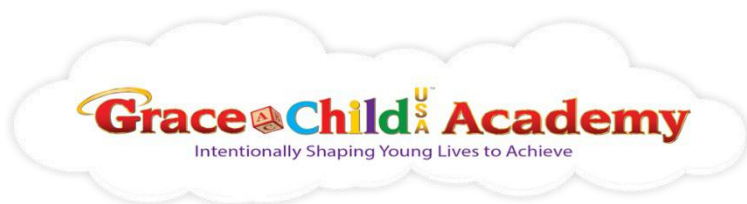




2024-2025

For Our Families...*Policies,  
Procedures and Processes*



125 Scattergood Drive NW  
Christiansburg, VA 24073  
[www.gracechildusa.org](http://www.gracechildusa.org)  
540-382-9591

***Welcome to GRACEWAY Ministries***

***Updated: 2/2025***



Dear Families,

*Pastor Eddie and I welcome you to a dream come true! Gracechild Academy is a unique ministry concept that is intentionally fun and inspirational. It will bless the lives of our Life Shapers, your children, and your Family!*

*Everything we do and every decision we make is built on the concepts of love and joy. Our collective goal is to give your family exceptional services and be a consistent blessing as we build blessed lives together.*

*In Mark 10:14, Jesus showed his devotion to children and their importance to Him. The scripture says, “**He picked up the children and invoked a fervent blessing on them!**” Our Life Shapers are carefully selected to help us execute the vision the Lord has given us in this ministry. Our heart is for everyone who enters GAC to feel the Love of God! Just as the Lord blessed children, so will we!*

*Our Core Values have been based from the Bible concerning the care of His children.*

*We believe every Child:*

- *is a gift from God*
- *needs intentional direction from people who care*
- *has a unique life plan designed by our Creator*
- *is precious and unique*
- *needs structure and guidance*
- *deserves a childhood filled with love*
- *needs instruction and guidance to become accountable adults*
- *learns from play and from their role models*
- *needs confident adults who can lead, guide, and direct*

*We have been given an incredible opportunity to make a difference. We want you and your child to love coming to our Academy, just as our Life Shapers do. They genuinely love the children they train up and love being in the ministry with us! We hope you and your family will too!*

*Sincerely yours,*



*Eddie & Donna Roberts*

*Pastor Eddie @ [www.gracewayministry.org](http://www.gracewayministry.org)*

*Donna Roberts, Founder @ [www.donnakthornton.com](http://www.donnakthornton.com)*

**Proverbs 22:6 New King  
James Version (NKJV)**

*<sup>6</sup> Train up a child in the  
way he should go,  
and when he is old, he  
will not depart from it.*



# ***Shaping Young Lives to Achieve***

*And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. – Luke 2:40*

Gracechild Academy is a ministry of Grace Way Ministries, Inc., devoted to building blessed lives for the people served. We are a Christian Academy dedicated to sharing God's love with young children and their families. Our Academy is a unique family-friendly life center providing full-time care and education along with flexible hourly care tailored to meet the needs of today's parents.

***We seek to impact a child's development through active play and intentional interaction with people devoted to their well-being and spiritual growth.***

In order to be successful in building that kind of ministry, we respectfully ask every Life Shaper to commit to some fundamental values.

## **We ask every Life Shaper that they:**

- keep an intimate, personal relationship with the Lord Jesus;
- attend their home church regularly;
- pray for the ministry regularly;
- love their co-workers and pray for them;
- work as unto the Lord-giving their best to the children on a daily basis;
- ask for help if needed; the Ministry is here to help and support them;
- share ideas, suggestions, and input to further the ministry's growth;
- know Ministry Management supports, trusts, and has confidence in them;
- believe in the best of the people they work for and with;
- give children excellent care on a consistent basis;
- practically show the love of God through their actions and words;
- they believe and speak the best of the ministry and fellow Life Shapers;
- experience a deeper commitment to the Lord by serving Him;

## **Our Mission Statement**

*Shaping Young Lives to Achieve! Touching the hearts, minds, and lives of young children with God's Grace, Love, and Joy!*

## **Our Cultural Objective**

*To actively demonstrate the love of Christ with a standard of excellence to one another and with each task we accomplish.*

## **Our Philosophy**

*Training children is commissioned by the Lord and is both an honorable and a worthy profession.*



# Enrollment Benefits

Thank you for enrolling your child with us! GraceAChild is dedicated to providing exceptional educational childcare while making it easy and affordable for working parents since May 2011. We are a family-focused, non-profit ministry that cares deeply for the well-being of young children. Please visit our website [www.graceachild.org](http://www.graceachild.org) for complete information and updates!

