

Parent Handbook

7265 St. Claude Ave.

Arabi, LA 70032

504-354-2277

melissar@thegatheringcc.com

Hours of Operation

7:00am – 6:00pm Monday through Friday

Mission Statement

Our mission is to love, nurture, and develop children for every aspect of life.

Our Goal

Our goal is to create lifelong learners and happy families by showering them in love, providing fun, developmentally appropriate activities, and adapting to their individual needs to support the children as they cognitively, spiritually, socially, emotionally, and physically develop.

Our Philosophy of Learning

We believe that children learn and retain knowledge best through play and exploration. We believe children should be provided with developmentally appropriate activities and many opportunities to guide their own learning through self-discovery, gentle guiding, and encouragement from teachers. We believe each child is an individual, developing at his own rate and should be supported in what they are working on to enable them to be successful and build self-confidence.

Non-Discrimination Policy

We aim to serve the child care needs of students (6 weeks-5 yr), staff, and faculty regardless of race, color, creed, gender, class, ability, ethnic background, beliefs, national origin, ancestry, disability, and whether a child is being breastfed or not.

Parent Handbook

The parent handbook for The Gathering Academy is an outline of our policies and procedures. We reserve the right to modify these policies and procedures as needed to create a better system for our children and facility. The policies reflect licensing, standards, and agreements made between parents and the center to make The Gathering Academy a loving and safe environment where children can excel in reaching their potential.

Licensing

The State of Louisiana, Department of Education is charged with the responsibility for developing and publishing standards for the licensing of child care centers. The Gathering Academy is licensed by the State of Louisiana.

We are inspected yearly for health and safety compliance by regulatory agencies. This is done to ensure your child will be safe while he/she is in our care. If you ever have a concern, please address it with your child's teacher first. Then if your concern is not addressed to your satisfaction, we encourage you to contact the director. If we are unable to resolve your complaint, you may call the Louisiana Department of Education Licensing at (225-342-9905) or you may write to them at

Child Care License

P.O. Box 4249

Baton Rouge, LA 70821

Our team is dedicated to making your child feel loved, comfortable, safe, and happy about being at The Gathering Academy. We are excited to lead children in discoveries, provide engaging developmentally appropriate activities, build their self-esteem and self-awareness, gain independence and knowledge, model and promote healthy relationships and social skills, encourage creativity, lead them spiritually, and love them daily. We aim for children to develop and build their level of thinking and understanding daily so they will become curious lifelong learners and prepared for when they leave our center.

We are committed at The Gathering Academy to teach your children and inspire them to be all that they can be! We are also committed to working with you to make this facility the best it can be for your child and you. Please offer us your suggestions and hopes of how we can grow this place to make it even better. While we may not be able to make all changes suggested, as a team, collaborative thinking can inspire creative solutions. We value our families and hope to always have open, positive communication- helping one another to make an optimal experience for each individual child.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to work with your child. We truly delight in watching them grow and discover and be a part of shaping their lives.

Sincerely,

*Melissa Brandt
The Gathering Academy Director*

Eligibility/Admission Policy

The Gathering Academy is a nursery/preschool that accepts children who are 6 weeks old through 5 years old.

Hours of Operation

The Gathering Academy will be open Monday through Friday from 7:00 am until 6:00 pm. The center will be closed for the holidays listed on the holiday schedule (posted on the front desk) and for a week during the month of June or July for vacation.

Contracts

The center enters into a contract with each family to agree upon the hours of care to be provided and the rate to be paid for that care. These fees are applicable even if the child is absent or late. We follow this policy since we order food, schedule staff, and pay building fees in advance. The center reserves the right to cancel enrollment and give the child's spot to someone else for unpaid fees.

Holidays

It is our belief that time off for training, rest, and family time is important. We want our teachers to be their best and live a well-balanced life. It is for this reason The Gathering Academy will be closed in observance of the following days listed. Reminder notices pertaining to closings will be posted prior to the holiday. Payments are expected when we are not open to offer our services. We want to attract the best staff and be able to offer them holiday pay, while still paying our bills for the facility.

Check the holiday schedule located by the sign in sheet for the current information on days the center will be closed.

Fee's

There is a one-time \$100.00 registration fee. This is nonrefundable and ensures your child's spot.

There is a \$150.00 annual instruction fee to cover your child's materials, supplies, and replace worn toys, bikes, books, etc. This fee can be paid yearly or split into 3 payments of \$50 (by the last day of February, June, October).

Tuition is due in advance on the Friday morning before the next week of care provided. If tuition is not received on Friday, then there will be a warning the first time, \$5 late fee for the second time, and \$10 late fee every time after that. If payment is not received by the Tuesday of the current week, then your child will not be accepted into the center until arrangements have been made with the director.

