



Family Handbook

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Dear Family,

Welcome to The Highlander School! We are delighted to meet you and your family! We are excited to have the opportunity to be a part of your family's early education and childcare experience. Know that we recognize the considerable trust you demonstrate by placing your child in our hands. We take this responsibility seriously and strive to provide the highest quality living and learning experience.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions. Our doors are always open and we will make ourselves available. We look forward to many happy years with you and your family. We look forward to partnering with you in this most amazing time in your child's life!

We are dedicated to promoting the value of social conscience, integrity, trust, and education in a nurturing environment for children, teachers, and families.

Kind Regards,

Rukia Rogers

Rukia Rogers
Founder & Director

Our History, Our Vision

The conception of our school began as a conversation in the summer of 2007, surrounding the boundless possibilities of early childhood education in the Atlanta Metropolitan Area. The school's founder were deeply committed to creating a program that addressed the need for quality care and innovative approaches to early childhood education, while fostering children's awareness and respect for the environment and the natural world. We are inspired to fashion a community of learners, where children are viewed as "citizens of today". We envision a world where every child is able to dream and reach his or her fullest potential. This optimism to leave the world better than we had found it was the inspiration for our name.

The Highlander School draws on the rich and vibrant culture of the southeast and honors the Highlander Folk School of Tennessee, founded in 1932, to educate and empower adults for social change. Students such as Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., John Lewis and others flocked to the school as it acted as a safe haven for dialogue and non-violent resistance to social injustices. Our hope and illuminating dream is that The Highlander School will embody this same spirit of freedom and cultivate a community of learners who are thirsty for knowledge.

The Highlander School's Core Values

Our values are what bind us together and shape our world. The core values of the Highlander School guide our decision making process with regard to our curriculum, professional development, community interaction, and fiscal spending.



We believe relationships are a framework for our lives together, our thinking and planning. We believe that knowledge is constructed in relationship with others, our community, our environment, and materials; every encounter is an opportunity for an exchange of ideas and new perspectives.

The Rights of the Child

The child has a right to be seen as a competent and capable human being. We believe that children are born ready and eager to build loving relationships and to explore the world around them. We believe children have the right to be producers of their own knowledge instead of being immersed with predetermined and prefabricated educational standards. Children have the right to play that is chosen and directed from their free will.

Children have the right of support from thoughtful and reflective adults who scaffold and support their play experiences, and continuously seek the perspective of the child. Children have the right to have their curious, eager minds, and ideas taken seriously. We will treat children as today's citizens, not future ones. We commit ourselves to creating a culture that fosters their self-esteem and dignity with love and respect.

The Rights of the Families

We believe that families have the right to be viewed as capable and devoted guardians of children. We believe that family partnerships are essential in creating a community of learners and constructing our school culture. Families have the right to be respected, offered clear communications, to have personal privacy and to be an integral part of the learning process. We will always seek and respect the parent's points of view and perspectives.

The Rights of Teachers

Teachers have the right to be regarded as skilled, competent researchers and professionals who are eager for growth. We believe teachers have the right to receive fair wages for their work, to expect administrative transparency and to be an integral participant in the school's program. Teachers have a right to the time, space, resources and support to accomplish their work with young children.

Democracy and a Sense of Belonging

We believe that education has an essential role in a democratic society. Therefore, we believe that every member of the community should feel empowered and have real opportunities to participate in decision making processes.

Equality and Social Justice

We believe that every human and thus every child is endowed with certain inalienable rights that include the right to attain his or her fullest potential through creative expression, thought, inquiry, collaboration and dissension. It is our unwavering belief that education is a vehicle for citizens to realize those capabilities and create a more democratic, pluralistic and just society. We believe high quality early childhood education and care is the gateway for equality and social justice; and that experiences in progressive programs for young children are greater indicators of later “success” or fulfillment. We believe that every child, family, and teacher has the right to equal opportunities to learning regardless of their learning style, gender, age, ability, race, ethnicity and family background. We are committed to creating a quality program that is accessible to a diverse group of children and families.

The Natural World and Conservation

We believe that one vital role of education is to connect young children to the natural world and to offer them the skills to serve as custodians for this earth. In a fast-paced world, our goal is to move slowly with great intention and help children connect to the rhythm of the natural world. We delight and celebrate in the change of seasons. You might find us studying the cycles of life and bringing the elements of the outdoors, inside. We use natural and found materials, guiding children to care for their world through conservation, recycling and reusing.

Our program will emphasize reducing unnecessary consumption; using recycled and found materials, utilizing products that do not harm the earth and making these practices part of our learning approaches with young children, their families and our community. This value also extends to operating a school that is fiscally responsible and operates within our means through creativity and without sacrificing our core values.

Multiple Perspectives

We value multiple perspectives as this supports and challenges our own thinking and helps us to create new and deeper understandings. We avoid conformity but instead seek new and divergent voices. In that context, we celebrate intellectual freedom and creative conflict.

Transparency

We believe in making visible the thinking behind our planning and the hands-on work itself with young children and each other. We welcome discussions and questions about our planning, work and documentation. Our desire is to create a program that is open to the community for collaboration with educators, in early learning programs, colleges and universities.

