life Church, the academy's core values align with the church's mission: We Love God; We Love Our Neighbor; and We Connect People to Jesus because we believe Jesus is the source of life. We provide a safe, clean, 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

## Partnering with Parents

The goal of CCA is to partner with parents to spiritually, socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively prepare children for school readiness; and, to connect to the plan God has for his/her life. In addition, we strive to support parents in their role to raise their children as God desires. You are your child's first and primary teacher. We understand the value of the family relationship as 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 Assistant Director 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.

## **Staff**

The Director provides the leadership, and along with the cooperation of the Assistant Director, 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 Assistant Director, is responsible for curriculum selection and implementation. The Assistant Director is the on-site manager and is responsible for all day-to-day operations. The Director works in connection with all Community Life Church appointed leadership boards.

The teaching staff are trained and committed to early childhood development and education. Each staff member has completed an intensive background screen, drug test, and required training through the Department of Children and Families for the State of Florida. All permanent staff maintain CPR and First Aid certifications. Each classroom has at least one lead teacher and at least one assistant teacher. The lead teacher(s) plans activities and develop lesson plans while also partnering with parents to keep them informed about the lessons, their child's progress, and the planned activities.

## **Staffing and Supervision**

We operate under Safe Sanctuary procedures to protect both children and adults. In addition, we meet or exceed all DCF 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

## **School Communication**

We use Brightwheel as our primary means of communication. In addition, we will use email, occasional SMS text-messages, and private school/class Facebook pages. It is your responsibility to keep current with the information provided by the school.

## **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 considerations, and other sensitive issues are 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 signed a confidentiality agreement. In accordance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines, official written records for each child are kept in locked spaces 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.

## **Family Responsibility**

As part of the enrollment process, parents must complete an Emergency Information form and give permission for staff 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. Parents may add/remove/update their personal information, as well as emergency contacts through Brightwheel at any time.

Before the child's first day of school, parents must submit current Florida school entry health and immunization forms, or a religious exemption. These forms are available from your pediatrician or county health department. You will be notified when required immunizations are due to be updated. A child may not attend school with an expired health form or shot record.

## **Enrollment, Placement and Probation Period**

Enrollment in our program begins in February of each year for all currently enrolled CCA families, followed by families on our waiting list, and members of Community Life Church. Registration opens to the public on March 1 of each year. Enrollment forms are made available on our website:

[www.clc.life/academy](http://www.clc.life/academy) prior to open enrollment. Submission of an enrollment form does not guarantee placement, and early submissions will not be processed. Placements are made based on the availability for each class, availability of staffing, and other considerations. Registration fees are not charged until placement is guaranteed.

All enrollment opportunities at CCA are offered with a thirty (30) day probation period following your child's start date each year. We will do our best to help your child adjust, grow, and thrive at CCA! During this probationary time, if it is determined that our program cannot meet your child's needs, or that this may not be a good fit for the child or the program, termination of enrollment may result. If that becomes the case, we will refund your enrollment/supply fee. Based on your child's growth and development, we may recommend enrollment at a later date. We will offer updates and open communication during this probationary period, and we welcome any thoughts, concerns, or questions from parents as well.

## **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/or Director of the center determine changes in center or classroom placements. Each decision is made on a case-by-case basis. Mid-year class changes are not typically an option as each class is filled to the capacity in which we feel is best for each age group & class size. Class placements are at the discretion of the administrative team.

## **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.* The more you linger, the harder it is for your child.

- 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. Teachers and administrators are available for scheduled meetings during our operating hours. Please keep in mind that conversations at drop-off or pick-up should be kept to a minimum to prevent distraction to the learning environment.