Tuition is determined by your child's class.

Infant Class (0-1yr)	\$175.00/week
Toddler Class (1-2yr)	\$170.00/week
Preschool Classes(2-5yr)	\$165.00/week

***Multi-Family Discount of \$10.00 will be taken from the second child's weekly tuition.*

Payments can be made by cash, personal checks, or money orders payable to **The Gathering**. You can also set up an auto draft payment through the app Brightwheel, however a 2.9% credit card fee or \$.60 ACH fee will be added to the total amount. A \$25.00 handling fee will be assessed for any checks returned NSF (non-sufficient funds). The Center will no longer accept personal checks after two NSF checks in one year.

Tuition is still due, despite a child's absence. You are paying for a position and a service. Tuition will also be collected on any day that we are closed, for holidays or weather, the only exception is the week the center is closed for summer break/maintenance.

In the event of an extended break, payment will be due as usual for the first week. The second week, tuition will be 50% of the normal fee. Any weeks after that tuition will not be charged.

We aim to attract and maintain quality educators and caregivers. We want to treat them like professionals and be sure to provide for our employees who make this their career and depend on their weekly paycheck, at the same time being understanding to parents and extending circumstances. If you are in a financial bind with this, given the circumstances as well, please talk with the director to work out a plan.

Late Evening Fees

The center is open from 7:00 am until 6:00 pm. Please be considerate to our staff so that we may also spend time with our families, and pick up your child so we can close the center at 6:00 pm. Late fees begin at 6:01 pm. Children who are in the center after the scheduled departure time will be charged a late fee, added to your next weekly tuition. You will be charged \$1.00 per minute after 6:00 pm.

We reserve the right to dismiss the child from the Center for excessive late pick-ups.

Your Child's Day

Your child's day will consist of activities to stimulate your child's development based on their developmental level. There will be activities to promote physical, mental, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual development. Our goal is self-discoveries with well set up centers and independent activities set up to facilitate this, but we will also offer small group instruction and one-on-one opportunities to accomplish your child's individual goals. A daily schedule is posted in each room along with the planned activities. If you would like more information on our philosophy or instructional program, please call the director and we will be happy to give you more detailed information.

Parental Access Policy

To enter the building parents must ring the doorbell and be allowed in by a staff member. Please go to the front door before picking up your child from the back. Anyone signing the child out, must be on the master card. See Check-in/Check-out Policy.

Check-in/Check-out Policy

Upon arrival at the center, please walk your child through the main door to the daycare door daily. You will need to sign your child in before he/she can enter the classroom. Then you will be given a chance to walk your child to their classroom and have a brief discussion with the teacher, sharing important information and informing them of any marks on the child. The teacher must complete a Daily Observation Report mandated by the Licensing Department. Then please wash your child's hands and help them put up their belongings.

When picking up your child, a similar procedure will be followed. You will need to sign out your child, using a picture ID. Only those indicated on the child's card can check out the child. If additional names need to be added, it must be done in writing and by the child's parent or guardian; the person being added as a guardian will also need to bring a picture ID. For the safety of your child, if a person coming to check out the child is not on the list or does not have a picture ID, we cannot release the child to them. Please always be prepared with your ID and let others know who might pick up your child, as we might have new staff checking out and they are required to check ID's to release the child.

The licensing department has a strict policy on check-outs and record keeping which we believe helps ensure the safety of all children. Please be prepared and let others know what they will need to pick up the child so there is no frustration with this important policy.

The center also abides by all legally served court orders. We must have a notarized copy of certified court orders on file regarding parental custody matters. If appropriate a do-not-allow check-out should be on the master card which will be highlighted and an awareness made available to all the staff.

Parent Involvement Policy

Parents are welcomed and encouraged to participate in our program in several ways. We would love to invite parents to join us for lunch, snack, special plays, outdoor play, or to nurse/give a bottle or rock your child. Parents are encouraged to share a hobby, talk about their job or interests, or read a book to the class. We have an open door policy and would love to have you in our center at any time. All guests must be escorted by a staff member while on premise, so while not

necessary it helps us to plan for the day to know when you would like to come. But feel free to drop in at any time!

Teachers are available in the mornings and afternoons to greet parents and receive and give information regarding the child. We ask you to limit this time to five minutes or less to allow the teacher to continue their routines and focus on all the children in the classroom. If you need to speak to the teacher for a longer period, please see the director to schedule a conference. A conference can be scheduled at any time a parent, teacher, or director feels the need to share or gain information from the other. We will try to schedule these during the teacher's working hours.