Joy

We value sheer happiness and delight! As a community, we cherish the richness of learning as it unfolds. We pay close attention to this process as we believe that we should be ruled not by the clock but by the natural rhythms of our bodies. We value our routines and see them as opportunities for meaningful learning. You'll find us deeply engaged in play, projects, and conversations for extended periods of time; we feel that this that allows for complexity, as well as, the joy of being.

The Highlander Staff: A Community of Learners

Originally a native of Wisconsin, I have worked with young children and their families for over 20 years in a number of ways, including work as a preschool & toddler teacher, an atelierista [studio teacher], and as a Curriculum Coordinator for The Clifton School. I have been inspired by the educators of Reggio Emilia, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and many others, who saw education as a fundamental right as well as a catalyst for social change.



I have credits towards my Master's in Early Childhood Education at Pacific Oaks College. I have a Bachelor of Science in Education from Georgia State University, which includes an endorsement in special education, as well as an Associate in Early Childhood Education from Chattahoochee Technical College with a specialization in Program Administration. I have helped to forge an on-going collaboration with Emory University and Georgia State University, researching the rights of young children and the cultural context of Development Appropriate Practices. I have a unique interest in reflective practices especially as it relates to curriculum planning for young children, the role of documentation in early child care centers, building partnerships with families, creating engaging learning environments and using materials as thinking tools. I'm deeply committed to improving the quality of education accessible to all children and creating a program that is innovative and cultivates a community full of inquiry.

Our Teachers

We are very selective in hiring staff who not only have the background and experience relevant to early care and education, but whose life experiences and ethical values will exemplify their dedication to young children, enrich our environment and serve as excellent role models for children and families.

The care and education of young children is complex and demanding. Teachers must have knowledge and skills which prepare them to be successful in their challenging and rewarding work. This foundation is gained through a variety of ways: formal education, ongoing professional development, mentoring relationships and a deep commitment to young children and to the profession.

Our program employs and supports a teaching staff who have the educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children's

learning and development and to support families' diverse needs and interests. Our teachers are all qualified to administer Pediatric CPR and First Aid and are cleared to work in early childhood programs as required by State of Georgia.

In the world of the young child, we believe that there are three teachers who inspire learning in the early years. First, we believe the children are teachers. There is the child and there are the child's peers. Second, there is the environment. Third, there are the adults; the teachers and the parents. We believe in a reciprocal relationship that provides for adults and children to exchange ideas as mutual learning partners to research theories.

Our Approach to Learning

Our approach to learning has been deeply influenced by John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky and the educators of Reggio Emilia, Italy. Their work and thinking has helped to shape our fundamental belief that people learn best when they actively construct their own understanding. This learning takes place in the context of our relationships with each other and our encounters with the world.

This belief is the foundation of our curriculum and encompasses all of our work with young children, their families, and colleagues. This includes our planning, design of our environments, routines, selection of materials, and interactions. Our rich curriculum emerges and uniquely derives from the identities and interests of the children, teachers, families and our values which embody who we are. Our hope is to create a community of inquiry, where children and educators alike are empowered to wonder together and pursue their curiosities.

Our curriculum creates an atmosphere of exploration and wonder, coupled with rich social opportunities through play. In partnership with children and parents, we work to promote acceptance and support which develops and enhances the child's competence, identity and acceptance of others. Our practices of developing valuable learning experiences for children are inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach which promotes meaningful and respectful relationships between the child, family, teacher and environment through careful observation, thought-provoking exchanges and mindful documentation.



In the context of these meaningful experiences and investigations, teachers support and deepen children's exploration of math, language and literacy, science, social studies and the arts.

Our Image of the Child

In designing The Highlander School, we commit ourselves to a strong image of the child. We view the child as capable, intelligent, full of complexity, wonder and a desire to connect with others. We see children as having existing knowledge that they bring to learning opportunities and we believe that they have the right to be treated with respect, dignity and to be a part of the decision-making process. Children are viewed not as passive participants but as active discoverers and constructors of their own knowledge.

Inquiry Based Learning

We believe that the child is innately curious about the world around them; they are forever seeking opportunities for exploration. This inquiry fuels our longing for knowledge. We seek to foster and celebrate a community that seeks truth and knowledge through questioning and research. In this process, the learner is passionately engaged in acquiring his or her education by researching problems, collecting data with their senses, proposing theories and creating new meaning. Far from a pre-scribed curriculum, we are most interested in fostering a community that is delighted by curiosity. What is it that children want to learn? What is it that we want to learn with them?

Parent Partnership

Parents play a valued and crucial role in every aspect of our school community. Parental participation in the education process is paramount to the Highlander philosophy of early childhood education. Parents are viewed as equal partners and are invited to participate in collaborative planning meetings with teachers and share their ideas and perspectives on common goals.

The parents are a vital part of the school. In a curriculum which works towards accepting the whole child and believing in the competency of the child, it is necessary to have strong connections between home and school. It is important that parents be involved so that their children feel that the school experiences are valued by the parents. Ideally, it is beneficial for parents to spend volunteer time helping within the classroom, i.e. documenting children's work, special projects, etc. If this is not possible, parents can accomplish tasks that benefit the school outside of the classroom, i.e. preparing documentation boards, committee work, special projects, field trips, etc. Parents that spend time in the classroom grow in understanding of the whole child concept and build trusting and respectful relationships with teachers. They value the role of the teacher and soon become the "thread" that connects between school and home. Parents are teachers

Visitation at the School

Parents are invited to visit the school at any time. Parents may choose to have lunch with their child. Parents may want to visit the classroom and read a book to the children or help facilitate a learning activity.