## **Our Program**

Our preschool program has a well-written, researched-based, and comprehensive curriculum. CCA operates as an early education program and not as a daycare facility. Each classroom, beginning with our infant age group, has planned activities geared to the interest and level of that age group. We provide a wide variety of activities to enhance each child's opportunity to play and learn. The atmosphere is one that 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:

- **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, games, movement, games and sharing.
- **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 (ages 3-5) to complement development.
- **Chapel:** To help children develop a love for God and others by teaching children that Jesus is God's son, Jesus wants to be their friend forever, and how much He loves them. We use an age-appropriate, Biblical curriculum which is interwoven through weekly chapel time, Bible stories, life application stories, memory verses, prayer, Godly character traits, Bible story videos, and more.
- **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.

## **Learning Domains**

We are established to promote early childhood education, with a spiritual dimension, for preschool-aged children. Our primary goal is to provide a safe, loving, and positive environment where children can grow in all areas of development. 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:** This domain encompasses your child's physical health, well-being, and fine/gross motor development.

- **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, who 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.

## **Assessment and Screening**

Assessment is naturally integrated into everyday programming and ongoing teacher observation of group patterns and individual development. Assessments are used to better support groups and individual progress. We use a combination of informal classroom observation, Developmental Checklists, and ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) for all children. STAR 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. We are also happy to work closely alongside the Early Steps and Early Learning Coalitions of Santa Rosa County to provide resources for both families and teachers.

Assessments and screenings offer numerous benefits for children by helping to identify strengths, celebrate accomplishments, identify potential delays, and provide both parents and teachers with guidance on how to best support the child's continued development. Screenings and assessments look at 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 a child's individual portfolio. These descriptions and representations are shared with parents, both in writing and via personal conferences.

## **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), fine/gross motor development, and lunch. Infant/Toddler schedules will also include time for gross motor development, diapering, naps/rest, snacks. Full-time children, *in all age groups*, will have nap/rest time each day. 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.

## **Classroom Rules and Expectations**

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 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, children are eager to act appropriately and are recognized for doing so. Knowing and meeting expectations encourages independent action and fosters positive self-esteem. We design activities that are age appropriate in both task and duration to maximize positive interactions.

We understand and deeply respect that every child grows and develops at their own unique pace. In our classroom environments, we strive to support each child’s individuality while also creating a space where all children can learn and thrive. To ensure this, children are expected to participate in a way that supports a positive and focused learning environment. If a child consistently struggles to engage, becomes disruptive to the learning environment for others, or requires more individualized care and instruction than we are able to provide within the context of our program, we may need to explore alternative options that better meet their needs. This may include a change in status, or removal from the program. We commit to open communication and exploring options in partnership with families to do what is best for all parties involved.

### **Attendance and Tardy Policy**

Regular attendance in the preschool program is important to help your child be successful and 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 so as not to disrupt the learning environment. In order to reduce distractions from the learning environment; and, in order to provide services to families who have the greatest need who may be on our waiting list, we may discontinue services if a student has excessive absences, more than 5 per calendar month, which are not verified with a medical excuse, or excessive tardiness, more than 5 per calendar month, within the school year. Please make every effort to make sure your child is present and on time barring an illness or appointment that can’t be scheduled outside of the instructional hours. If you know your child will be absent or late, please let your teacher know as early as possible.

### **Policies and Procedures**

- **Enrollment:** A non-refundable registration/supply fee is payable per child each year during open registration, typically held in March. This registration fee covers the application process, curriculum, and supplies. This fee is non-refundable, regardless of the reason.
- **Communication:** CCA staff uses Brightwheel as our primary means of communication with families. It is the responsibility of the family to keep up with communication and respond appropriately, within a 30 minute timeframe, if a child needs to be picked up for any reason.
- **Tuition:** CCA has annual tuition covering the school year (August – May) in accordance with our school calendar. For convenience, this annual tuition is broken into 10 equal payments which are billed on the 1st of each month, August – May (*regardless of the number of school days in each month*). Parents agree to pay the full amount for monthly tuition, through auto pay in Brightwheel, on or before the 3rd of each month.
- **Payment options:** Families can choose to pay through an ACH electronic transfer at no additional charge or pay by credit card which will add a 2.5% transaction fee to the total charge. Note: tuition fees are non-refundable and will not be adjusted due to illness, attendance, dismissal due to behavior issues, and/or school closures due to infectious diseases, natural disasters or other reasons as determined by the Director.
- **Late Fees:** Tuition is due on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of each month. If a payment fails for any reason, it must be resubmitted immediately. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day of each month a late fee of \$25 will be added to

accounts with a past-due balance. If payment is not made by the 10th of the month, service may be suspended at the director's discretion.