We will also have several events throughout the year to encourage family and school connections. Keep an eye out in our monthly newsletter to know when and where. They are typically every other month, some being at school and others meeting outside of school on a weekend.

Complaint Policy

If you are dissatisfied or concerned about something at our center, we urge you to have a conversation with the director. We aim to serve you and work together to make the best changes for your child and all the children at the center. If you are unable to discuss when picking up or dropping off your child, feel free to call the center (504-354-2277) to plan a meeting time or to discuss the issue over the phone. You can also email us at melissar@thegatheringcc.com. If we are unable to resolve your complaint, you may call the Louisiana Department of Education Licensing at (225-342-9905) or you may write to them at LDELicensing@la.gov

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Disclosure of Information Policy

The State of Louisiana provides our licensing approval through a series of on-going inspections. These surveys and inspections are available to parents to view through the louisiana believes website and a copy is also located on the “inspections” binder located by the sign-in/sign-out code. Parents are always welcome to check out our reviews and read through the licensing regulations and laws.

Photographing Children

We will be taking photographs and videos daily of the children for education purposes, decoration, and to share with parents. We respect each child's privacy and will only send photos of the child to the parent listed on the consent form or if parents have signed the waiver to release their child's photos to other school parents. We encourage you to look at the photos in the classroom of your child and all the students. We will request your permission before publishing photographs or videos in the newspaper, online, or in other types of public community display. Each classroom has a designated tablet, the teachers will use the tablets to take pictures of their students. The tablets are only for staff purposes.

Video Surveillance

We do have video surveillance in our rooms with tape recall to monitor care, look back on incidents, and observe lessons with employees to see from a different perspective and teach strategies. This will only be observed by Gathering employees to ensure the privacy of all children will be maintained. However, we do want parents aware we have this tool and will be using it daily to ensure the safety and quality of services.

Outdoor Play/Physical Activity

Outdoor play is often the highlight of a child's day and is extremely important as it provides exercise, gross motor development, sunshine and fresh air! Please be sure that you send your child ready to go outside daily- appropriate shoes and clothes for hot or cold weather. Don't send your child in clothes they can't play in

or you don't want to get stained. We know the weather can quickly change, so if you choose, you can keep a light jacket in their cubby. We ask that you apply sunscreen and bug repellent at home if desired. Children under the age of two will have at least 60 min

Religious and Character Development

The Gathering Academy is a part of The Gathering whose mission is to create a spiritual community that lives as Jesus lived. We will daily try to achieve this in how we speak and work with your children. We will have mini lessons and activities to teach children about Jesus' character and life and hope to guide children in their spiritual life and build their morals and character to reflect the fruits of the spirit- love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The Gathering meets Saturday mornings at 9:00 and is always open to anyone interested.

Personal Belongings

Comfort toys and personal belongings can greatly help a child transition. Some examples are blankets, soft toys, and baby dolls. We will ask children to put these items in their cubbies upon arrival and keep them there until nap time. They may sleep with them, but will need to return them after a nap. We ask that they not bring any other personal items or toys to the center. We will not be responsible for lost, broken, or worn down items. Please help us by directing them to keep their personal belongings in their cubbies, as it helps our day flow smoothly. If your child has outgrown toy items and they are still in good shape, we will gladly take them as donations.

Rest Periods

Rest is a very important part of a child's development and health. The State of Louisiana requires children five years and younger to have a daily rest period of at least one hour. We believe this is important with all the exciting, active, engaging learning experiences happening, to give children a time to rest and process. We will be on a regular schedule and rest time should be indicated on your child's schedule located in the classroom.

Drop off Policy

We will be serving breakfast at 8:30. If you want your child to eat here in the morning, they need to be here on or before 8:20. We will not serve food late or hold it, even if you pack their breakfast, as we have many other kids who don't have the patience to wait on one and need to move on to their next activity. So if you will be bringing them late, please feed them before you drop them off.

We ask that students be dropped off by 9:00 am, unless they have a doctor's appointment. We have learned late drops-offs can cause disruptions with the flow and activities of the day, and make nap time difficult for all. The only time we discourage picking up children is during your child's classroom's scheduled nap time, as it can disturb many kids.

Daily Health Assessment Check

As required by the state, a daily health assessment will be performed by your child's teacher when your child arrives. The assessment will include observing the child, speaking with parents, and if applicable, talking with the child.