Parent Representative

We want parents to be a part of the decision making process. Each class will have at one or two parent representatives. Parent reps will help to ensure that their voices are collectively heard, participating in quarterly advisory board meetings as well as welcoming new families, planning social event for individual classrooms, coordinating gifts for teachers among other possibilities.



Learning Together: Social Constructivism

Learning is an active and social process. It connects individuals to their society and culture. Based on the theory of Lev Vygotsky, we believe that part of learning in a culture requires “coaching” from an expert of the community. Therefore, in our practices at The Highlander School one will see a balance between child-directed experiences and teachers guiding children in the acquisition of new skills knowledge.

During the day, children may choose to explore inside or outside. Sometimes they choose a new activity or return to what they have already been working on. The teachers are “coaches” or “facilitators” and will follow and support the choices of the children. Teachers are positioned inside and outside for supervision and assistance as the child may need it. Teachers have clip boards to document learning experiences and cameras to take pictures to support the children’s learning.

These photographs are provided for the children to recall their experiences, to document the learning process and to communicate with parents about the child’s day.

The philosophy of documenting and facilitating represents a crucial difference between The Highlander School and many traditional educational approaches. Many times adult intervention interrupts a preconceived journey of a child. A child may be in the process of solving problems or collaborating with peers on a project without it always being obvious to the adult. At The Highlander School we discover children learning leadership, collaboration and communication skills this way. Observing first, then deciding when to step in (or not) is a very difficult task for most adults. At times, it is necessary to step in and

help children over a hurdle that frustrates their thought process or behavior. Many times children will give signs that invite us to intervene. The process of documenting gives validation and value to children and their play. The adult may document in various forms. Adults may write words directly on paper, take photos, create a song, or perhaps even draw pictures of what the children are doing – or they may choose to use a combination of documentation styles. As adults learn to act consciously and deliberately, the children are fostered emotionally and intellectually. According to the NAEYC position statement, one of the core principles that inform us of developmentally appropriate practice is that “play is an important vehicle for children’s social, emotional, and cognitive development, as well as a reflection of their development”.

Materials

In our setting children are provided with materials to explore and manipulate during play. We recognize and honor their symbolic representations of theories that can be expressed and valued through dramatic play, drawings, collage, clay creations, storytelling, music, recycled materials, paint, blocks, sand and water to name a few. These materials are necessary for the children to express their ideas and construct new knowledge. The environment is inviting for all the “languages” of communication and yet still provides opportunities to explore interests and discuss ideas in small groups.

Environments

The environment is beautiful and inviting; it provides a sense of wonder for the children. It is well-maintained because children deserve the very best that we can give them; every day should be brand new! Every corner and space has a purpose, and is rich in potential to engage and to communicate. The environment contains art, mirrors, documents and photos to enhance the exploration and study of self, social interactions and appreciation. With all elements of the child’s world working together, we build an exciting, yet nurturing environment to enhance their journey of learning and growth.

Teacher and Child Interaction

The most essential component of a strong early childhood program is the quality of the relationships between the teacher and the child.

“My impression of Reggio Emilia practices is that to a large extent the content of teacher-child relationships is focused on the work itself, rather than mainly on routines or the children’s performances on academic tasks. Adults and children’s minds meet on matters of interest to both them.”

-- Lillian Katz

Staff will always speak with children in a friendly, positive, courteous manner, asking open-ended questions and speaking individually to children. We are available and responsive to children, listening closely to their perspectives.

The role of the teachers is complex, full of wonder, delight and negotiations. The roles of the teacher include being a loving facilitator and researcher ready to engage and support children in the process of inquiry based learning. The teacher's purpose is to not simply give to children information, but to create a unique balance of observing children's play, interpreting observations, and coaching children's acquisition of new skills and working side by side with the children. So as the child is fully engaged in the learning process, the teacher is also an active learner, researching in collaborations with families, colleagues and children. Teachers reflect and collaborate with their peers (children and parents) so that knowledge is understood in a deeper and more meaningful way.

Positive Guidance

We want to look at the positive side of the children's behavior, building on our relationships with them through nurturing and positive attention. To this end, we organize the children's day to promote appropriate behavior. We set up the classroom equipment and materials to facilitate positive play and social experiences. The activities offered to the children are appropriate for their developmental level. We use our knowledge of developmental principles to give us reasonable and appropriate expectations for each child's behavior. **A Thinking Lens™**, developed by world renowned educators and authors Deb Curtis and Margie Carter, is a tool for reflective practices, to support staff in considering the many possibilities that might be impacting children's actions and behavior.

One of the most important ways to guide children's behavior is to give them the skills to manage their own behavior. Primarily, we teach children to use WORDS to express themselves rather than inappropriate actions or gestures. Helping children learn to use language as the primary tool for handling conflict is one of the greatest gifts we can offer our children.

Of course, there will be times when children behave inappropriately. In these instances, the teachers will use substitution, redirection and discussion to manage the situation. There may be times when a child needs a short time away from the current activity to calm down, but this is not viewed as a punishment or time-out, just a time we all sometimes need to regroup and reframe our responses. Children are NEVER hit, humiliated or frightened as a form of punishment. Food is never withheld as a form of punishment.