- **Hours of Operation:** CCA is open 7:00am – 5:00pm Monday – Friday according to the school calendar. An after-hours fee of \$15 plus \$1.00/minute will be applied to any accounts which have early check-ins (5+ minutes prior to scheduled arrival time) or late check-outs (1+ minutes after scheduled pick-up time). *Three or more late pick-ups occurring after hours (12:00pm for VPK, 1:00pm for part-time students, and/or 5:00pm for full-time students) may result in dismissal from the program.*
  - a. We will open doors for full-time students at 6:55am each day. Full-time children must be picked up no later than 5:00pm.
  - b. Part-time and VPK students may be dropped off beginning at 8:55am. VPK students not enrolled in lunch bunch or full-time care should be picked up at 12:00pm each day. All other part-time students should be picked up by 1:00pm.
- **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 or removal of Lunch Bunch, changing requested enrollment options (part-time to full-time status or vice versa). Requests to change enrollment are not guaranteed and are based on availability, class size, and other factors as determined by the Director. Enrollment changes are allowed once/year without an additional fee. If additional changes are requested, they are subject to a \$100 non-refundable processing fee.
- **Withdrawal:** All withdrawals must be made in writing with as much notice as possible. No refunds of paid tuition will be given. If a child's spot is not able to be filled by another family, the remaining portion of the annual tuition may be charged.
- **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. **Enter the building through the children's ministry entrance on the north side of the building and use your unique 5-digit family door code to access the secure facility.** *Please note: Community Life Church is a public facility and used for multiple purposes. Please be mindful of traffic, use common courtesy, and hold hands in the parking lot for safety.*
- **Checking In/Out:** Parents/caregivers should walk with the child to the classroom; sign your child in/out via the Brightwheel system using your unique 4-digit code. **Each approved person on your account MUST use their own Brightwheel code for checking in or out.** This code provides a digital signature and is required to ensure the safety of your child.
- **Hand Washing:** Because hand washing is the #1 way to prevent the spread of disease, we 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. Hand washing will be performed in all classes for students aged 1 and up. Hand sanitizers may be used if washing of hands is not readily available/accessible.
- **Toilet Training:** Children are considered toilet trained when they are ready to use the toilet on their own within their physiological and emotional time and need little to no assistance from adults. A child is truly toilet trained when the child can tell you what they *need* to do and *not* what they have already done. When children are ready, and after parents have started the potty-training process, the staff in our two-year old classes will provide the support to help them master this important developmental milestone.
  - *Note: All children in classes for ages 3 and up are required to be fully potty trained. If a child in one of these age-group classes experiences a potty accident, they will be changed and the parent will be notified. If the same child has another accident in the*



*same day, the child will have to be picked up and must remain home for the next full school day. If a child has 3 or more potty accidents in the same week, they will not be able to return for the remainder of that week, plus an additional week. If a child has 4 or more potty accidents within a calendar month, they will be suspended from the program for one month (30 days). If they continue to have accidents (one or more) once they return, they will be removed from the program. Tuition reimbursement is not provided during suspensions. If a child is removed from the program, no fees or tuition payments will be reimbursed.*