- **Centers Specifically Designed for Early Care and Education**
  - Classrooms designed for children with age-appropriate furniture, materials, and equipment
  - STEM Activity Centers in our Preschool Classrooms
  - Great playgrounds and green spaces
- **Service Choices**
  - Full-Time Enrollment Status – rates are not based on attendance and do not pause for vacation or illness.
  - Easy payment methods with automatic draft through Brightwheel parent app. Electronic Payments accepted include all major credit cards and bank accounts including checking/savings (**processing fees apply**).
- **Parent Referral Reward**
  - For Every referral that ends in new enrollment, **parents receive an instant \$25.00 tuition credit!** There is no limit! Refer friends and families and be rewarded!
- **Electronic Daily Communication Tools Through Brightwheel Parent App**
  - Receive daily reports **directly to your Smart Phone, Tablet, or Computer**
  - Receive **pictures and videos of your child** in “action”
  - **Communicate throughout the day** directly with your child’s teacher
- **Advanced Security for our Children & Families**
  - With **Brightwheel Computer Check-in** - Real Time
  - **Advanced Security with Avigilon Webcams**
  - **Double Security Entrance**
- **Advanced Technology utilized with Online Applications**
  - Complete Online Application Process – **Gone Green with Enrollment Process\*** (\*Immunization, School Entrance Physical, and Birth Certificate required)
- **Advanced Accounting Software from Brightwheel!**
  - **Instant access** to accounts using Brightwheel Parent App
  - **Pay online** and review statements in real-time

Our **Parent Newsletter** is sent out *once a month email*. It contains valuable information about Grace a Child, including exciting activities and special events we may be hosting. At GAC, we strive to keep our parents completely informed with up-to-date information! *Extra copies of the Newsletter, as well as our Monthly Calendar, will also be placed at the Director’s Station for your convenience.*



Grace a Child USA Academy is **open** Monday thru Friday, 6:45 am – 5:45 pm.  
Please note that GAC is closed on the following days and Holidays:

**New Year’s Day**      **Good Friday**      **Memorial Day**      **Independence Day**  
**Labor Day**      **Thanksgiving Day & Black Friday**      **Christmas Eve & Christmas Day**

Teacher workday:

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

*Also note that if a Holiday is on Saturday, GAC will be closed the Friday prior, and if a Holiday is on Sunday, GAC will be closed the following Monday.*

**Information regarding Tuition and Fees**

For your convenience, we accept the following methods of Payment: **(NO CASH OR CHECKS ACCEPTED)**

- Auto Draft from a Checking Account or Savings Account with a processing fee of 0.6% per transaction. **OR** Auto draft from a Credit/Debit Card at 2.95% processing fee per transaction. **Payment Setup must be completed by primary payer through the Brightwheel app.**
- Subsidy payment from the Department of Social Services – Monthly Copay’s & Weekly Differences may apply! Must use DSS card at Center to swipe daily for your child’s attendance.

Please note that ALL PAYMENTS are processed on Thursday for the following week. Monday is our “Grace Period”, and no late fees will be charged if payment is received by **5:45 on Monday**. If payment of tuition and late fees are not **paid IN FULL by 12 noon on Wednesday, enrollment will be suspended** until your account becomes current. A new registration fee may be applied if enrollment is suspended for more than two weeks. If you are at risk for suspension, please see your director immediately.

**Transportation Policy**

Currently, Gracechild doesn’t take field trips or transport any children.

**Arrival and Departure Policy**

- Only after enrollment is complete will parents receive their door code that allows this code to parent’s access to the childcare building.
- For security reasons, parents are asked not to allow other adults (even familiar ones) into the building. Each parent/authorized person must re-enter their security code before entering.
- Upon arrival, parents must sign their children in.
- If someone other than the usual parent or guardian will be picking up your child, please inform the morning staff of this change in schedule. Make sure anyone picking up your child is listed on the authorized pick-up list. They must be able to show valid IDs in order for a staff member to release your child to them. We reserve the right to hold the child if verification cannot be obtained.
- Your child will not be released to siblings or other children. These policies are for the safety of your child(ren)! When returning to pick up your child, a parent/ guardian must sign each child out.

**When the parent/guardian is late:**

- Contact the parent/guardian at the numbers in Brightwheel
- If contact with parent/guardian is not established, call the emergency contact(s) listed in Brightwheel and make arrangements for the child to be picked up.





