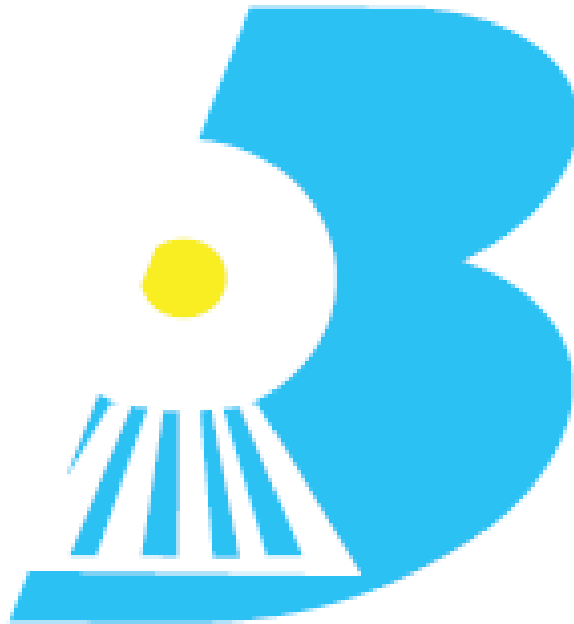


# BERLIN EDUCATION STATION

PARENT HANDBOOK

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**Berlin**  
education station

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“It is the policy of the State of Maryland that all public and publicly funded schools and school programs operate in compliance with:  
(1) Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964; and  
(2) Title 26, Subtitle 7 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code, which states that public and publicly funded schools and programs may not:

- i. Discriminate against a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability;
- ii. Refuse enrollment of a prospective student, expel a current student, or withhold privileges from a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student because of an individual’s race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability; or
- iii. Discipline, invoke a penalty against, or take any other retaliatory action against a student or parent or guardian of a student who files a complaint alleging that the program or school discriminated against the student, regardless of the outcome of the complaint.”

## MISSION & PHILOSOPHY

Our goal at Berlin Education Station is to provide a warm, nurturing, safe, and loving environment where self-concepts are enhanced, independence encouraged, and individuality is respected. All students, families and staff members have the right to an education and equal access to the benefits, burdens and responsibilities of our society regardless of race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or other aspects of what we look like or where we come from. Our families play an important role in education as a child's first teacher. Daily interaction with the loving, caring people who work at Berlin Education Station can positively influence your child's future.

The Center's program is designed to include both planned and spontaneous age-appropriate activities in response to children's interests. Experiences with music, movement, art, science, and language building are incorporated into daily lesson plans. Regularly scheduled snacks, meals, rest time, indoor and outdoor play promote good physical health, comfort, and a general overall positive sense of self. We strive to meet the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth of each individual child in a caring and supportive atmosphere.

## PROGRAM INFORMATION

Berlin Activities Depot started out in 2002 as Twisters Gymnastics & Carmella's Kids Child Care. Through the years, this program has grown to many times its original size and has moved into larger buildings to accommodate the families we serve. Along with the great Ocean Pines/Berlin area, we have grown a lot over the past 20 years and are now able to offer multiple programs to serve families in many ways.

We are proud to offer MSDE approved childcare, school age care and summer camp programs, recreational and competitive gymnastics programs to the youth of the greater Berlin area. We are expanding our programs in the coming year to offer more opportunities for youth and families to participate in recreational activities together at our facility.

We value parents and families as partners in giving all children in our care the very best early care and education possible. We strive to create positive relationships with all children and families we serve.

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Berlin Education Station provides full and part time educational programs to children ages 6 weeks through 15 years. We have infant/toddler care, early preschool, MSDE certified Pre-K classes for children ages 3-4, and school age programs. We have before/after care as well as full day summer camp for our school ages children (ages 5-15).

Our Infant, Toddler, Twos, and Preschool I & II programs use the Investigator Club Curriculum, which is an MSDE approved curricula for these age groups. Our Pre-K programs use the MD State Children Study Their World Curriculum. All children will be assessed throughout the school year using MSDE approved assessment tools. All Pre-K children will be assessed through the Early Learning Assessment (ELA), which is used by Worcester County Public Schools. All children will be screened using the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) as directed throughout the year.