Teacher will observe and document:

- Changes in behavior and appearance

- Any skin rash and itchy skin or scalp

- Any bruises, cuts, scratches

- Sign of fever such as flushed appearance or shivering

- Complaints of pain or not feeling well

- Vomiting, diarrhea, and drainage from eye(s)

- When a child or family has been exposed to a communicable disease

Parents are asked to give an explanation for the above listing. This will be noted on the assessment sheet each morning as mandated by the State.

Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

All teachers are mandated reporters and required to report any signs of abuse or neglect to the Louisiana Child Protection Statewide Hotline (855) 4LA-KIDS (855-452-05437). We will not delay in reporting and staff is not required to report to management first.

Food

As a Type I facility children CAN bring in their own food, snacks, and drinks. We would ask that if you choose to send food, please send healthy, well-balanced items and inform a teacher so that we can make sure to store and heat it properly.

A morning snack, lunch, mid-afternoon snack, and late afternoon snack will be provided by the center if you choose not to send food with your child. A weekly menu will be posted consisting of nutritious, well-balanced food.

It is VERY important that you advise us of any allergies or dietary constraints your child may have, even if you pack their food. For any substitutions we do need a doctor's note.

We look forward to celebrating your child's birthday and other holiday parties at school. If you ever want to provide the snack for each child in your child's class, please let us know so we can update you on your child's class size and any allergies. Also, please let us know a week in advance so that we can plan and order our food accordingly.

Bottles and Baby Food

We ask that all infant formula, breast milk, and baby food be provided by the parents. Please label formula with your child's name and send plenty of clean bottles daily. Breast milk bottles or bags should also be labeled with the child's name, and clean bottles should be sent daily. Please send enough bottles for the teacher to use a clean one at each feeding. If you are sending breast milk we ask that you send 2 extra days' worth of frozen milk in case the baby needs extra milk one day, or provide a small can of formula as a back-up. All bottles need to come with caps as required by the Board of Health and be washed and sanitized daily at home.

As babies are beginning new foods (cereals, purees and softened foods) we ask that parents also send this for their child as they are all often at different stages.

Please label this and let your teacher know how to refrigerate/freeze/heat the food if needed. We know as children start and try new foods, reactions may occur. Please let us know of any food reactions you have noticed in your child, so we can be prepared and keep their chart up-to-date. For babies starting new foods, we will always follow the parent's lead and use only the food brought to the center by the parent until they feel the child is ready for the center's food. Please be in communication with your child's teacher and let them know when your child has tried a variety of foods with you and is ready to eat what is provided on our menu.

Teachers will also be having ongoing conversations and filling out daily sheets with parents about how they are doing, amount being eaten, etc.

Extra Clothing

Children often get dirty, spill food and drinks, or get paint on themselves. Please leave some extra clothes at the center so that we always have something to make sure your child is dry and clean. We are not responsible for stained or torn clothes, so please don't send your child in anything that can't be replaced.

For Infants

2 onesies or pants and shirts

1 pair of socks

Light sweater (optional)

For Toddlers/Preschool

Underwear (more if they are toilet training)

Shirt

Pants (keep in season- long or short)

1 pair of socks

Light jacket/sweater (optional)

Please keep in mind size changes and seasons, and replace as needed.

If we send them home with a bag of dirty clothes, we ask that you send more clothes back the next day to replace what was used.

Please check your child's cubby and make sure they have extra clothes. We have very limited sets of extras and you will be called to bring clothes if we are out and your child has no extra clothes.

Classroom Changes

We will keep you informed of any classroom changes- new teachers, new kids, and new interesting toys or activities through a regular newsletter. We will talk with parents personally as we are thinking of transitioning kids up to a new class or teacher. We will work to make the transitions as smooth and easy as possible for everyone involved. If you ever have any questions, concerns, or suggestions please let us know!

Emergencies

The Gathering will follow the procedures set forth by the Department of Education for all licensed Class I daycare centers in Louisiana.

Procedures for emergencies and evacuations, such as fire, flood, tornado, hurricane, etc. are available.

Should any disaster occur, the children's caregivers will be notified immediately and will be expected to pick up their child/children in a prompt manner.

Closure will depend on local authorities, news reports, local television stations, etc. regarding the impending disaster. We will call parents with closure information as soon as we have it decided.

If a disaster occurs and the center is impacted, it may be necessary to suspend care until the facility can be verified as safe to provide services again.

Medical Forms/ Immunizations

In the interest of your child's health and the health of other children enrolled, we are required to keep copies of your child's current medical and immunization records. These records must be up-to-date in compliance with the state law. If immunizations are not current students will not be allowed to attend until the vaccinations are administered and noted.