- In the event that the parents/guardians/emergency contact(s) are not reached and have not called the center, it is 6:45 pm, or the center has closed for an emergency situation, the center will notify the authorities, such as child protective services.

\*\*\***In accordance with VDOE Standard 22VAC40-185-420.C:** A custodial parent shall be admitted to any child day program. Such right of admission shall apply only while the child is in the child day program (63.2-1813 of the Code of Virginia).

- Drop off is between the hours of 6:45 am and 8:45 am
- **ALL CHILDREN NEED TO BE PRESENT BY 8:45 am**
- Pick-up needs to be **before 5:40 pm** because our doors close at 5:45 pm
- **Late Pick-Up Fee of \$10 automatic at 5:46 pm and after, an additional \$1 per minute will be charged until the child is clocked out of Brightwheel.**

If your child will be late or not in attendance, **please call the Academy prior to 8 am**, or send a message through Brightwheel.

## Health and Medication

- All medications must be in the original container
- If your child has a pre-existing condition that requires medication, we will need a doctor's note and a telephone number to contact the doctor in case of emergency  
We cannot administer any medication without a completed medical form for the date medication is to be administered. Please make sure we have local emergency numbers in case your child becomes ill  
Only trained and authorized staff is permitted to dispense medication to a child with parental permission. Medication will be dispensed as indicated on the packaging. Any special instructions must be provided in writing.  
Duration of the medicine will be no longer than ten working days unless specific authorization is obtained from the physician. This is to ensure the prevention of outdated medication  
When authorization for medication expires, the parent will be notified that the medication needs to be picked up within seven days, or the parent must renew the authorization Medications not picked up by the parent within seven days will be disposed of by the center. We will mix the

**Sunscreen and/or Insect Repellent:** Parent's permission must be given, and sunscreen must be in its original container, clearly labeled with the child's name and the date it was first brought in. We ask that parents apply sunscreen in the morning at home, and we will reapply in the afternoon.

**Diaper Cream:** Parent's permission must be given, and diaper cream must be in its original container, clearly labeled with the child's name and the date it was first brought in.

### Infection Control/Sick Children

The center takes precautionary measures to prevent illness from spreading. Tables, toys, and areas children use are disinfected daily. Gracechild staff is trained in universal precautions and effective hand-washing techniques. Every effort is taken to protect children from exposure to infectious or contagious diseases. However, if your child is exposed to a communicable disease, a **notice will be posted by the Director's Station** identifying which classroom is at risk. The center reserves the right to obtain appropriate medical should the need arise.



If your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease or any household member, **please notify the Academy as soon as possible**. Your help in controlling communicable diseases is greatly appreciated.

To protect all children in our care, your child will not be permitted to the Academy if:

- ***They have a Fever; the Temperature is registering 100 degrees F or above.***
- ***They have an unidentified rash.***
- ***They have an eye infection, swelling, or drainage***
- ***They have recurring vomiting or diarrhea***

Any child showing signs of illness will be isolated until he/she leaves the Academy, and a staff member of the volunteer will comfort until a parent or authorized pick-up contact arrives to take the child home. *Parents and/or guardians will be notified immediately and **have one hour to arrive** at the Academy; other emergency contacts will then be called for pick up.*

Before returning to the Academy, **children must be symptom-free and fever free**, without the aid of a fever reducer, **for at least 48 hours**.

Please make the ministry aware of any physical impairments or conditions your child may have. (i.e., diabetes, epilepsy, hearing or visual impairments, ports, heart monitors, ADD/ADHD, etc.)

Parents must notify the Director of any changes in the child's health history and whenever immunizations are due and received. **Please provide us with an updated Immunization History any time your child receives immunizations** so we can keep their file up to date.

**Emergency care** will be given to any child enrolled. Please note your hospital and physician preferences for emergency care on your enrollment form. We will call 911 first and then notify the parents or emergency contacts if the parents cannot be reached. **PLEASE REMEMBER TO ALWAYS KEEP ALL CONTACT INFORMATION CURRENT AND UP TO DATE.**

### **Injury Prevention Plan**

- All the cleaning supplies will be locked safely away from the reach of the children.
- All teachers will check classrooms daily for any hazards and remove anything that can be harmful to a child (broken toys, etc.)
- Playgrounds will be checked daily for any hazards and remove anything that can be harmful to a child (broken toys, etc.)
- During classroom time, staff will carefully keep watch for any hazards and remove anything that can be harmful to a child (broken toys, etc.)
- During playground time, staff will carefully keep watch for any hazards and remove anything that can be harmful to a child (broken toys, etc.)