A Thinking Lens™ for Reflection and Inquiry

Knowing yourself

What captures my attention as the children engage, explore and interact? What delights me as I watch and listen? What in my background and values is influencing my response to this situation and why? What adult perspectives, i.e. standards, health and safety, time, goals are on my mind?

Finding the details of children's competency that engage your heart and mind

What do I notice in the children's faces and actions? Where do I see examples of children's strengths and competencies? What do I think is valuable about this experience?

Seeking the child's point of view

What is the child drawn to and excited about? What might the child be trying to accomplish? Why might the child be interacting with others this way? What developmental themes, ideas or theories might the child be exploring?

Examining the physical/social/emotional environment

How is the organization and use of the physical space and materials impacting this situation? How could we strengthen relationships here? How are schedules and routines influencing this experience?

Considering multiple perspectives

How might the child's culture and family background be influencing this situation? What questions might we ask to get the perspective of the child's family? Who else or what other perspectives should we consider? What child development or early learning theories should we consider in this experience? What desired early learning outcomes do I see reflected here?

Considering opportunities and possibilities for next steps

What values, philosophy and desired outcomes do I want to influence my response? What new or existing relationships could be strengthened? Which learning goals could be focused on here? What other materials and activities could be offered to build on this experience?

Meals and Snacks

The Highlander School will provide children with a morning snack, lunch, and an afternoon snack each day. We are committed to providing a wholesome variety of fresh fruits and vegetables (organic whenever possible) and lean meats. It is important to us that children have a connection to the natural world and the food they consume. Integrated into our program is gardening, trips to the farmer's market and using those foods as part of our meals. Our menu will follow the guidelines established by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

Infant Feeding

The infants are fed on demand. Their feeding schedule is individualized to accommodate their specific needs.

If you would like your child to have a SPECIAL snack on a daily basis that is different from what we provide, please bring enough for ALL children. Foods indicative of children's cultural backgrounds are served routinely and we encourage parents to bring in a special cooking project or share a favorite ethnic recipe or dish.



Please inform us of any food allergies that your child may have. (See enrollment forms)

Special accommodations for food allergies or families that are vegetarian, vegan or who require Halal or Kosher meals are made on an individual basis. Please contact Center Director for more information.

Mealtimes promote good nutrition habits and are pleasant social and learning experiences for children. Children are seated with one teacher in four groups of 6-8 children and are encouraged to stay seated until finished eating. This is often challenging for young two's, but we help them learn the routine within the first few weeks of school. Staff members sit with the children whenever possible to demonstrate appropriate table manners and pleasant conversation.

Birthdays and Special Celebrations

Birthday celebrations for young children are a special time for the child to share with friends at school and when possible, for families to come along too. Sometimes families like to bring special birthday snacks and we're happy to have parents send a special snack for the day.

Often parents like to come and make something with the children! This is a great time to share a special cooking project with the preschoolers! Check with your child's teacher when your child's birthday draws near so that you can plan an appropriate celebration

together that will work with the daily schedule. We recommend serving low-sugar treats, fresh fruit cups, or mini cupcakes or muffins. Children with allergies who cannot have special birthday treats are encouraged to have “safe” treats on hand at the school so that they never feel left out. We will be happy to discuss these special accommodations with you.

Also special accommodations for families that do not celebrate are made on an individual basis. Please contact Center Director for more information.

What to Bring to School

At the beginning of the school year:

- Families Photos

On a daily basis you should bring:

- Personal Belongings

Please label all items brought from home with your child’s name to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or misdirected items that are not properly labeled.

What to Bring for Infants (6 weeks to 12 months)

- Enough bottles of breast milk or formula for one day’s feedings should be brought already prepared to school each day. Bottles should be clearly marked with the child’s name and date. Empty bottles are returned to the family each day.
- Food.
- A supply of diapers and wipes.
- At least 2 complete changes of clothes.
- Any comfort items that your child needs such as pacifiers, blankies, lovies, etc.

What to Bring for Toddlers (12 months to 36 months)

- A sippy cup for water.
- A tooth brush.
- If your child is a young toddler (under 18 months) and still needs a bottle during the school day, we work with you during the transition to a cup.
- At least 2 complete changes of clothes (more if your child is learning to go potty).

- Water bottle.
- Any comfort items that your child needs such as pacifiers, blankies, lovies, etc.
- A complete change of clothing (labeled) including extra socks and shoes, in a backpack that will easily fit into the child's assigned cubby.
- Diapers for one day, (storage is limited) wipes, special ointments or medications. We will only administer ointments and diapering medications with a signed authorization form. We do not encourage the use of pull-ups at school to replace diapers for a child that has little bowel or bladder control. (Please see section on toilet training or talk to teacher/director).
 - Whatever your child may need for comfort or for sleeping, such as a special blanket or "lovey". We do not recommend pillows in the preschool setting. If your child must have a pillow, it should be small enough to be stored in his backpack and inside his/her cubby.
 - Sunscreen should be applied before school in the morning.

You may bring:

Objects from nature that the child has found while at home (for instance, fall leaves, flowers or pine cones). Such items may be shared with the class and used to provide rich connections between home and school experiences.

Books from home. Give the books to the teacher upon arrival and the teacher will find a time to read them during the day.