- **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 preschool. **Closed-toe shoes that fasten are required every day.** No flip flops, slide-on shoes, shoes with heels, and/or dress up 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 left at school, including at least one outfit, underwear, socks; and, if possible, a spare set of shoes.*
- **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 classroom treats must be store-bought and brought in their original packaging.** Creative, healthy snacks are encouraged. Full-size cakes and/or homemade treats of any kind are not allowed.
- **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.
- **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 Children & Families, as well as the Department of Health. If a school closure is required by DCF or the DOH, tuition refunds are not given. As a private facility, we will make well-informed, wise decisions based on what is best for the well-being of our staff and students. Therefore, a closure may be required by CCA even if it is not mandated by the DOH.
  - *Note: if our facility is without power for more than 30 minutes, and we do not have an estimated time of restoral within 60 minutes from the original outage time, we are required to send children home and close for the remainder of the day.*
- **Toys/Items from home:** We ask that children not bring toys or other items from home. Toys can be easily lost or broken, cause distractions, and most preschool children have not reached the

age where sharing personal items is comfortable. Toys brought from home will be sent home with the parent at drop-off or will remain in the cubby for the school day.

- **Rest Time:** All full-time children 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. A blanket or soft/quiet toy may be sent to school to help soothe your child during nap time. **A plastic, 12"x15" sealable bag will be provided for each full-time student. All rest time items must fit in the bag, and the bag must be able to seal.** Rest time items should be brought in on Monday and will be sent home each Friday for cleaning. Items brought without the plastic, sealable bag or items not fit in the bag will not be used or accepted.
- **Lunches:** **All children (except VPK students attending solely on the ELC Voucher) will have lunch as part of their daily schedule.** Lunches must be provided by the parent/guardian and should contain healthy options for your child. Healthy options are described on the "My Plate" link provided on our website, [www.clc.life/academy](http://www.clc.life/academy). *In accordance with the DCF policy, we are not allowed to serve foods that are associated with young children's choking incidents including, but not limited to, the following foods: whole/round hot dogs or grapes, popcorn, chips, pretzel nuggets, nuts, cheese cubes/sticks, and any food that is similar shape and size of the trachea/windpipe. **Food for infants must be cut into ¼" or smaller; food for toddlers must be cut into ½" or smaller to prevent choking.*** Lunches are not provided by the school except on special occasions. In this case, parents will be given advance notice with the ability to provide their own lunch option.
- **Snacks:** Full-time students are offered at least one snack each day. In addition, some classes choose to have snacks as part of their daily schedule. *Snacks should be provided by the parent/guardian and should be labeled with the child's first and last name.* Snacks must also abide by the above referenced DCF policy. Occasionally, we will offer a special snack to celebrate birthdays/holidays. In this case, parents will be notified in advance and given the option to provide an alternate snack. In the instance a child has forgotten their snack, each class may provide something like goldfish, puffs, animal crackers, or dry cereal as needed.
- **Water Bottles:** Each child is required to bring a **spill-proof/leak-proof** water bottle each day. Water bottles **MUST** be labeled with the child's full first and last name in accordance with DCF policy. Water is offered and given throughout the day for hydration purposes. *Please do not fill these bottles with other liquids.* We will refill the water as needed. Bottles with wide-mouth/free-sip openings, or bottles with straws that are not leak-proof, such as Stanley's or Owala bottles are not allowed.

## Social Media Policy

We recognize that social media is a powerful tool for connection and communication. As a ministry of Community Life Church, we are committed to giving grace, showing love for all people, mutual respect, and a partnership with all our CCA families. As adults, we are all role models for our children, therefore we ask that all members of our school community use social media responsibly and in a way that reflects our shared values of respect, kindness, and collaboration.

We value your input and open dialogue. We are here to listen and help in any way we can. We will keep you informed of your child's progress and openly share our thoughts, concerns, suggestions, or ideas regarding your child's academic journey with you directly. We kindly ask that any concerns you may have be addressed directly and privately. If you have a concern about your child, or another child in your child's class, we ask that you first request a meeting with your child's teacher. If you have a concern about your child's teacher, or if you need additional help in navigating a problem or concern, please request a meeting with the Assistant Director, and/or Director.

Please refrain from posting negative, or critical comments, about individual teachers, students, staff, or our school on social media. These kinds of posts are often hurtful, and can be harmful as they do not typically contribute to a productive resolution.