### **Accident Policy and Procedures**

If your child is involved in an accident at the Academy, Standard First Aid will be administered immediately, depending upon the type and severity of the accident. If the injury is serious enough that medical attention is thought to be required or if the injury is to the head or face, we will contact the parents, guardian, and/or emergency contacts. An Accident Report will be filled out for all types of injuries. The witnessing Lifeshaper will complete documentation, and both they, the director and the parents will sign. The Academy will keep the documentation, and it will be kept in a yearly accident/incident file. Upon request, parents can receive copies of the accident/incident documentation. When any type of serious accident occurs (i.e., broken bones, possible concussion,



allergic reaction, or cuts requiring stitches, etc.), the Academy Director will notify the VP of Operations and call 911 if necessary. If the child is transported to the Hospital via ambulance, the Director will ride with the child and stay until the parents arrive.

## **Family Life Academy Structure**

Gracechild Academy was founded by Donna Thornton-Roberts, who has over 35 years of childcare and ministry experience. Her team is comprised of professionally educated and experienced individuals who love God, have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and have a passion to impact the lives of young children and families that are being served. The Academy is overseen by the Site Chief Operational Manager. It is led by a Director and Assistant Director who work with our Life Shapers, volunteers, and our Pastor to make this the best place for your child to grow and learn!

### **General Team Qualifications**

Life Shapers are the teachers of Grace a child. Ministry employees are selected based on their passion and devotion to teaching young children. Life Shapers believe children are precious possessions. As Believers in Christ, with skills, talents, and abilities, we strive to make a positive difference in the lives of young children and their families.

## **A Sampling of Life Shaper Standards & Requirements**

- Completion of application with at least 3 Professional and Personal References
- Completing Criminal Background Check prior to employment
- CPS Investigative Report
- Obtaining proof of a Negative Tb screening prior to employment
- Completing 24 hours of On-Site Training, & a 10 hr. course of Mandatory Online Training
- Incident-free 30-Day Probationary Period AND a successful 90-Day Introductory Period
- Must be between the ages of 17 and 75
- Has college credits or completed education
- Must be able to write and articulate a ministry devotion or call to teach young children
- Submit a personal statement of faith and belief in Jesus Christ
- Has the desire to teach and model Christian principles
- Is in faithful attendance at their home church

### **Executive Management Team**

Donna Thornton-Roberts, Founder GAC Academy  
Deanne Sowers, Site Chief Operational Manager  
Ashley Shockley, Director  
Lucy Secrist, Assistant Director  
Eddie Roberts, Senior Pastor and Board President

#### **Physical Address:**

*125 Scattergood Dr. NW, Christiansburg, VA 24073*

#### **Mailing Address:**

*P.O. Box 6068, Christiansburg, VA 24068*

#### **Contact us:**

*Academy Phone Number: 540-382-9591*

*Fax Number: 540-724-6457*

*[www.gracechildusa.org](http://www.gracechildusa.org)*





### **Natural Disaster Policy**

In the event of a natural disaster (flood, tornado, chemical spill, severe storm, etc.):

- We will move children to the safest area of the Academy, designated as “Shelter in Place”; If the center is deemed unsafe, staff will evacuate to the nearest safe business building, for example, Scattergood Church, and utilize our standard Fire evacuation procedures.
- Emergency phone numbers and attendance sheets will be taken so parents may be called.
- A message will also be sent to parents through our Brightwheel Portal.
- Radio, flashlight, blankets, nonperishable food, bottled water, formula, & First Aid Supplies will accompany staff.
- In a power outage, the centers are equipped with emergency hall lights, and water supplies will be delivered to the center via administration and church employees.

**Emergency Procedures:** All Essential Staff will be trained on Emergency Procedures, such as monthly Fire Drills and bi-annually Shelter in Place Procedures or as changes necessitate.