What NOT to bring to school:

- Toys from home are not allowed in preschool because they create power disputes and are easily lost or broken. Please avoid "transitioning" your child into school with a toy! If this is too challenging, please leave the toy outside the gate or in the car.
- Coins and small items that may cause choking
- Candy, bubblegum, nuts, vitamins and other foods or snack items which are inappropriate to share with other children.

What to Wear to School

When you select clothing for your child to wear to school, please choose items that can become dirty, “painty”, and wet! Suitable clothing should allow a child to move about freely, encouraging creativity and freedom of expression. The joy of creating is diminished when the child is restricted in their desire to explore messy, sensory materials. We do encourage smocks whenever possible, but wearing a smock will always be the child’s choice at The Highlander School.

WE WILL NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR DAMAGE TO OR LOSS OF CLOTHING THAT IS INAPPROPRIATE TO A PRESCHOOL OR CHILDCARE SETTING IN WHICH OUTDOOR PLAY AND ART ACTIVITIES ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE PROGRAM.

Please dress children in clothing that promotes independence and allows them to help themselves and feel empowered. “I can do it” is the preschooler’s mantra! Overalls that are hard to unbuckle for the preschool child and are not recommended in this setting.

We recommend pants with elastic waists that are easy to pull up and down; t-shirts that do not require snapping at the bottom; shoes that are easy for the child to take on and off and that protect his or her feet, and that are great for running and climbing.

Clothing should also be suitable for the weather. With our indoor/outdoor environment it is best to layer clothing on a chilly morning, but please remember that children exert a lot of energy while playing at school!

Wearing an undershirt with a play shirt and vest or jacket/sweater should be plenty for most kids. Throughout the day, we encourage them to think about how they feel – “Are you feeling too hot? Perhaps you should take off your jacket and place it in your cubby!” or “Ooh! You must feel cold...do you think you should think about putting on your sweater?” These conversations generate self- awareness and communicate our intention to coach them into thinking independently and gain confidence in caring for themselves.

Tooth Brushing

Children 1 year and older are provided an opportunity for tooth brushing and gum cleaning to remove food and plaque. Toothbrushes and toothpaste (not required) are provided by parents and should be changed every six months.

Gums of infants under the age of one year are cleaned using a cloth unless an infant brush is provided by the parent.

Toilet Learning

We are happy to work with families in the process of supporting children to learn how to use the toilet, but feel that there is a clear criterion for success; most importantly, a child must be ready! Your child will let you know in many ways when he/she is ready to begin using the toilet. We are glad to help your child make this important leap toward independence. You will need to bring 5 pairs of training pants and 3 changes of clothes each day during this learning process. Training pants are extra thick and absorbent. We discourage the use of pull-ups as they typically prolong the toilet learning process.

The procedure for toilet learning at the school typically takes place in the two-year-old classrooms. Children are introduced to the small toilets by watching their classmates in the bathroom.

Classmates are praised for using the toilet, and the learner is then invited to use it. Encouragement and praise from the teachers, coupled with sharing the experience with a classmate, usually make the process easier.

The child's inability or unwillingness to use the toilet for elimination is referred to as an accident and treated in a matter-of-fact sort of way. Children are never humiliated or punished for having an accident. We recognize that toilet learning takes time and we do not rush the process. Clothes soiled during any accident are not washed at school. They are bagged and sent home.

Nap/Rest Time

Each infant sleeps in a crib assigned to him/her according to his/her own sleep schedule. To prevent SIDS, infants are placed on their backs to sleep. Sleep sacks, not blankets, will be used when needed. We must have a note signed by the child's physician in order to place an infant on his or her stomach to sleep.

Older children at The Highlander School are asked to rest their bodies for at least one hour during the afternoon between 1:00 and 3:00 PM. Children attending our preschool are extremely active and need time to rest every day. Children are never required to sleep, but we do ask that everyone "rest their bodies". Children that do not normally nap at home may be asked to rest at school and will be given the opportunity to read books or do quiet puzzles on their mats after the initial rest period. Napping children should have a crib sized sheet, provided by families, to cover their napping mats along with a small blanket or "lovey" to help them feel cozy and comfortable. Napping supplies will be sent home each week for laundering.

Field Trips/Neighborhood Walks

We occasionally try to initiate opportunities for small groups of children to walk in the neighborhood and explore the area near and around the school. This provides a continued sense of wonder and discovery for our natural environment and children grow in awareness of the world around them. Short walks are great for talking about street signs, house numbers, identifying different types of trees and plant life, talking about directions and map-making or just singing, skipping and marching. These walking excursions will not be announced in advance and do not require signed permission slips.

We also enjoy going on field trips that will highlight and enhance a particular project or unit of study. These trips are planned in advance and are typically announced in our monthly newsletter or e-mail. When we go on extended field trips, parents are notified and asked if they can participate by driving or chaperoning. We like our excursion field trips to be a 1:2 ratio and we encourage parents to take an active role in planning and participating in the experience whenever possible. Permission slips are required and we ask that parents provide proof of insurance if they are driving. As required by state law, every child will be in a car seat or approved child safety restraint system.