Medication Policy

Most medications can be administered once or twice a day, but we recognize there are times when your child may need medications during the day too. The

Gathering Academy will administer only current, dated, labeled prescriptions that are in the original container that are needed to be here. Medications needing to be administered at other times should be given at home. Over-the-counter medications will be given only with written permission. We will only be administering medications as needed to be here. We will not administer Tylenol or other fever reducing medications. **Doctors notes/prescriptions are required for any medications to be administered.** Parents are permitted to administer medicines if needed, but not to reduce fevers if the child is sick.

You are required to complete an appropriate medication authorization form in order for your child to receive any medicine at the center. The forms are available from the director. The forms and the medicine are to be given to the director so they may be locked up in the medicine cabinet. We will be keeping a log of medications dispensed, how much, and by whom. Medication should not be left at the center- please bring them home daily. Do not put medications in diaper bags or bags- we do not want them to be forgotten and found by a child. The Department of Health and Hospital and the State of Louisiana requires all medication that is at the center be kept in locked cabinets.

Please follow the guides posted on the bulletin board for sick exclusions.

Exclusion- Conditions requiring Temporary Exclusion

A child can be excluded if:

The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in class activities

The illness results in a need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising their ability to care for other children

The illness poses a risk of spreading the disease to others

Procedure for a Child Who Requires Exclusion

The teacher will notify the parent or designated person as soon as possible if the child develops symptoms or exclusion conditions.

Ask the family to pick up the child as soon as possible or within 30 minutes.

Document actions in the child's file with date, time, symptoms, and actions taken and by whom: sign and date.

Provide care for the child in a place where the child will be isolated from other children, comfortable, and supervised by someone who knows the child and will continue to observe the child for new or worsening symptoms.

Sanitize toys and other items the child may have put in his/her mouth or infected and continue to practice good hand washing techniques.

*** The center staff will make the final decision about whether a child meets or does not meet the exclusion criteria and the child's need for extra care while not feeling well in relation to the staff's ability to provide it.*

*** Staff will ask for a health professional's note to re-admit if professional advice is needed to determine whether a child is a health risk to others or the child needs special care.*

We ask that everyone is very considerate of our sick policy- being proactive in noticing signs, and keeping children home if sick and until well. Germs spread so fast and with so many growing immune systems, we do our very best to prevent the spreading of illness and ask that you do too. Please consider other parents and their little ones, as they will also consider you in keeping their children isolated to prevent the spread of illness.

Children may not reenter care until they have been 24 hour fever, diarrhea, vomit free or have a doctor's note to state they are not contagious.

Administer auto-injectable epinephrine

With the passage of [HB 417/Act 335](#) , effective August 1, 2022, childcare centers: are authorized for a trained early learning center employee to administer an auto-injectable epinephrine to a child who is believed to be having an anaphylactic reaction whether or not such child has a prescription for epinephrine.

The center may maintain a supply of an auto-injectable epinephrine at the center in a secure and easily accessible location but inaccessible to children.

Potty Training Policy

Learning to use the potty can be an exciting time for parents and children! Although it can be accompanied by many frustrations, we will do our best to help ease the process for all. Communication during this period is especially helpful along with parent/teacher coordination. Let your teacher know your style of training and staff members will do their best to follow it for consistency at home and school. We will need you to be sure to supply us with clothing changes to adequately care for your child. Your child will need extra underwear and clothes as well as socks and shoes.

Potty training should be introduced when the child can stay dry through the night and shows an interest in using the potty. If your child is showing these signs then please talk with your child's teacher.

Many children have success when working with another child. We will work with children in pairs of two and as they achieve success, we will work with two more.

If your child wears pull-ups, they will be taken to the bathroom every 1 ½ - 2 hours. Please feel free to begin your child in pull-ups, and talk with your child's teacher, and we will make an effort to work with them.

Children who begin wearing underwear to school will also be taken to the bathroom every 1 ½ -2 hours. If these children have repeated accidents and/or show no signs of interest, then the teacher will ask you to either send them in pull-ups or a diaper until further notice.

- o If a child in underwear has more than 3 accidents a day, they will be put in a diaper or pull-up the duration of the day as it gets very difficult for the teacher to clean up multiple accidents and care for the other students.

Bathroom usage as well as diaper changes are recorded on our app Brightwheel.

Forcing potty training on your child can be detrimental to their health and self-esteem. Impacted bowels and urine infections can occur. Anger and frustration about failing can also dampen their self-esteem. Please do not force your child into this situation.