### **Bottles and Feeding for 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. 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 developmentally appropriate for the infant's age and developmental ability.
- Bottle feeding is only allowed in infant classrooms at CCA.
- Pacifiers can only be used in infant and one-year old classrooms as allowed by the classroom teachers.

### **Health & Safety Guidelines and Illnesses**

At all times, health and safety are top priorities at CONNECT Christian Academy. Everyone'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. We will follow the protocols and guidance from the Department of Health and CDC for all illnesses, including COVID-19.

*We rely on the adult family member's 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 at home if they are not feeling well or have any of these symptoms: an elevated temperature, loose stool, rash, vomiting, colored discharge in any area, persistent consistent, sore throat, extreme tiredness, unusually clingy or irritable, or other symptoms which are outside of your child's normal behavior.

A child who becomes ill during the day will be isolated, the parents will be notified and expected to pick up the child immediately but within a maximum of 30 minutes. If a child displays any of the following symptoms, or if we feel they are exhibiting signs of illness that may be transferred to others, we will contact you to pick them up. The following is a list of reasons we may send your child home. Note: this is not an exhaustive list and there *may* be other reasons/concerns which would require your child to be picked up.

- Fever of 100.4 degrees or higher – Requires immediate pickup.
- Vomiting, not related to infant spit up – Requires immediate pickup.
- Lice or nits – Requires immediate pickup.
- Itchy, red, or irritated eyes with discharge – Requires immediate pickup.
- 2 or more instances of diarrhea within 24 hours, not thought to be caused by medication which is documented by a current prescription or a doctor's note – Requires immediate pickup.
- Rash, open sores, or signs of Hand, Foot, Mouth Disease – Requires immediate pickup.

**If a child is sent home due to signs of illness, they may return to school after\*:**

- 24 hours fever-free without fever-reducing medication.
- 24 hours after the first prescription medication is administered, accompanied by a doctor's note
- 24 hours after an insecticidal shampoo has been applied, and all lice, nits/eggs, and egg cases are removed for lice.
- Concerning symptoms have been resolved.

In some cases, a doctor's release note may be required to return after positive result of certain illnesses such as COVID, measles, mumps, or other communicable diseases. ***\*If a child is sent home for illness and returns to school with similar symptoms within 24 hours of returning to school, they will be required to stay home from school for 48 hours or have a doctor's note and/or negative COVID test result to return to school.***

Please note: CCA staff is not available to supervise individual 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.

**Medications:** We will not administer any medications at school (exceptions: gas drops, diaper cream, and/or cream for eczema). A medication release form must be signed and kept on site for any medications and/or creams. If medications must be given during the school day, a parent or caregiver will be required to return to administer medication.

## **Injuries**

Young children often experience falls or bumps during the day, especially at recess. Usually, these incidents do not result in a physical injury and are handled with simple comfort (sip of water, hug, Band-Aid, ice pack for comfort, and/or a Popsicle). 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. In the case of an injury involving the head or a more serious injury, we will contact Parents or guardians immediately and may contact 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.

## **Security and Emergency Procedures**

We monitor the building with security cameras and coded entry systems. Only authorized parents/guardians will be allowed into the secure, licensed area. We ask each family to enter their own entry code upon arrival, and to please do not hold the door open for other families so we can ensure the safest environment. 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.

## **Emergency Closings**

In the case of severe weather we will follow the Santa Rosa County School Districts 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. In addition to closings related to severe weather, as part of the DCF and DOH

requirements, we are required to close if the power to the building is out for 30 minutes or more without an estimated restoral time within 60 minutes of the original outage.

**Discipline Policy:** Our discipline policy begins with prevention. 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.