**If interested, a complete copy of this plan is located at the Director’s Station for your review.**

**Mandated Reporters:** All Life Shapers and Ministry Employees are mandated reporters by law. It is their duty and obligation to be trained annually in regard to Child Abuse and Neglect. Below is a sampling of our procedure for reporting suspicious Abuse & Neglect:

- *If you notice a child come in with bruises, marks, or injuries that were not there yesterday, please document them on an Incident form and inform Director immediately.*
- *You are a Mandated Reporter for Child Abuse; it is not your job to determine what happened or whether something happened; it is your duty to report suspected abuse and neglect; Child Protective Services will investigate further.*
- *Child Abuse and Neglect Training is mandatory for ALL employees.*
- *On occasion, go over Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect paperwork, policy & procedure.*

### **Discipline Guidelines:**

- Discipline will be handled in a fair, consistent, timely, and age-appropriate manner
- We redirect negative behavior and discuss appropriate interactions
- When redirection and conversations fail, our Life Shapers help children under the consequences of their behavior; it is important for children to understand why a certain behavior is socially unacceptable and give examples of how to modify such behavior
- Consequences are age-appropriate and never physical
- No form of physical punishment will ever be administered
- Children will never be isolated in a confined space or put in an uncomfortable position
- If age-appropriate, children will be asked to help problem-solve/conflict resolution
- The only time a child will be restrained is to prevent him from running away or causing harm to himself or others; If that occurs, the Director will be called immediately for assistance

### **Termination Policy:**

Occasionally, a child will experience some difficulty in adapting to the center’s environment or abiding by the center’s rules of behavior. Should this occur, a conference will be scheduled with you (the parents or guardian), the teacher, and the director. We will work closely with you to see if the problem can be resolved. It may be determined that a child will not benefit from this center, and then other arrangements must be made. It is Gracechild management and the director who reserve the right to terminate the enrollment of children whose behavior is continually disruptive and/or whose parents are not willing to comply with center policies. A two-week written notice to the parents will be given by the center should we decide to terminate the enrollment of a child.



## Meals

*Please note that Grace a Child Academy is a  
**PEANUT-FREE FACILITY***

### **Breakfast:**

Served in our Creative Café at 8:30 am for our Toddlers and Two-Year Old's.

Served in our Creative Café at 9:00 am for our Preschool Classrooms.

Served in our Creative Café at 9:30 am for our Pre-K Scholars.

*Infants not yet on table food will be fed according to their schedule and fed in Babyland.*

*Waddlers will be served the selected breakfast in their classroom.*

### **Lunch:**

Served in our Creative Café at 11:00 am for our Toddlers and Two-Year Old's.

Served in our Creative Café at 11:30 am for our Preschool Classrooms.

Served in our Creative Café at 12noon for our Pre-K Scholars.

*Infants not yet on table food will be fed according to their schedule and fed in Babyland.*

*Waddlers will be served the selected lunch in their classroom.*

### **Afternoon Snack:**

Served in our Creative Café at 2:30 am for our Toddlers and Two-Year Old's.

Served in our Creative Café at 3:15 pm for our Preschool Classrooms.

Served in our Creative Café at 3:30 pm for our Pre-K Scholars.

*Infants not yet on table food will be fed according to their schedule and fed in Babyland.*

*Waddlers will be served the selected snack in their classroom.*

For your convenience, GraceAChild provides well-balanced meals to your child at no additional cost. Children will be served milk with lunch each day; milk, juice, or water will be served with breakfast and afternoon snacks.

Parents can opt to pack their child's lunchbox. **Please note all lunchboxes must be clearly labeled with your child's name and the current date...**this is a requirement of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and it is imperative to comply with this regulation. The same rules apply to any milk or juice containers brought in for your child. **Please clearly label with your child's name and the date that Milk Carton was opened.**

We have a four-week rotating menu posted in our kitchen and at the director's station. If our menu has to change due to food delivery issues, for example, we will post that change on your child's daily report.

**PLEASE LET YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER AND THE ACADEMY DIRECTOR KNOW IF YOUR CHILD HAS AN ALLERGY or ANY SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS.**

In that case, permission to post their Allergy or Special Dietary need will be required so it can be posted in ALL Classrooms, in the Creative Café, and in the Kitchen for our Cook.

Parents are encouraged to bring special treats on special occasions such as picnics, birthdays, or other social events. **PLEASE BE RESPECTFUL OF CLASSROOM ALLERGIES --- ASK YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER DIRECTLY SINCE SHE HAS AN ALLERGY ALERT POSTED, AND CHECK THE LABELS OF PURCHASED PRODUCTS SINCE WE ARE A PEANUT-FREE FACILITY.**



**A Sample of Meal Routines our Life Shapers practice daily:**

- All children will use the bathroom and wash their hands thoroughly.
- Tables will be cleaned and sanitized prior to mealtime.
- When possible, children may help with setting the tables and preparing for mealtimes.
- Children will lead the mealtime prayer with “God is great, God is good, let us thank Him for our food. Amen”
- When possible, children will serve themselves Family Style by passing the food dishes and scooping appropriate amounts onto their plates.
- Children will be encouraged to try new foods, but we do not force them to clean the plate.
- Children will stay seated and practice quiet conversation with polite manners and interacting.
- Teachers will talk and teach about foods by discussing things such as origin, culture, region, preparation, etc.
- We will always give seconds when available.
- We do encourage children to clean up after themselves.
- We will always visit the bathroom afterward – Clean hands and FACES always!