BES does serve children with diagnosed special needs, in accordance with doctor recommendations. We will work with therapists and local agencies to provide the best care we can, within our state mandated staff: child ratios. If a child has an IEP/IFSP, BES requires a copy of the document to be sure that we are doing all we can to help each child reach their developmental potential and to make sure that we are able to meet all children's needs within our staff: child ratios.

Children will engage in gross motor play for at least 30 minutes each morning & afternoon. Our playgrounds are separated by age groups (infants/preschool/school age). If we cannot go outside, we will take the preschool and school aged children to the gym for age- appropriate gross motor play.

## GENERAL POLICIES

### Enrollment Process

There is a non-refundable \$75 registration fee due along with the registration form to enroll your child. If the class is full, this fee will secure your place on the waiting list. You will be contacted when a spot becomes available for your child. At that time, you will pay the enrollment confirmation fee - equal to one week's tuition - to secure the spot. All required paperwork must be completed by parents and physicians and returned to the office to be processed a week prior to your child's start date. Children may not come to the center if all required paperwork is not completed. Tuition will be charged weekly as of the enrollment date on the enrollment agreement, regardless of attendance that week.

### Tuition

Your tuition payment is the amount agreed upon and stated in your Enrollment Agreement, this amount varies on age, program and times needed by each individual family and is updated as needed when programming changes during the year. Tuition is charged for the classroom in which your child is enrolled and is based on the staff to child ratio of that classroom. Children will be transitioned into new classrooms as they are developmentally ready to move and when there is room for them to move. BES admin staff will make all classroom decisions in consultation with parents.

All families are required to have a credit card (fees apply) or an ACH (no fee) account on file with ProCare. This does not have to be your regular form of payment however, if payment isn't made by another method by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, your "on file" account will be charged for the following week's tuition. All payments must be made through ProCare.

All tuition payments must be made prior to going on vacation, or a holiday or the card on file will be charged. You will be responsible for paying your past due balance, your late fees, and the following weeks' tuition regardless of attendance. Tuition is NOT adjusted for vacations, illness, or any other family reason. Children may not attend on Monday morning if there is an unpaid balance due.

If your balance is not paid 1 month from the last day payment was made, your account will be surrendered to small claims court in which you are also responsible for paying all related costs.

Declined cards incur a \$35.00 decline fee immediately upon decline. A \$15.00 Late fee per day will be imposed for payments received after 5 p.m. Friday.

### Drop off & Pick Up

Parents are required to sign their child in and out each day on the ProCare app. Ipads are located at the entrances if needed. Children will be walked to their classrooms each morning. Parents will proceed to the classrooms for pick up after signing children out. Pre-K class drop off/pick up may differ and will be sent to parents directly.

We ask that parents are not in the building for more than 15 minutes total for drop off/pick up. We have a no cell phone policy for parents that are entering the center to drop off or pick up their children. This is a safety concern for obvious reasons that talking on a cell phone can be very distracting. Pick up and drop off is a time when attention should be focused on transitioning your child/children safely to and from the center.

Children must be transported according to MD State Motor Vehicle Laws. There are no exceptions to this. For the wellbeing of your child BES staff will not allow a child to be driven in a vehicle without being in a car seat or proper restraint system for their age. We are mandated reporters and therefore, we will report any violation to the local authorities as well as Child Protective Services.

### Late Pick-Up

BES closes each night at 6 pm. If children are left here beyond 6 pm, your account will be charged \$5/child/minute. The late policy is in effect as of 5:30pm for any children not enrolled in extended PM care. The late policy is in effect as of 3:30pm for any PreK children not enrolled in wrap around care. This late pick up fee will be charged to your account. Repeated lateness will result in termination of your child's enrollment. Please note Summer Camp hours of operation may differ. Please refer to your camp enrollment forms for details.

### Holiday Closings

BES follows the Worcester County school calendar with regard to the following holidays:

Labor Day	Martin Luther King Day
President's Day	Easter Holiday (Friday & Monday)
Memorial Day	Thanksgiving—(Thursday & Friday)
Juneteenth	

Christmas/New Year's - TBD each year

Tuition is NOT adjusted when we are closed due to a holiday.