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 it is time clean up or find the teacher for instructions. Rules: Be a kind friend; listen the first time; follow the routine; keep your hands to yourself; 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, deliberate destruction and aggression, or eloping (running away from the teacher or classroom), the child will be sent to the office and the parent will be notified. If after a short time to reset, the child is not able to return to the classroom, the parent may be called to pick up the child. If a child has frequent discipline concerns, a conference with the parent, teacher, and Director/Assistant Director will be arranged. If behavior does not improve, a change in status (ex. drop from full-time to part-time status) may be offered. If the undesired behavior continues, withdrawal from the program will 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 their own safety or that of other children/staff, a teacher will redirect or gently hold the child until he/she can gain control and feel safe/calm again. If a child is unable to productively return to the classroom environment, the child will be sent home.

If frequent episodes or persistent behavior issues\* occur in which the child is a threat to themselves or others; and/or our program is unable to meet the needs of the child, the child may be withdrawn from the program.

\*Frequent episodes or persistent behavior issues could include, but are not limited to:

- 2 or more unprovoked incidents requiring a child to be sent home within one school week
- 3 or more unprovoked incidents requiring a child to be sent home within one school month
- Violent behavior including, but not limited to, hitting, kicking, punching, spitting, throwing objects, and/or screaming at other children or a CCA staff member.

*Note: Decisions regarding a child being removed from the program are at the sole discretion of the Director and/or Assistant Director. Tuition reimbursement is not provided.*

## **Biting**

Biting is hard for all parties involved: the children, the parents of the child who was bit, and the parents of the child who is biting. Experts in child development tell us that biting occurs mainly due to 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 bitten, clean the area to prevent infection, document the incident in 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 each 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 of time, or permanently.

## **Prohibited Practices**

If any staff member or person from a child's family, while in the vicinity of Community Life Church, engages in a practice prohibited by the program, the Director/Assistant Director 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 a child

All observations, or suspicions, of child abuse/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 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 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. 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, Exceptional Abilities, and/or Disabilities**

Our staff will make every effort to include children with special needs or exceptional abilities. 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 accommodation and adaptations that are reasonably achievable. If we do not feel we can provide the best care and environment for a child with special abilities, or if we observe behaviors consistent with that of someone requiring specialized care, we will refer the family to other education/medical professionals. The parents/guardians will be responsible for any expenses needed for observation and/or testing. It is important to note that while

we commit to doing our best to accommodate the needs of all students, our teachers are not specifically trained in special education, nor do we have additional staff available to provide individualized instruction to any student.

### **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, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, kitchen, and around the loop road. Annual permission is required for these “in-house field trips” and is included in each child’s registration form. We do not participate in field trips outside of our church property.

### **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 kept at the front desk for no more than 5 days. At the end of that time, items will be discarded or donated.

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

CONNECT Christian Academy offers VPK through the Florida Department of Education and Early Learning Coalition, for children aged 4 by September 1 of the current school year. This state funded program offers 540 instructional hours that meet the educational standards developed by Florida’s DOE. Our VPK program’s instructional hours are M-F, 9am – 12pm, with certain days within the school year having instructional hours scheduled from 9am – 1pm. Lunch time is not included as part of the normal instructional day. VPK Eligibility and application information can be found at [www.elcsantarosa.org](http://www.elcsantarosa.org). Enrollment with CONNECT Christian Academy does not automatically enroll your child into the State of Florida VPK program. All VPK programs have specific attendance policy, our policy 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 any instructional days scheduled from 9:00am – 1:00pm in connection with the school calendar. 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. Lunch Bunch is available for VPK students for a small monthly fee. \*Lunch is not provided.

### **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 aged 12 and under. Please be sure that anyone who picks up your child from our facility has a car seat. Car seats can only be kept at the school office in emergency situations; and, on an as-needed basis only. We do not have enough storage to store car seats regularly. CCA Staff is not responsible for, or liable for, car seat installation.

### **Termination of Enrollment**

CONNECT Christian Academy may terminate any child from the program if: (a) the parent fails to comply with any of the school policies and procedures, (b) if the school cannot meet the child's needs, or (c) for any reason it is determined to be in the best interest of the class or school. Termination of Enrollment is at the discretion of the Director.