Daily Schedules

Infants The infants are fed on demand. There feeding schedule is individualized to accommodate their specific needs. At no time do we attempt to get them all on the same schedule. Following is a sample schedule for 6 month old "Sophie":	
8:30	Arrival Mom kisses Sophie good-bye after changing her diaper
8:30-9:15	Sophie is read to, stimulated through music and movement
9:15-9:45	Sophie shows signs that she is hungry and offered a bottle
9:45-10:45	Outside time in the sandbox
10:45-11:00	Sophie is cleaned up and checked to see if she needs to be changed
11:00-11:30	Sophie plays in an activity center
11:30-12:00	Lunch (She has shown signs of being hungry)
12:00-12:15	Sophie is cleaned up and changed
12:15-2:30	Nap time
2:30-2:45	Sophie is checked to see if she needs to have her diaper changed when she awakes
2:45-3:15	Sophie is offered a snack (i.e. fruit, cereal, bottle)

Toddlers	
The schedule for toddlers is flexible and often individualized to accommodate children's specific needs. For example, very often young toddlers' bodies will still require a morning nap and in that case, space and time will be created for the child to rest.	
8:00	Children begin to arrive; learning choices are available
8:30-9:00	Breakfast is served
9:00 – 9:15	Diapers Changed/Toileting
9:15-9:30	Morning Meeting: Story Time and Music and Movement
9:30-10:15	Learning choices; finding friends, exploring the environment, art activities, sensory activities, discovery and imaginative play, block building
10:15-11:00	Outdoor Experiences-Gardening, mud kitchen, etc.
11:00-11:15	Clean-up time-Prepare for lunch
11:15-12:00	Lunch
12:00-12:30	Preparing for Nap time-Tooth brushing and diapering
12:30	Stories and lullabies
12:30-2:30	Rest Time-Quiet Activities
3:00	Afternoon Snack
3:30-4:30	Learning choices; finding friends, exploring the environment, art activities, sensory activities, discovery and imaginative play, block-building
4:30-5:30	Outdoor Learning Experiences-Gardening, mud kitchen, etc.
5:30	Afternoon Circle Time and Goodbyes
5:45-6:00	CENTER CLOSED
Preschoolers	
Our daily schedule is flexible and based upon the rights of the children and staff	
8:00	Children begin to arrive; learning choices are available
8:30-9:00	Breakfast is served
9:15 – 9:30	Morning Meeting
9:30-11:00	Learning choices; finding friends, exploring the environment, art activities, sensory activities, discovery and imaginative play, block building
11:00-11:45	Outdoor Experiences-Gardening, mud kitchen, etc.
11:45 – 12:00	Clean-up time-Prepare for lunch

12:00 – 12:30	Lunch
12:30-1:00	Preparing for Nap time-Tooth brushing and story time
1:00-3:00	Rest Time-Quiet Activities
3:00	Afternoon Snack
3:30-4:30	Outdoor Learning Experiences-Gardening, mud kitchen, etc.
4:30-5:30	Learning choices; finding friends, exploring the environment, art activities, sensory activities, discovery and imaginative play, block-building
5:30	Afternoon Circle Time and Goodbyes
5:45-6:00	CENTER CLOSED

Arrival and Dismissal

All state licensed preschool programs are required to provide a method of signing each child in and out daily. Please indicate the time of arrival when you arrive and the time you depart. Your full signature is necessary each time. Part-time families are asked to arrive no earlier than 9 AM and no later than 1 PM due to staffing patterns during these times.

When you arrive in the morning, please sign in before you leave and briefly tell a teacher about your child's disposition or make any special notes in the parent notebook on the sign in table. You are encouraged to suggest that your child use the bathroom and wash his/her hands before you leave and/or bring in the daily diapers from your child's backpack. Your child will be our responsibility the moment you leave the classroom.

Please, never sneak out to avoid an emotional goodbye. It's best for children to express these feelings and find that they are O.K. after a few moments! If your schedule does not permit a slow, gentle entry into preschool, we will work together with you to help your child become comfortable here as quickly as possible. We realize that each family and child is unique, and we will do our best to customize your child's entry to best suit your family's needs.

We are committed to ensuring each child's positive emotional and social experience while at The Highlander School. We will call you within 10-20 minutes if we think your child's impression of school and learning is being compromised with anxiety and tears. We want to school to be a fun, joyful memory!

Please be prompt in picking up your children and sign out as soon as you arrive at the end of the day. You are fully responsible for your child the moment you enter the school. Our

center policy requires parents and caregivers to pick no later than 15 minutes prior to departure. This allows for you to gather your child's belongings, check the information clipboards, briefly talk to the teacher about your child's day, and say goodbye to friends. These times are crucial in establishing positive transitions into and out of the school day. To assure smooth transitions, it is necessary to be on time when dropping-off and picking up your children.

Open communication is a key goal of The Highlander School however, since teachers and parents must be focused on the children during these transition times, we ask that parent and teacher discussions be minimized. We encourage contacting the center by phone or email during in the morning from 9:30-10:30 or during nap time from 1-3 PM for detailed questions and sharing concerns.

While we do our best to give brief anecdotal reports about the day, please keep in mind that our first priority is to the children in our care.

Cell Phones

Cell phones are not to be used in the presence of children in order to respect the child's environment. Please avoid using cell phones on the school property.

Additionally, please keep in mind that the energy level of the children raises as the number of adults and adult chatter increases. Your presence raises the consciousness and expectations of other children that their own parents will arrive soon as well. We appreciate your efforts in keeping a low profile in order to respect our learning environment and our child-centered program!