### Professional Development Days

Berlin Education Station strives to provide opportunities for ongoing professional development for our staff. To this end, we will close the learning center to children in order to provide staff training and development to our staff. These dates will be posted in the yearly calendar distributed in August. Any additions/changes to these dates will be announced at least one month in advance.

### Weather Closings

BES will post any weather-related delays, early closings, or school closures on WBOC as well as notify families through the ProCare app. School age children will need to sign up for care on these days; care is based upon availability of staff.

### Nap/Rest Time

Our full day preschool programs do include time in the schedule for rest time. We provide a cot and cot sheet. A small blanket for your child may be supplied, blanket should be easily stored in their backpack. Children are not

permitted to bring any bulky blankets, sleep sacks, pillows etc. However, if your child has a strong attachment to something small & soft, you may bring it if it fits in their bookbag. **All items must be able to fit inside the bookbag.** These items must be labeled and taken home weekly to wash. Children are not required to sleep but are required to remain on their cots quietly during this rest time.

### Clothing

Each child must have a complete set of weather appropriate clothes in their bag (including socks & underwear) to be used in case of spills or accidents. All clothing should be labeled and placed in a Ziploc bag. If there is a spill or accident and your child has no extra clothes, someone will be called to either pick them up or bring us clothes.

Children in our programs will learn through play and exploration. This can sometimes be messy! Please make sure children are dressed for play. No open toed or open backed shoes are permitted. Closed toed shoes are allowed, but sneakers are encouraged, as they are safer for outdoor play.

### Classroom Celebrations

Please discuss in advance if you would like to bring in any special treats for a birthday or other special occasion. We allow popsicles and/or fruit snacks to be brought in. Please include all children in the class in any activities, including invitations to an off-site party.

### Personal Belongings/Toys from Home

To avoid damage or loss of personal items, children are not permitted to bring in toys from home unless it is for "show & tell" or another special event planned for the class. Please make sure all toys are appropriate for the child's age group.

Personal electronic devices (i.e., Nintendo DS, iPods, cell phones, etc.) are not permitted at BES, unless specifically noted by the School Age teachers. Any electronics and/or games brought to the center are the responsibility of the child. BES assumes no responsibility for lost or broken devices.

### Screen Time Policy

BES, in accordance with MSDE recommendations, limits screen time for all children during their time here. Children ages 2 & younger will have no regularly scheduled screen time in their daily schedule. Preschool children (ages 3-5) and school aged children (ages 5-12) will have use of computers for direct learning only for no more than 30 minutes per week. There is no passive screen time where children are watching videos.

### Babysitting

Berlin Education Station employees are permitted to babysit for families provided that a waiver is signed by both the family and the staff member.

This waiver clearly states the guidelines under which staff can babysit and the responsibilities of both the staff and family members. Waivers are available in the office.

### Withdrawal

In the event you depart from the center, a written full four-week notice must be given in writing to the Center Director. **Verbal notices are not accepted.** Tuition and all applicable contracted fees will apply for all weeks (attended or unattended). Payment parameters are the same.

### Termination of Enrollment

BES reserves the right to terminate enrollment of a child(ren) at any time. This decision will be made by the Director and would be based on maintaining a safe, positive learning environment for all children and staff. Termination could be a result of any of the following:

- Non-payment of tuition
- Continued violation of policies
- Abuse of other children, staff, or property at Berlin Activities Depot
- Inability to meet a child's needs within our program

## **MEALS & SNACKS**

BES participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) which is a federally granted\* program. This program offers partial reimbursement for all meals and snacks served which meet the strict guidelines for nutritional value. We serve breakfast, lunch, and snack to all children enrolled.

All meals and snacks are prepared on site by our staff who are trained in all CACFP regulations and ServSafe guidelines. Menus are prepared weekly and posted on the parent board, as well as emailed out to families. We serve fruit and vegetables each day for breakfast and lunch. We have limited the use of processed foods and sodium in our meals. Milk is served daily with breakfast and lunch, and snack 1-2 times per week. Children ages 1-2 years will drink whole milk and those children 3 and older will drink skim milk. 100% fruit juice is served no more than 1-2 times per week for snack.