**Parent-Teacher Communication**

**Conferences**

Every six months, Grace a Child Academy will facilitate a parent-teacher conference. Typically, these are held in November and again in May. In this meeting, the Lead Life Shaper will inform the parent of social and academic growth as well as behavior, class time participation, and transition to and from classrooms and enrichment centers.

Evaluation forms will be provided to keep an official record for Grace a Child, and a copy may be given to the family.



Brightwheel allows our Academy to go paperless with daily reports, portfolios (including photos/videos), and communications. You can get the FREE Brightwheel App in both Google Play and App Store. **Once enrolled, please check your email for your invitation to Brightwheel! Be sure to check your junk mail.**

With your Brightwheel account, you will be able to:

	Brightwheel	
<b>View updated information in real-time (Live)</b>	√	
<b>Send messages to teachers / receive messages</b>	√	
<b>Upload documents</b>	√	
<b>Manage Your Account Settings</b>	√	
<b>Pay your child’s tuition – update payments</b>	√	
<b>Update you on your child’s information</b>	√	



**IF YOUR CHILD CAN NOT BE PHOTOGRAPHED OR VIDEOTAPED, PLEASE BE SURE TO NOTIFY THE ACADEMY DIRECTOR AND YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER.**

Be sure to like us on Facebook! And feel free to Like and Share so your family and friends can see all the fun and exciting things happening at Grace a Child!



Log on to the Avigilon System and watch your child grow, learn, and have fun! Share with grandparents who live out of town!

Know your child is safe and secure inside our Academy because we have invested over \$80,000 in our High-Tech Security Door Systems and HD Video Cameras.

Upon enrollment, you will receive an email to set up your account with Avigilon, you will have 24 hours to complete this. Once set up, you can download the mobile app ACC MOBILE 3 and log on to view your child.

If you have any issues installing the program, please call the Academy during operating hours, or bring your phone in at pick up, and we will have our IT Specialist help you troubleshoot and determine the issues, hopefully helping you resolve it and get you all set up.

*"Avigilon's High-Definition Stream Management (HDSM™) technology preserves complete image integrity through visually lossless compression, while intelligently managing bandwidth and storage. When you couple it with the broadest range of megapixel cameras in the industry, you get superior image quality and maximum coverage"*

## **Our Curriculum**



- **The WEE Learn** curriculum not only offers cognitive challenges to the young children exposed to their framework but also incorporates individual and age-appropriate practices.
- **The WEE Learn** curriculum is solidified on its base of concrete experience and focus on relationships, communication, and exploration of the environment. It is evidenced that the curriculum is thoughtfully planned, comprehensive, cohesive, and integrated across each domain.
- **The WEE Learn** curriculum provides systematic learning opportunities in language and early literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, physical development, and personal and social development. The curriculum is relevant to children's everyday experiences and highlights the importance of the family's role in linking a child's early experiences to the world around them. *(Research foundation - Wee Learn)*



# The Transition Process

There is a great deal of research indicating that a child's success in school can be linked, at least in part, to effective transition practices and activities. Children's early experiences lay the foundation for enjoying school and performing well.

What we do as parents and professional educators of young children can make a tremendous difference in how these future adults perceive school experiences and life-long learning.

Listed below are some guidelines implemented in successful transitions and examples of how Grace a Child has adopted these guidelines into our Transition Process.