Admission, Procedures and Policies

Our program admits families of any race, creed, color, sexual orientation and national or ethnic origin. While we primarily accept students on a first come first serve basis, we also consider other factors such as age, gender, and schedule. The procedure is as follows:

- Our enrollment process begins with each family being sent an application package. This contains a letter from our director, a brochure about the school, and an application.
- When the family has returned the application, a home visit is scheduled. We schedule a home visit to meet the child for the first time in the environment they feel most comfortable, home. We have a chance to meet members of the family that we may not see at school and it makes bonding with the child easier than meeting a stranger in a strange place.

- After the home visit, we schedule a visit to the school. We let the child observe and encourage him/her to participate. This gives the parents an opportunity to see what a typical day would be like for their child at the school and allows the child to become comfortable and familiar with the school before being dropped off for an entire day.
- Once the family and director have determined that The Highlander School would be a good fit, the family will be sent an enrollment package. If there is no space available, the child will be wait listed. Guardians are required to participate in an orientation of the school prior to enrollment.

Upon entering the program all parents are required to fill out and maintain the required forms for the child's file, including a statement from the physician and proof of current immunizations.

These necessary forms required include the following:

- Admission Agreement
- Identification and Emergency Form
- Consent to Treat Forms
- Pre-Admission Health History
- Physician's Report

Parents and caregivers agree to provide alternative child care whenever the child does not meet the Center's wellness guidelines and emergency contact information including the names and phone numbers of persons available for immediate pick up as required. Parents are asked to keep the center up to date on any changes in contact information (i.e. cell phone numbers, change of address, etc.)



Enrollment and Monthly Fees

We require a registration fee of \$200. This fee is non-refundable. Monthly payment is due on the 25th of each month.

If payment is not received by the 1st of the month a \$25 late fee will be assessed. The monthly fee is constant from month to month. There are no reductions for absences (planned or unplanned) or school closures (see Holiday Schedule).

The Highlander School is a year round program that operates between the hours of 8:00am-6:00pm. Families of children in the Toddler or Multi-Age room may choose a 12-month contract or a 10-month contract.

Classroom	Days-Full Time 5 days Monday-Friday	Part-Time 3 days Mon,Wed,Fri	Part Time 2 days Tues & Thru
Infants 6 weeks-12 months	\$1,100		
Toddlers 12 months-36 months	\$1,050	\$675	\$500
Preschool 3 and 4 year olds	\$1,000	\$650	\$450

Scholarships

The Highlander School has a limited fund to provide scholarships to families. Assistance is first offered to families currently receiving aid, next to current families whose financial situation has changed, and finally to new families. Please contact the director to request a scholarship application.

• **Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) - Department of Human Services**

The Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program is designed to help low income families afford safe quality childcare.

We now accept CAPS funds toward our tuition. If your child is between 14 months and 4 years old and your family is eligible for the CAPS program contact us to find out how your tuition will be significantly discounted. (CAPS funding may also be used in conjunction with scholarships.)

Late Pick-Up Fees

Our school closes promptly at 6:00 PM, for the Full Day program. Parents are expected to arrive by 5:45 PM., gather their child's belongings, and depart by 6:00 PM. There is a \$30.00 minimum fee for late pick-ups, and \$20.00 for every 10 minutes will begin to accrue at 6:01 PM.

Health and Emergencies

We strive to maintain excellent health and hygiene standards in every aspect of our program. Health and safety issues concern families and teachers both. We rely upon each family's thoughtful assessment of their child's health before sending him/her to school each morning. Staff is instructed to assess their own health in the same manner before reporting to school.

On a daily basis, the staff is instructed to greet children at the beginning of the day and to be watchful of the health of all children as they enter the classroom. Please inform us of any medications your child is taking, including antibiotics. A signed permission slip is required before teachers can administer medications to children, for both prescriptions and over the counter drugs. Please make sure medication is in the original container and provide a medication spoon.

Do not let children carry their own medication or use their lunch boxes or backpacks to transport or store medication.

If a child becomes ill at school, the school will take every measure to isolate the sick child from the other children in order to not contaminate others. Parents will be notified to come and take the child home. It is generally expected that parents will arrive to pick up a sick child in no more than 1 hour after being notified. If you plan on going out of town during the day, while your child is at school, please leave the phone number of an authorized person that can pick up your child in the case of an emergency or illness. Notices of currently occurring contagious conditions (e.g. strep throat, chicken pox, conjunctivitis/pink eye, lice, pin worms, etc.) will be posted and sent home as required by state law.

In the case of a serious accident at school, parents will be notified and consulted immediately. Appropriate action will be taken by contacting paramedics, taking the child to the nearest emergency hospital (or location indicated on your emergency form) or contacting the child's pediatrician or dentist as indicated on his/her emergency form.

Children who are sick should not come to school. We consider your child sick and should stay home if she or he displays any of the following symptoms:

- Fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher (oral – by mouth or axillary – underarm)
- Vomiting.
- Diarrhea (2 or more occurrences within a one hour period).
- Eye irritations with swelling, or green/yellow discharge.
- Unexplained rashes or skin lesions
- General lethargy and or irritability which prevents your child from fully participating in the normal daily routine.
- When children require cough medicine or an analgesic to participate in the preschool day.

