



Parent Handbook
2023/24

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PRESCHOOL CALENDAR 2023/2024

The following days, HCA will be closed:

September 7	First Day of School
October 9	Columbus Day
November 10	Veterans Day
November 22-24	Thanksgiving Break
December 22-January 2	Winter Break
January 15	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February 16-19	President's Day
March 14-15	Superintendent's Day
March 29-April 5	Spring Recess
May 24-27	Memorial Day Recess
June 19	Juneteenth
June 26	Last Day of School (tentatively)

Make-up days: February 16, May 24, April 5

INTRODUCTION

HCA, Helping Celebrate Abilities, has been providing services to the disabled population since 1947. What began as a small preschool for special needs children has grown into a much larger organization serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities of all ages. These programs include 15 residential group homes, 10 integrated preschool classrooms as well as respite, habilitation, counseling, employment, and self-directed services. HCA is a NYS Cerebral Palsy Affiliate as well as a United Way Member Agency.

Mission Statement

Develop and implement individualized programs designed to celebrate each individual's physical, social, intellectual, and emotional abilities and foster each individual's integration with our community.

Vision Statements

Provide integration opportunities for people with disabilities in a dignified respectful manner. Provide an environment where activities, services and supports are based on the dreams interests, preferences, strengths and capabilities of the individual

Maintain current programs and supports and develop new ones that allow individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to remain in the community

HCA Values Statements

We are committed to an environment of **collaboration** with the people we support, our employees, and our community.

We are committed to treating all people with **compassion and understanding** in applying the platinum rule of treating all people as they wish to be treated.

We are committed to an atmosphere of **acceptance and inclusion** of all people to harness the power in our diversity.

We are committed to fostering and valuing **creativity and flexibility**.

We are committed to act with **integrity** to each other and to those that we support.

PRESCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Education Director: Julie Henry, MEd. in Administration and Supervision of Special Education Programs 607-798-7117 ext309 j.henry@hcaserves.com

Assistant Education Director: Danielle Dibble, MEd in Early Childhood Education. 607-798-7117 ext 310 d.dibble@hcaserves.com

Clinical Director: Jessie Cornell, 607-798-7117 ext 311 j.cornell@hcaserves.com

Assistant Director of Therapy Services: Bonnie Cole, 607-798-7117 ext 332 b.cole@hcaserves.com

Nurse: Bonnie Guzenski, LPN, 607-798-7117 ext 313 b.guzenski@hcaserves.com

INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

Special Education Teachers:

Corey Barrows- B.A. in Early Childhood Education, working towards M.S. in Special Education; 16 years teaching experience

Jennifer Cox- A.A. in Early Childhood Education, B.A. in Psychology & Elementary Education, MSE in Special Education; 20 years teaching experience

Krista Fizette-MSEd in Education, 15 years teaching experience

Melissa Haskell-B.S. in Education, Nursery School/Kindergarten and Grades 1-6; MSE in Special Education; MSE in Reading;

Ellen Krupa-B.S. in Education, Nursery School/Kindergarten and Grades 1-6;MSE in Special Education

Miranda Rojas- B.A. Early Childhood Education & Special Education; 5 years teaching experience

General Education Teachers:

Brenda Courtright-MSEd in Science & Music Education; 13 years teaching experience

Danielle Haines-B.S in Early Childhood Education/Social Studies;

Kaeleen Lewis- A.A. Early Childhood Education, working towards B.S. in Education; 2 Years teaching experience

Theresa Krymowski- B.A. Early Childhood Education; 30 years teaching experience

Teacher Aides:

Linda Gehr- 20+ years of classroom experience

Alyzza Locker- Teaching Assistant Certificate; 10 years classroom experience

Kathi McCann- working towards CDA; 16 years classroom experience

Owen Staub- 2 years of classroom experience

Molly Tomancik- A.A. in Early Childhood Education;

Rachel Ward- 5 years of classroom experience

Christine Shawley-

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of HCA's Building Blocks Preschool program and extended sites is to provide an enriching play-based environment where children are exposed to a variety of motivating opportunities in which children, through play, explore their environment, while addressing goals and objectives that are academic, physical and social/emotional.