- 1. *Effective transitions establish a positive relationship between the children, parents, and educators.*** A parent conference will be scheduled. We feel it is important for you to meet with your new child's teacher, visit the classroom and be able to answer any questions they may have.
- 2. *Effective transition programs facilitate each child's development as a capable learner.*** We recognize the growth, development, and learning that has occurred up to this point. As a result of daily observations and recent evaluations, you might feel that your child is more than capable of the next step. You should meet with the new teacher so that important information and learning preferences can be exchanged.
- 3. *Transition Programs can be of indeterminate length, depending on a particular child or parent's needs.*** We recognize that this will be a transition time **for all involved.** Your child will transition at their own pace. Please remember that we have an open-door policy, and parents are invited to come and observe at any time or view the transition process utilizing the Avigilon System.
- 4. *Effective transition programs are well-planned and effectively evaluated.*** Our transition program has been developed with detailed planning and contains clearly defined objectives for a child's development and learning. A few components of the program include observations, evaluations, planning meetings amongst teachers, meeting(s) with family, visiting, and graduation.
- 5. *Effective transition programs are flexible and responsive.*** We strive to operate in a climate of trust, where the perspectives of all participants are respected so that open communication can take place. Please do not ever hesitate to address any concerns or to find out information if the need arises.
- 6. *Effective transition programs rely on reciprocal communication amongst participants.*** Parents, as well as educators, know a great deal about the children in their care. Children also know a lot about themselves, how they learn, and how they respond in certain situations. When the educational and emotional needs of our children are uppermost in the minds of all parties involved, success is attainable.

Let us assure you that we recognize that dispositions, values, feelings, attitudes, and understandings are equally as important as skills and knowledge. We also recognize that **children are an active part of the transition process** and not merely recipients. Therefore, above all else, we will always take our cue from the child throughout the entire process. **Remember, our goal is to make the child's transition as smooth and positive as possible.**





## **TRANSITION PROCEDURES**

- *Observation and Evaluation completed by the Lead Teacher*
- *Evaluation reviewed by Academy Director*
- *Parent Evaluation Completed*
- *Teacher's Exchange Meeting Scheduled*
- *Portfolio/Previous Evaluations Shared*
- *Parent/Teacher Conference Scheduled*
- *Child begins visiting the new classroom*
- *Director changes Parent's Avigilon Camera Access to view the new classroom.*
- *Child's cubby and belongings moved; Life Cubby updated, and child "moved"*
- *Transition is complete*
- *Graduation! Congratulations!*

At Gracechild Academy, we use a Transition Checklist that documents all of the steps mentioned above and is filed in your Child's folder once the transition process is complete. See your Academy Director if you would like a copy of our transition checklist.

### **What to bring from home...?**

#### **Children under two years of age:**

- Infants need their favorite baby food, formula, or breast milk
- Any supplemental food items you'd like them to have for breakfast and/or snack
- Infants need 2 Crib Sheets and their favorite blanket
- Toddlers and Two's need a sheet for their nap cot and their favorite blanket
- Disposable diapers, pull-ups and two changes of clothing
- When Two's are potty training, please be sure to bring extra clothing
- Please label EACH ITEM with your child's full name
- Food Items must be clearly labeled with their name and date

Things to remember:

- *Infants must be at least six weeks old in order to enroll.*
- *Children under 16 months are on their own schedule in regard to feeding and sleeping.*
- *Once your child is ready to want to feed themselves, we will encourage them to do so.*
- *Refer to your child's individual Daily Schedule for specifics regarding Show n' Share Day.*

#### **Preschool Children, ages 3-5 years old:**

- A box of tissues and disposable wipes
- At least one complete change of clothing in a Ziploc bag, with their name written on it
- Their favorite snuggle toy for nap time
- Please label EACH ITEM with your child's full name



# The Toddler Years (16mos-36mos)

## **Potty Training:**

- Once your child is showing signs of readiness, we will be happy to work with you on potty training; your child’s teacher knows what indicators to look for and will discuss this with you.
- Potty training requires consistency and patience. It should be a positive experience with lots of encouragement. You will be asked to provide underwear and several additional changes of clothing during this training period.
- Regular and constant communication will be maintained, especially during this time, as parents and teachers both need support.

## **Biting:**

Biting is a normal phase of child development, occurring typically between the ages of 13-30 months. It is a result of a child’s inability to communicate effectively. Many young children are not very verbal and may become easily frustrated. A child may bite when a toy is taken from them or they are faced with a new situation.

*When biting does occur:*

- the child receiving the bite will be comforted, and the bite will be thoroughly cleaned with soap and water; if the bite is severe, ice may be applied to relieve the pain and swelling.
- the biting child is removed from the situation or redirected to appropriate activities.
- the parent is notified, and an Incident Report is completed to document the biting.
- an Accident Report is written for the child who was a bit in order to notify the parents.
- the teacher will review the individual situation in an attempt to minimize future and repetitive frustrations for the child.
- the child who bit will be closely supervised, and the parents may be asked to come in for a conference to discuss ways we can work together to redirect this behavior.
- the identity of all children involved will always be kept confidential.
- should a child’s biting behavior become excessive, such that another child’s safety is a concern, the center reserves the right to suspend and/or dismiss the child from care

Our Life Shapers have received extensive training on dealing with Biting and realize it is an unfortunate but age-appropriate phase in a child’s development that will pass. Encouragement, redirection, support, and close supervision usually help to resolve the issue quickly.