Positive Behavior Management

We are firm believers in a positive approach to behavior management. We aim to become people the children trust, respect, and look to for guidance in sorting out their feelings, thoughts, and understanding of the world around them. We will strive to grow their self-confidence and understanding of the world around them daily. The early childhood ages are the most crucial in building their morals and beliefs, learning about their emotions and how to appropriately express them, how to build positive relationships with peers, and how to control their bodies to express themselves effectively and appropriately. We aim to model, communicate, and teach children loving, respectful ways to handle themselves and develop self-discipline. We know a safe, consistent environment filled with loving teachers, kind words, praise, and positive thoughts is the best way to do this.

Some techniques we might use include engaging children, giving children an opportunity to share and be heard, praising positive behaviors and good choices, encouraging others to make good choices, empowering them with prompting questions instead of directing them or telling them what to do, giving them limited choices, leading them in conversations when they are doing something inappropriate to help them realize what might be a better choice, using kind words and tones, and repeating directions and rules often and positively. We will use a consistent schedule with warnings and transitions to alert children of upcoming changes and plan our day to best meet our students' needs. There will be NO corporal punishment ever. We will set limits that are age and individually appropriate. We will be just and patient, focusing on the child's action- not the child, and always make sure they still feel loved and accepted. If consequences are needed, they will be immediate and related to the offensive action. Punishment will only be used for behaviors that threaten the safety of other children or behaviors that are repeated and not responding to other methods. Punishment could be removing a child from a play area, limiting play privileges, taking away an object, or a time-out equal to the child's age. Time outs shall take place within sight of staff and shall not be used for children under age two. The length of each time out shall be based on the age of the child and shall not exceed one minute per year. Punishment will never affect meals, bathroom privileges, or nap time.

Outside/Gross Motor playtime cannot be taken away as a form of punishment/discipline.

Children cannot be placed in high chairs or buckled seats as a form of restraints.

Physical or corporal punishment is prohibited. This can include, but is not limited to, yelling, slapping, spanking, yanking, shaking, pinching, exposure to extreme temperatures or other measures of producing physical pain, putting anything in the mouth of a child, requiring a child to exercise, or placing a child in an uncomfortable position.

Verbal abuse, which includes but is not limited to using offensive or profane language, telling a child to “shut up”, or making derogatory remarks about children or family members of children in the presence of children is also prohibited.

Other prohibited discipline actions include, the threat of a prohibited action, even if there is no intent to follow through the threat, allowing a child to be disciplined by another child, allowing a child to be bullied by another child, being deprived of food or beverages, being restrained by devices such as high chairs or feeding tables for disciplinary purposes, and having active playtime withheld for disciplinary purposes, except timeout may be used during active play time for an infraction incurred during the playtime.

If a student is acting or showing any dangerous and/or out of control behaviors they will be brought to the directors office first to try and calm down. A parent will be notified of the child’s behavior. If the child can not calm down an approved pick up person will have to come get the child. Suspension or expulsions should only be considered as a final action after the implementation of behavior support strategies, including at a minimum engaging parents by written communication and/or parent conference; and providing a referral to EarlySteps, Child Search, and/or mental health consultant if appropriate.

Parent Behavior Policy

Parent/Teacher interactions are incredibly important to building relationships with children. We aim to serve and teach your child to the best of our abilities, but to do so we need your child to see that you respect our teachers and value them. Your child has the best chance at succeeding when we partner together, which means listening and implementing strategies at home to help with behaviors as we implement the same strategies at school. It is very important to work on behaviors as a team, creating consistency for children and similar boundaries for the greatest success of your child. To best serve your child we need parents to be honest, always speak respectfully to teachers, and to discuss any issues with us.

The Gathering's Early Childhood Prep School reserves the right to immediately dismiss any child from care if parents act in a rude, dishonest, or disrespectful way to staff, or is not willing to work as a team to help solve behavior problems presented at school.

Electronic Policy

Electronic devices, included by not limited to television, movies, games, videos, computers, and hand held electronic devices shall not be used by children under the age of 2. Children over the age of 2 shall not exceed 2 hours of use per day.

Programs, Movies, Video Games Policy

All television, video, DVD, or other programming will be suitable for the youngest child present. Only G rated programs will be used in the center- nothing ever PG or above, or anything with violent or adult content.

Provisionally Approved Employee

A provisionally approved employee will wait until they are fully approved/cleared before working at the center.

Computer Policy

Children in the center will not be allowed access to computers with internet access on.

Biting

During the infant/toddler years this scary, frustrating problem can arise. Even though it yields a stressful situation, it is very common and unavoidable as children are going through developmental stages and trying to make sense and gain control of their world. As much as we try to prevent any child getting harmed in any way, it can sometimes be impossible to predict who is going to bite and

who will be bitten. We have to remember not to blame the child, parents, or caregivers- thus we use confidentiality and cannot tell a parent who bit their child. We do our very best, but there are many reasons why a child can bite that is out of our control.