We believe

- All children can learn and children's learning is facilitated through play
- Home-school collaboration is a valued component of the educational experience
- Education is the shared responsibility of the school, family and community
- All children benefit from developmentally-appropriate peer interactions in an inclusive setting
- Collaborative teams work together to provide related services (occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech therapy) in the classroom and in therapeutic settings

We accept

- The responsibility that each child has the ability to achieve individualized goals through adaptations for a variety of learning styles and needs
- The responsibility to prepare HCA's children to interact positively with each other and with all members of their community regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, religion, ethnicity or cultural identity

We support

- The development of a positive self-concept in every child
- A community and family-based approach to educating the whole child

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY

HCA, Building Blocks Preschool and all outlying sites, admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin and religion.

OPERATING INFORMATION

Main Location- Building Blocks Preschool

18 Broad Street, Johnson City, NY 13790

Phone: (607) 798-7117 Fax: (607) 798-0074

Class Hours: AM session 8:30-11:30, PM session 1:00pm-4:00pm

MacArthur Elementary School

1123 Vestal Avenue, Binghamton, NY 13903

Phone: (607) 762-8119

Class Hours: 8:00am-1:00pm

Linnaeus W. West

1201 Union Center Highway, Endicott, NY 13760

Phone: (607) 757-2149

Class Hours: 8:30am-11:30am

REQUIRED REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

Parents of children enrolled in HCA Building Blocks Preschool will be asked to complete a number of releases before their children can start school services for both the new school year and summer sessions:

- Preschool Enrollment Form
- Emergency information/authorization to consent to medical treatment
- Signed release of information form (HIPAA)
- Health Profile
- Recent physical (HCA will provide form for the doctor). ***MUST*** be submitted ***prior to*** the student beginning preschool; proof of upcoming appointment will be accepted.
- Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act Policies (FERPA)
- Verification of Receipt of FERPA
- Telehealth Consents for Virtual Education & any therapies your child will receive during health related emergency situations.

We will ask parents to bring the following information with them for registration:

Their child's:

- Immunization Record
- Medical Insurance Card (Medicaid No. as available)
- OPWDD/diagnosis tabs number (as available)
- Emergency Numbers

TYPES OF PRESCHOOLERS

HCA's preschool program provides services to children ages 3-5. There are a variety of ways that children are enrolled in our program. This includes the following:

Special Class Integrated Setting (SCIS)- these preschoolers are approved for services through their home school district. They have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), that often includes therapies and/or accommodations.

Universal Pre Kindergarten (UPK)- Johnson City School District enrolls these preschoolers at our Broad Street location. Binghamton City School District enrolls these preschoolers in our class at MacArthur Elementary. Union-Endicott enrolls these preschoolers in our class at Linnaeus W. West.

Private Pay (PP)- children ages 3-5 that do not qualify as SCIS or UPK may enroll in our program at Broad St. for a fee. *Our current private pay tuition rate is \$270/month for 1-3 times a week or \$395/month for 4-5 times a week.*

Related Services (RS)-children that receive therapies but do not qualify for special class integrated setting. They can be enrolled as a UPK or PP student.

*SCIS Children are placed on our waitlist in accordance to the date of their CPSE meeting.

TRANSITIONS

Incoming Students

We aim to make each child's transition into our program as smooth as possible. We offer tours of the preschool site to prospective students where parents can ask questions of administration as well as classroom staff. Upon enrollment, parents and children are welcome to make an appointment to visit the classroom and meet the teacher. Tours and classroom visits can be scheduled through the Education Director or Assistant Director.

Student Placement

Placement of students in classrooms is a process that takes into consideration many factors such as gender, ratio of students with special needs to neuro-typical students, students needing aides or special equipment, students' ages, etc. Any information that you can provide us about your child that will help us make the best decisions for their placement would be welcomed.

Since most of our classrooms are multiage, three to five years of age, children may remain in the same classroom for an entire year and perhaps longer based on the needs of the child. If it is decided that a student will be moved from one classroom to another before a school year is completed, the teacher, with the parents' input, will develop a transition plan for the child that will take into consideration his/her individual needs. Some students respond best to a gradual introduction to the new setting and staff members while for others this may not be necessary.

Transitioning out of HCA

During the year immediately preceding kindergarten entry, HCA will work collaboratively with your child's home school district in conducting classroom observations, talking with your child's teachers, arranging for the home school visits and meeting with parents in an effort to plan for the most suitable educational placement for the child as s/he enters Kindergarten.

If your child is transitioning to another educational setting, HCA teachers, with the input from parents, will assist in developing a transition plan to help with the move to a new setting.