Allergies and medically necessary dietary restrictions are accommodated in our menu planning process, provided we have a note from a doctor with specific instructions. **Outside food and drink is not permitted.**

Infants are offered house formula (parents are permitted to bring in breastmilk or other formula as well with a signed waiver), cereal, and baby foods until children are ready to eat the food on our menus.

\*In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, BES does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.



## HEALTH & SAFETY

### Required Health Paperwork

Upon enrollment, parents are responsible for obtaining and completing all required forms. This includes all health forms from the doctor's office. Within 30 days of start date, all children must have had their blood lead test, as required by Office of Child Care regulations. Children must be up to date on all immunizations or have a delayed schedule in writing from the doctor's office.

### Emergency Contact Information

Each child must have an updated Emergency Contact Form on file with the office. This form must contain all personal contact information, as well as at least two people to be contacted in an emergency. All information on this form will be updated annually, or as changes in information occur.

Persons listed on the form are able to pick up your child when needed. If the teacher does not recognize the pick-up person, they will be asked to show photo ID to match up with the Emergency Contact Form. In the event that you need someone who is not listed on your Emergency Contact Form to pick up, you must notify BES in advance. Staff members will not release a child to someone not on the list without prior approval. Children will not be released to anyone under the age of 16, with or without permission.

### Illness Policy

Berlin Education Station strives to maintain a safe & healthy environment for our children and staff. We understand the demands of working parents, but our responsibility is to all children and staff in our building. Per MSDE state regulations, children may not come to BES if they have any of these:

- Temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher within the past 24 hours—**WITHOUT MEDICATION**
- Contagious viral/bacterial infections — pink eye, skin rashes, strep throat, etc. Children with pink eye must have one dose of medicine administered before they can attend.
- Diarrhea— liquid or watery stool more than 2 times within one hour or more than 3 times in the past 24 hours
- Vomiting — must be vomit free for 24 hours
- Severe cough or cold symptoms—this includes continual nasal discharge & sore throat
- Severe diaper rash—to include raised bumps and broken skin

A child who becomes ill during the day will be removed from the classroom whenever possible. Parents will be notified immediately, and the child must be picked up within ONE HOUR. Child **cannot** return to BES the following day as they must be symptom free for 24 hours without medication.

### Accidents & Injuries

If a minor injury happens during the course of our daily activities, the witnessing teacher will complete an injury report on the ProCare App and ask for parent acknowledgement. If a more serious injury occurs, the parent will be notified immediately to discuss further treatment.

In the case of an emergency, 911 will be contacted immediately. The parent will also receive a phone call detailing the accident. If necessary, the child will be transported to AGH for treatment. The waiver for emergency treatment is located on the Emergency Contact form, which is kept in the office.

### Prescription Medication Policy

If a child requires prescription medicine during the day, the parent must complete a Medication Administration Form, located in the office. This form must contain all required information (name of medication, dosage, times to be administered, expiration date, and doctor's name) and must be signed before any medication will be given. All medication must be in its original container with the prescription label clearly visible. Medication must be handed directly to a staff member and will be stored out of children's reach. No child is to have their medicine in their bag at any time.

### Over-The-Counter Medication Policy

OTC medication must also be in its original container and must be labeled with child's name on it. Dosage must be clearly visible on the label. A Medication Administration Form signed by a physician is required for OTC medication as well.

- Topical Medications—i.e.: diaper cream, chap stick, orajel, etc.—can be administered with a written permission form signed by the parent for preventative use only. Once a rash is present, a doctor's note is required.

### Sunscreen Policy

BES will provide a center sunscreen that we will use with parent permission. You can bring in your own for us to use if it is labeled. A permission form is required each year to apply sunscreen. During spring/summer months, children should arrive to the center with sunscreen applied for morning play. We will reapply in the afternoon.