## **Teacher-to-Child Ratio**

<b>Infants and Waddlers</b>	<b>(6 weeks-16mos.)</b>	<b>One Life Shaper cares for 4 children</b>
<b>Toddlers</b>	<b>(16mos.-24mos.)</b>	<b>One Life Shaper cares for 5 children</b>
<b>Two Years Old</b>	<b>(24mos.-36mos.)</b>	<b>One Life Shaper cares for 8 children</b>
<b>Preschool &amp; Pre-K</b>	<b>(3yrs. – 5 yrs. old)</b>	<b>One Life Shaper cares for 10 children</b>

## **Interns and Volunteers**



Gracechild Academy welcomes intern students and volunteers from local Colleges, Community Groups, and churches. An Intern position is considered a privilege and should be regarded as a sacred trust.

An Intern or Volunteer is a non-paid individual, who is directly supervised by Leadership, and assists with daily duties as deemed necessary.

**Requirements:**

- Willingness to work in a professional environment
- Ability to work under supervision and receive feedback
- Must be of honest and moral character
- Respects the Confidentiality Agreement
- Understand the Child Abuse and Neglect Policy
- Exhibits professional and appropriate communication
- Demonstrates a positive attitude and a willing heart to serve
- Must show proof of a negative Tb Test conducted within the last 6 months
- Completes a Criminal Background and Child Protective Services Check
- Completes and signs a Sworn Disclosure Statement

## **Yearly Prevention Procedures**

Staff Meetings and Training will be held each year to review all of the accident/incident reports generated within the past year. In this meeting, we will cover prevention procedures for each type of accident/incident pertaining to each classroom/report.

### **Playground/Outdoor Play & Safety Plan**

We constantly remind our Life Shapers of the importance of constantly supervising outdoor activities by actively roaming the playground and participating in children's activities. This policy, when followed, helps to eliminate --and hopefully-- prevent accidents from occurring. Please understand...your child's health and safety are our main priority.

Preventing Injuries at Work Training will also be held to make certain that all employees understand Best Practices to limit injury to themselves or others, understand OSHA safety standards and implement safe practices in the workplace.

## **Outdoor Play/ Weather Policy**

Outdoor play is a very important part of our Curriculum. children will play outside, weather permitting, in reasonable conditions. Please make sure your child has the appropriate clothing so that they will be able to participate in the Outdoor Classroom portion of their Curriculum. Our staff uses good judgment in determining if the weather conditions allow for outdoor activities or if the time outdoors needs to be shortened.

Gracechild prides itself on being a year-round program for the convenience of our families. Unfortunately, though, if the weather makes driving conditions unsafe or hazardous, we will post closings, delayed openings, or early releases on our Facebook page. We will also make every attempt to contact you via Brightwheel and/or email. Please make sure your contact information is always current and up to date.



## Withdrawing Enrollment from GAC Academy

- ❖ If you decide you no longer need the ministry's services, please note that we require a 4-week written notice prior to withdrawing your child.
- ❖ If you choose to withdraw without a 4-week notice, your account will be charged for the 4-week notice regardless. Disenrollment will be processed after receiving the notification in writing. A confirmation may be requested confirming your child's last day at GAC Academy.
- ❖ If it becomes necessary for us to terminate your child's care, we will make every effort to extend the same courtesy unless circumstances prevent us from doing so.
- ❖ Dis-enrollments can result from non-payment, excessive biting, aggressive behavior that does not improve, behavior that endangers your child or other children in our care, use of vulgar language, parental aggressiveness, any rudeness, disrespect, and/or vulgar language towards any of our Academy staff.

### **DISCLOSURE:**

Grace-A-Child USA Academy reserves the right to make changes to any policy, procedure, tuition rates, enrollment forms, or other processes and information disclosed in this parent handbook without prior notice. We reserve this right to maintain licensing compliance, stability, and integrity of our Academy and for the safety and security of the children and families in our programs and for the staff that our company employs. Throughout the year, prior to our next official revision/reprinting of this Parent Handbook, addendums and changes may be needed. At that point, a type of written or verbal addendum will be presented to you. However, at any point, should you need additional information, clarification or better understanding of any policy or procedure, do not hesitate to ask your Academy Director.



This page has been intentionally left blank so you can write down any **QUESTIONS AND/OR NOTES** you may have.