Separation & Attachment

We know that separation can be hard for children of any age. Our staff are sensitive to each child's individual needs and we strive to do all we can to make each child successful at school. Please speak with your child's teacher if you have concerns and we'll work together to help you and your child have a great year.

We believe that attachment is important for all children. We strive to help your child feel safe and secure during their time with us. Please refer to the resources listed below for more information on separation and attachment.

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/helping-preschoolers-cope-with-separation-anxiety>

<https://www.easternflorida.edu/community-resources/child-development-centers/parent-resource/library/documents/attachment-and-bonding.pdf>

CURRICULUM

The Creative Curriculum[®] for Preschool is a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that features exploration and discovery as a way of learning, enabling children to develop confidence, creativity and lifelong critical thinking skills. It is designed to help educators at all levels of experience plan and implement a developmentally appropriate, content-rich program for children with diverse backgrounds and skill levels.

HCA Building Blocks Preschool program uses the Creative Curriculum to provide instruction using developmentally appropriate practice. Developmentally appropriate practice means teaching in ways that match the way children learn so as to promote their optimal development and learning. Early childhood professionals make decisions about the education of children on the basis of information about child development and how children learn, the individual strengths, needs and interests of each child, and the cultures of each child's family and community. The Creative Curriculum is based on five fundamental principles that guide practice and help understand the reasons for intentionally setting up and operating preschool programs in particular ways. These are the principles:

- Positive interactions and relationships with adults provide a critical foundation for successful learning
- Social-emotional competence is a significant factor in school success
- Constructive, purposeful play supports essential learning
- The physical environment affects the type and quality of learning interactions
- Teacher-family partnerships promote development and learning
- The Creative Curriculum is also in alignment with New York State Preschool Foundations for the Common Core; the New York State Next Generation Learning Standards for Preschool and the OWL, Our World of Learning Curriculum.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Arrival

All children should arrive to program on time. Teachers and/or staff will open the building doors at the start of each session. Parents will provide a hand to hand transfer of the child to the teacher. Children should be alert and walking (if able) into the school. Teachers are unable to accept a sleeping child. The teacher will then walk the child to the classroom. Please do not arrive with children earlier than their scheduled start times. Due to staff meetings and classroom preparation, we are unable to accommodate any early arrivals.

Dismissal

Children will be picked up at the end of session at the same location to where they arrived. If an emergency occurs and you are unable to arrive on time, please call the office and/or your child's teacher. Only adults listed on the "Authorized Child Release" form may pick up your child. If you need to add an adult to the form, contact your child's teacher or office staff. No child will be released to anyone not on the authorized child release form. Children MUST be picked up at the end of the school session. Chronic tardiness in picking up your child could result in dismissal from the program.

Building Blocks Preschool (JC Site) Session Times:

AM arrival- 8:30 am, departure- 11:30 am

PM arrival- 1:00 pm, departure- 4:00pm

SAMPLE DAILY SCHEDULE

Daily schedules remain consistent throughout the school year. Each classroom will ensure time for large group activities, gross motor, free play, and snack/meals. Here is a sample schedule for a half-day session at Broad St.

8:30-9:30	Free Play
9:30-9:35	Clean Up
9:35-9:50	Circle Time
9:50-10:05	Table Activity
10:05-10:45	Gross Motor Play
10:45-11:00	Snack
11:00-11:10	Read Aloud
11:10-11:25	Music and Movement
11:25-11:30	Dismissal

SUPPLIES AND SNACKS

At HCA we understand that play is essential for child development and growth. This play often involves tactile, messy activities. On occasion, your child may come home with paints on his/her clothes or glue in his/her hair. Please keep this in mind when you dress them for school. Also please send in a change of clothing to be kept in your child's bag. If we need to change your child using HCA clothing, we ask that you launder it and send it back to us as soon as possible

Weather permitting, children will be playing outside and should be dressed accordingly. Please label all your child's belongings. Sneakers, instead of flip flops or sandals, are a much safer choice for footwear for running and climbing on our playground. Flip flops are not appropriate for school.

If your child is coming to program in diapers or pull-ups, please send in enough to change him/her daily.

All preschoolers at our Johnson City and Linnaeus W. West locations will receive a healthy snack. Snacks are provided by HCA, families, and community donations. Parents may be asked to donate a snack to their child's classroom. This will never be a requirement, but rather an opportunity to contribute if you can. Preschoolers that attend program at MacArthur Elementary are provided with free breakfast, lunch, and snack each day.