### Emergency Preparedness

BES conducts fire drills monthly in accordance with OCC guidelines. This helps the children to be familiar with our evacuation procedures to minimize the stress if there were an actual emergency. In the event that we need to close or evacuate the building, parents will be notified as soon as possible. Our immediate emergency shelter is Croppers Auto Body. Parents

will be notified if we have evacuated and will need to proceed to Croppers to pick up their children.

### Communicable Diseases

Parents are required to notify BES within 24 hours if a child or family member is diagnosed with a communicable disease. All parents will be informed if a communicable disease is reported in the building. Examples of such illnesses are, but not limited to:

- Animal bites/Rabies
- Lyme Disease
- Ringworm
- Tuberculosis
- Whooping Cough
- Salmonellosis
- Meningitis
- COVID 19
- RSV

Outbreaks of any contagious disease must be reported to the Worcester County Health Department. BES will follow their guidance and recommendations on when children can return to care. These guidelines may change at any time and BES will consult the health department for any updates or current mandates.

### Reporting Child Abuse

Berlin Education Station Employees are required by law to report any suspected abuse or neglect, serious injuries, or any incidents which pose a threat to the child's wellbeing to the Department of Social Services. We are legally required to comply with all state regulations, which does not always include notifying parents of the report. If a social worker arrives at BES to interview a child, we are legally required to allow this interview to occur. We will have a staff member stay with the child throughout the interview if permitted by the social worker. Please contact the Director if you have any questions or would like further information on mandated reporting.

## **POSITIVE DISCIPLINE**

### Discipline Guidelines

Berlin Education Station believes that an important part of every child is the need for and understanding of acceptable behavior. Children learn positive behavior and self-control through education and modeling of the adults in their lives. BES staff strive to model positive interactions for all children in our care. We pledge to use positive body language in our daily interactions to encourage a positive relationship between staff and children. We pledge to use positive guidance in all that we do to facilitate positive interactions. BES staff will never use physical restraint, withholding of food or drink, humiliation, or isolation as discipline tactics.

To achieve this end, all staff members will:

- Set simple & reasonable rules for all children
- Redirect inappropriate behavior and offer children choices for appropriate behavior
- Use praise and positive reinforcement when appropriate behavior is seen
- Employ age-appropriate discipline strategy; “use your words” to handle situations
- Use a “cozy corner” to separate the child from the activity or group and allow them time to calm down. The teacher will then talk to the child about the undesired behavior and offer the child several behavior choices that will allow them to rejoin the group.
- Refer a child to the office for repeated acts of inappropriate behavior, or any behavior that hurts another child/staff member
- Encourage the positive behavior of all children whenever possible
- Model appropriate behavior when interacting with the children.

#### Behavior Modification

- If inappropriate behavior patterns continue, the following steps will be taken:
- Observe & record behavior on the ProCare app
- Meet with parents & Director to devise a strategy to deal with the undesired behavior
- Utilize the Worcester County Infants & Toddlers and Child Find programs to assist us with specific behaviors or address certain developmental concerns.

Once these steps have been taken, and the behavior has not improved, it may be necessary to remove the child from the center for a brief period of time to assess the best resolution to the problem. The Director will make all decisions as to when a child may return to care. BES reserves the right to remove a child from our childcare setting if at any time their behavior puts other children, staff, or volunteers at risk for injury or danger. This decision will be made by the Director and is final.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

### Parent Engagement

We also welcome any enrichment that you may be able to provide to our center. Here are a few ways to become involved:

- Home Connections Family Projects
- Attend our holiday events
- Chaperone a field trip
- Raising A Reader Program
- Volunteer to be a part of our accreditation committee

### Parent Conferences

Parent conferences will be scheduled at least twice during the academic year to give parents & teachers the opportunity to meet and discuss their children's progress. Sign-up sheets will be available for parents to choose a time that works for them. If an in-person conference is not requested, written developmental assessment information will be provided to parents at this time.

### Parent Grievance Policy

Any parent with a concern or grievance should contact the Director. Once contacted, the Director will contact the parent either via email, by phone, or in person to discuss the grievance within 3 days. If meeting in person, parents may be supported by a friend, family member or a representative of a support organization.