Teething

Lack of impulse control- wanting to explore their world but not realizing the effects.

Get a reaction- see what will happen

Overstimulation

Frustration. Children this age often don't have the communication or reasoning skills to express their frustrations. They are still learning social skills and how to function properly in a group of peers, who are learning the same things.

Our response

1. Care for the child that has been bitten- reassure, calm, rebuild their feeling of safety and comfort.

Wash the wound with soap and water, Apply ice if needed

If the bite breaks the skin, notify the director who will call the parent. If it does not break the skin, notify the director and the parent upon pick up.

Write an accident report.

2. Talk with the biting child calmly to let them know biting is not acceptable. Explain how it hurts others, what they can do next time to communicate more clearly, reinforce they are there to help. The teacher will communicate so the child can understand them and in a calm way, so as to not bring about negative attention. If the child is a toddler/infant, they will be given an alternative to bite (teether). If the child is preschool age, they will be part of the care process (holding ice, comforting).
3. Examine the situation and try to figure out why the biting happened.
4. Any child who bites 3 times a day will be sent home for the day.

5. Any child who bites, causing the skin to break and bleed, will be sent home immediately.
6. For children that bite frequently, we reserve the right to suspend and, in some cases expel the child from our program. Suspension and/or expulsion will be at the discretion of the Director/Owner.

To Prevent

The teacher will log occurrences and attempts, analyzing possible triggers including situation, time, location, and students.

Stay close to children who have a tendency to bite- anticipating situations and intervening to teach better problem solving techniques and appropriate responses

Consider changes to the environment- toys or materials, routines, commotion, placement, schedules.

Teachers will receive additional training and support on biting and ways they can help prevent incidents. They will have ongoing meetings with the director to discuss the biting incidents and behaviors demonstrated.

We also have a resource pack for parents and staff to review to help understand the behavior and actions they can take to help.

If a child consistently is biting and staff is unable to anticipate, prevent the actions, and/or improve the behavior- in the safety and well-being of all children, it will be treated as aggressive behavior. We will have ongoing communication with the parent of the biter and steps being taken. Just as an aggressive behavior we will begin with the watch and log stage. After a couple incidents we will begin to shadow the child, keeping them in close proximity as much as possible. During this stage we take extra precautions and focus on eliminating triggers, giving them tools of communication, and modeling appropriate ways to handle their frustrations with their peers. If possible we will change the student's environment and continue to shadow and observe in the new environment. After 14 school days of shadowing the student, making changes to the environment, modeling appropriate communication skills, and doing everything in our power to support and help the student, we will reevaluate the student's behavior again. If no or very little improvements have been made, we will have to dismiss the student. Our ultimate goal is to help every child work through this difficult, frustrating phase, however, we recognize some students might need more support than we can provide and we want all of our students to feel safe and supported in their environment.

Aggressive Behaviors

Developmentally, we know that young children are in a stage of learning how to function within a community- they are gradually learning how to become less self-focused and how to share, realize and deal with their emotions, verbally communicate, control their impulses, and deal with problems and frustrations appropriately. We know that they have to learn these things and are excited to have the opportunity to help you teach them these important life skills. We also know it is important to let them know certain aggressive behaviors are unacceptable- hitting, kicking, biting, and scratching. We do not take these actions lightly and do our best to prevent them by maintaining our schedule and informing children of changes, keeping the day interesting and engaging, and constantly interacting with kids to help with problems if needed. However, when these behaviors become a frequent or consistent occurrence, we will take the following steps to assist the child.

Watch and Log- Watch and keep track of when these incidents are occurring, note if there are any patterns and make environmental changes we feel may help deal with the problem.

Teach and Model- Model, set up role play, and teach alternative behaviors or solutions for dealing with the frustration

Shadow- A child might need to have a teacher follow or stay close to the child to quickly intervene before he/she participates in an aggressive behavior. The teacher will continue to record occurrences and teach alternative strategies for dealing with the frustration. Parents will be informed if this is happening and asked to have conversations with the child at home too.

Conferencing- We hope to have a constant on-going conversation as we are learning to help the child work through his/her behaviors. After a while of trying the previously mentioned strategies with no change, we will request a conference with the parents to sit down together and brainstorm more strategies for school and home.

We will work our best to help your child process these feelings and behaviors and feel like with the Gathering Counseling we have fantastic resources to help, but have to also keep the physical safety and emotional well-being of all children in mind. Some behaviors may require immediate dismissal. Any decision related to

dismissal will be made by the director, in conjunction with the caregivers involved in the child's daily care.