Children should stay home for at least 24 hours after the LAST symptom ceases. This includes fever! Please refrain from masking a fever or cough by giving medications before coming to school. Children requiring cough medicine or an analgesic may not attend school. Remaining home for three days after the onset of a cold is a good rule of thumb. Children may return to school only when they are able to fully participate in the entire program, including outdoor play and water play. We will not place restrictions upon a child's full participation in the program due to illness. Please keep your child at home if you think they are unable to fully participate.

Sometimes your doctor may tell you that your child is well enough to attend school and will support his opinion with a note to the school. The burden of caring for a child who is showing questionable symptoms and possibly exposing other children and staff to illness belongs to the school and the family. We will work closely with the families in assessing each situation and making reasonable predictions about the child's ability to fully participate but ultimately, the decision to allow a child to attend school rests upon the school administration, not the doctor.

If your child is absent due to illness or other reasons, please call and leave a message. If your child has contracted a contagious condition or disease, please notify the school so that we can notify other parents and staff who may be affected.

Please make back-up arrangements for the time your child might have to remain at home due to illness, or needs to come home because she/he has become ill at school. We can recommend sick care and nanny agencies that care for sick children if you need help finding a resource.

If your child is to receive prescription medication during the day, you must fill out a Parent Consent Administration of Medication Form. The medication must be in the original container showing the child's name, date, dosage and instructions.

Suspected Child Abuse

We are mandated reporters and required by law to report all incidents of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency determines appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

Emergency and Disaster Plan

Fire drills are conducted monthly. Emergency procedures in the case of disaster or mass casualty, such as an earthquake or fire, may require evacuation of the building and relocation to a safe location. These locations are posted on the Emergency Disaster Plan posted in the front entry hall. If evacuation is necessary we will leave a note on the front door of the building notifying parents of the alternate location. After walking to the evacuation site, teachers will take attendance and notify the Director of any injuries or special problems. Students and staff will remain at the alternate location until it is safe to return to the building or until all children have been called for.

Holiday Schedule

The Holiday Schedule is published each year by January 3rd. We are closed for most national holidays, which include, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, and Thursday and Friday of Thanksgiving Week, along with four Staff development days; two in the Spring and two in the Fall. We are also closed for one week at Spring break, two weeks in the summer, and two weeks during Winter Holidays. All of these holidays coincide with the Atlanta Public School District schedule, except for the staff development days, which are coordinated with state and national early childhood conferences.

We respect each family's holiday traditions as well as those who choose not to celebrate holidays at all. We welcome and encourage families to come in and share with the rest of the school what holidays they celebrate and why. At The Highlander School, we do not

emphasize any specific holiday or tradition; instead, we focus on the change of seasons and lead the children into discovering what each season brings.

Schedule Changes

Schedule changes can be requested in writing by giving no less than 30 days written notice provided on the 1st of the month. From June 1– September 30, a sixty day written notices is required. The Center Director will verify availability of space to accommodate new attendance schedule request and will notify you and modify your contract accordingly.

Classroom Conversation and Confidentiality

Conversations between parents and teachers at drop-off and pick-up times are encouraged. These can be wonderful moments for brief exchanges related to family activities and customs.

To honor confidentiality, we do not have any conversations with adults about other families or children. We include children in conversations when appropriate. We do not talk about concerns in their presence and strive to keep all conversations in the presence of children positive. For more extensive conversations or for time to discuss concerns, a meeting should be scheduled.

To respect confidentiality, we do not give any personal or private information to anyone without that person's prior consent. This includes e-mails, phone numbers and addresses for play dates or parties. Email addresses for parents in your child's room may be obtained from your child's room rep.

In the event that a child is injured by another child, state licensing prohibits our giving the name of the child who caused the injury to the parents of the victim.

Children's enrollment files are kept confidential. Occasionally, for assessment and screening purposes, it may be necessary for some school personnel to have access to children's files. This information is never shared with school personnel not involved in the assessment process, or other families.

Termination Policy

Thirty days written notice is required upon withdrawing your child from the program on the first day of the month.

Open Door Policy

While your child is in our care, you are always welcome here. Please feel free to visit us any time. Not only do we love to have you join us, but it's your right to do so!

The licensing agency also has the right to enter and inspect our preschool program without notice. They have the authority to conduct private interviews with the children and staff and audit child or facility records without prior consent. They also have the right to observe the physical condition of the children, and to have a licensed medical professional physically examine the child(ren). This authority is not meant to be frightening in any way, and is only meant to ensure the safety and well-being of children in any state licensed facility.

Addressing Your Concerns

The Highlander School values the concerns of parents and believes that a courteous, respectful partnership is essential in order to build healthy relationships between school and home. If you have questions or concerns regarding the policies, procedures or operation of this school, please contact the Center Director by telephone or email in order to set up a conference. We are happy to hear your concerns and value open and honest communication in an appropriate setting!

The Highlander School Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Please sign the acknowledgement prior to enrollment. A copy of the acknowledgment will be made and placed in the individual child's file. The family handbook may be updated, and families will receive notices of those changes. Thank you for choosing The Highlander School to be a part of your life. We look forward to building relationships with you and your family.

I have received and reviewed The Highlander School Family Handbook. I understand that it is my responsibility to understand and acquaint myself with the culture of the school and its policies, procedures or information contained in The Highlander Family School Handbook.

Name of Child or Children: _____

Signature of Guardian _____

Date: _____