The Director will then meet with the teacher (if relevant) to discuss the grievance and recommend any necessary action. The Director will advise the parent and all concerned parties of the recommendations within 5 working days from the receipt of the statement of grievance. If the issue is not resolved, the Director may re-direct the parent to an appropriate agency (if relevant). Formal procedures will be documented throughout, and confidentiality always maintained. Teachers should direct and refer parents to school policies wherever necessary to support any decisions or recommendations.

## **PROGRAM QUALITY**

According to MSDE: Children benefit from accreditation because their learning environments are exciting, positive, and growth oriented. Parents of young children benefit from this process because their children are enrolled in learning environments that reflect the research and best practices of the field.

Berlin Education Station is licensed and accredited through the Maryland Department of Education. Accreditation is re-evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that that our program continues to provide an excellent environment that promotes children's health and education.

### Maryland Excels

Maryland EXCELS stands for (**EX**cellence **C**ounts in **E**arly **L**earning and **S**chool-Age Care). It is a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. Childcare programs are evaluated and rated at a level from 1\* to 5\*. BES is proud to be among a very few centers that are rated at a Level 5\* in the Excels System and have been for many years. We work hard each year to maintain our level and thank families for their cooperation.

## ASSESSMENT & SCREENING

### Assessment

In accordance with MSDE and recommendations from the National Association of Young Children (NAEYC), BES believes that assessments are necessary in order to continue to provide an environment in which all children can learn and grow to their fullest potential.

BES uses assessments recommended by the Maryland State Department of Education. These include a combination of assessments from The Investigator Club Curriculum® and the MD State Early Learning Assessment portal. All assessment information will be communicated with parents through our ProCare app and in person during conferences. Parents are encouraged bring any academic or developmental concerns to the attention of staff at any time and we will address any concerns.

### Developmental Screening

Maryland State Department of Education regulations mandate that beginning July 1, 2016, all children up to kindergarten entry attending regulated care and early childhood educational programs will need to have a developmental screening conducted. Screening tools must be approved by MSDE.

Developmental screening is used to celebrate a child's achievement as well as refer them for support and services when there is an area of concern. Developmental screenings, along with regular physical exams, hearing tests and vision tests, are important ways to monitor a child's growth and development. A child's development can be measured by how a child learns, speaks, moves, behaves, and relates. Results from developmental screenings indicate which children would benefit from a full evaluation and assessment.

BES uses the ASQ-3 (Ages and Stages Questionnaires) screening tool. Upon completion of the screening, we will meet with you to discuss the findings and whether a referral to another agency for further evaluation is necessary.

Children aged birth-36 months will be required to have two screenings per year. Children aged 37 months-kindergarten entry will be required to have one screening per year.

## EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

### Preschool Field Trips

Learning doesn't only happen in the classroom, and we will periodically throughout the year schedule field trips to local attractions to enhance our learning experience. Different classes attend certain field trips, so each one will vary. We travel either by chartered school bus or our BES vans to all field trips. Van trips will require the use of approved car seats - if we do not have enough on site, parents may be asked to provide one for use. Lunch options are specific to each field trip.

Parents will be notified of all trips at least two weeks ahead of time. Depending on the field trip and the classes attending, it is generally not possible to arrange childcare here for children who do not attend the field trip. The Director will make the final decision for each field trip as to whether or not alternate care is available.

### School Pictures

School pictures are taken two times during the school year. Picture days are optional, there is no sitting fee. You only pay for the pictures you want to purchase. We do take class pictures in the spring every year.

### Scholastic Book Fair

We host a book fair through Scholastic twice a year. This fair is an opportunity for children to choose new books to read both at home and in the classroom. Whenever possible, we will host a family event in coordination with the Book Fair. Money raised from this fundraiser is used to update classroom furniture and materials.

### Onsite Visitors

Periodically throughout the year, BES will host special visitors to come and share their talents with us. These events will be advertised ahead of time and any costs associated with them will be communicated to parents in advance. Staff will remain with children during any on site activities.

## **PARENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand all policies as outlined in this handbook. I agree to abide by all policies and regulations as stated in this handbook. I will contact the Director with any questions.

Parent Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_