Alcohol/Drug/Firearm Usage Policy

The Gathering Academy prohibits the use of alcohol and possession of illegal substances or unauthorized toxic substances, firearms, pellet guns, BB guns, or knives in the center, on the playground, or any field trip. Smoking is not allowed on the premises. If a parent or designated person to pick up the child is suspected of being intoxicated or under the influence of something, The Gathering Academy may refuse to allow them to take the child.

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have read and understand The Gathering Academy Parent Handbook and I am fully aware of all the policies and procedures.

I have read and understand the fee arrangements and conditions stated in the handbook. I agree to these conditions and will abide by them.

I have read and understand the holiday schedule and drop off and pick-up policy.

Child's Name _____

Parent's Signature

Date

Director's Signature

Date

This will be placed in our files. Before signing the handbook, please make sure you have read and understand it. Any questions should be directed to Emily Alphonso.

Thank you!

Each new student should have the following paperwork completed and filed before beginning.

_____ MasterCard with at least 3 emergency contacts (copy)

_____ Immunization records (keep up to date)

_____ All About Your Child

_____ Parental Awareness of Recordings

_____ Consent to Release Information, Recordings or Photographs

_____ Bottle Authorization (optional and only if needed)

_____ Facebook agreement (optional)

_____ Sippy Cup permission slip (only for children under 1)

_____ Contract Agreement (Acknowledgement page)

_____ Registration Deposit (one time- \$100)

Parent Signature

Date

Director Signature

Date

All About Your Child

Child's Full Name _____ Date of birth _____

Nickname: _____

I have _____ brother (s) and _____ sister(s). Their names and ages are

Eating Habits

Does your child have a special diet? _____

Are there any foods that should not be served to your child or any food allergies?

_____ Allergies and reactions: _____

Favorite foods: _____

Least favorite foods: _____

Does your child eat independently? _____

For infants what brand of formula are you using or do you use breastmilk?

How many ounces do you currently give? _____

What is your child's current daily eating schedule

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Sleeping Habits

Does your child have a regular bedtime schedule? _____

What time does your child usually wake in the morning? _____

What time does your child usually go to bed at night? _____

Does your child usually nap? _____

What times? _____

How do you usually put your child down for a nap?

Does your child have any problems getting to sleep or staying asleep? If yes, explain

Health Concerns

Does your child have any known health concerns? _____

If yes, please explain

Does your child take any medication on a regular basis? _____

If yes please explain

Any hearing or vision problems? If yes, explain

Any known allergies? If yes, please explain the allergy and the reaction, and how it is dealt with _____

Is there anything else we should know about your child's health?

Behavior

How do you reward or discipline your child?

Are there any behaviors or habits we should be aware of?

Please remember to keep us updated on any changes. We really want to work with you to help your child experience joyful, enriching days and become the best he/she can be!

5307.D

Parental Awareness of Recordings

I am aware that The Gathering Academy utilizes recordings and/or
taping of my child such as digital recordings, videotaping, audio recordings,
web cam while in the center for observation/security purposes.

Parent's Signature

Date

§1515.B

Consent to Release Information, Recordings or Photographs

I give my consent for _____ to release

(Name of Center)

information/photograph(s)/recording(s) of my child _____ from
which my child might be identified, except to authorized state and federal agencies.

Parent's Signature

Date

Bottle Authorization

I give permission for my child _____ to hold

(Child's Name)

his/her bottle while on a mat or cot.

Parent's Signature

Date

Date ____/____/____

_____, I, _____, hereby give permission to The Gathering's Early Childhood Prep School to share pictures of my child, _____, with other parents in the center. This would include but is not limited to- pictures of my child with another student in the center, pictures my child might be in the background of, and class pictures. I understand parents have been urged not to share these group pictures on social media, but will not hold the Gathering responsible.

_____, I, _____, understand I have been asked not to share pictures of my child with other children on social media or other public platforms, unless I have the other parents' approval. I know it is to respect the privacy and confidentiality of all students enrolled.

Date: _____

My child _____, has permission to drink water from a sippy cup at The Gathering's Early Childhood Prep School.

Parent Signature

Healthy infants usually require little or no extra water, except in very hot weather. However, it can help when solid food is first fed to your baby, extra water is often needed to prevent constipation. It can also help when your 4-6 month old baby is learning to use a cup, giving him a few sips of water a couple of times a day. Water should not replace formula or breastmilk when infants are under 1, so the amount of water given will be monitored and limited as to not take the place of the important vitamins and nutrients that are received from their other form of milk.