*Parents are permitted to send in an individual snack with their child if they prefer.

HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

In order to attend a preschool program, every child must have a lead screening, up-to-date immunization record, and yearly physical on file at HCA. If we do not have the above documents on file, the Health Department will not allow us to provide services to your child.

Please keep emergency numbers up-to-date. It is very important that we are able to reach someone if needed.

Sick Policy

Please keep your sick child home during an illness until he or she is completely well. Children with a fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or bad cold will be sent home from the school program.

Please let us know if your child is exposed to a contagious disease. Some common childhood contagious diseases include: flu, chicken pox, hand-foot-mouth, pinkeye, etc. Please review the chart below for more information regarding when your child may return to school following an illness.

<u>Illness:</u>	<u>May Return:</u>
Bronchitis	24 hours after start of treatment plus 24 hours after temperature is normal without the use of medication
Chicken Pox	24 hours after all lesions have dried and crusted
Colds	Keep home if symptoms are excessive or persistent
Conjunctivitis (pink eye)	24 hours after start of treatment if symptoms have stopped
Croup	24 hours after child is no longer experiencing deep “barking” cough
Diarrhea	24 hours after last loose stool or after one normal bowel movement
Flu (Influenza)	24 hours after temperature is normal
Hand, Foot, Mouth	Lesions on hands are gone and fever free for 24 Hours
Head Lice	After treatment has begun. Children <u>DO NOT</u> need to be ‘nit free’ to return to school
Impetigo	24 hours after treatment has started and sores dry up
Rash	Until physician determines not contagious
Ringworm	24 hours after completion of one treatment
Scabies	After treatment has been completed
Strep Throat	24 hours after start of treatment plus 24 hours after temperature is normal without the use of medication
Vomiting	24 hours after last episode of vomiting plus return of appetite (so not in danger of dehydration)
Whooping Cough (Pertussis)	At least 7 days after start of treatment

If your child will be absent, please notify HCA at 607-798-7117 by 7:30am for morning services and by 11:30am for afternoon services. If your child has bus transportation you must also notify your bus carrier (A&D Transportation: 607-386-4770; Serafini: 607-762-5480).

Illness and Exclusion

When illness, injuries, or contagious conditions occur while at HCA, the staff member present at the time of occurrence will begin first aid as needed. Nursing staff will then be consulted for further assessment. The parent will be notified by the nurse of any illness or injury either in writing or through a phone call.

Your child may be sent home from school if they display the following symptoms:

- Fever of a 100.4 or higher
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Discharge from eyes
- Skin Rash

If your child is sent home due to illness, please make arrangements to pick up your child as soon as possible. **If personal transportation poses a challenge you MUST have a secondary plan to pick up your sick/ injured child** from school.

Please keep emergency numbers up-to-date. It is very important that we are able to reach someone if needed.

If the nurse asks that you have your child seen by their health care provider to rule out any contagious diseases, please understand that we ask this for the well-being of your child and the children and staff at HCA.

HCA **does not** exclude children from school due to head lice. If live lice are found in the hair, treatment will be required before the child can return to school. Effective treatment includes using medicated shampoo and combing, using a fine tooth comb, to remove all nits.

Medication

It is preferred that medication be administered to children at home whenever possible. If a child must take medication during the school day, HCA requires that:

- A written medication consent form must be completed by the child's physician and the child's parent or legal guardian. This form is available in the nurse's office. HCA must have all required paperwork on file before administering any medication.
- Medication must be delivered to the school nurse by the parent/guardian in an unopened, original container with any instructions that came with the medication attached. Medication cannot be transported in the child's backpack on the bus/van or during parent drop off.
- The parent/guardian must be responsible for replacing medication when the supply is used up or outdated.

Please contact the school nurse for health related concerns at 798-7117 Ext 313.

Allergies and Health Care Plan

If your child has any allergies or special medical requirements (i.e. seizures), a Health Care Plan needs to be completed and returned to the nurse. The Health Care Plan ensures that proper and appropriate measures are taken by all staff to prevent and/or respond to allergic reactions and medical needs of the child.

Incidents and Accidents

If your child is injured during the day, the nurse will examine the child and first aid will be provided, if necessary. The nurse will contact the parent/guardian as needed. In case of a medical emergency beyond that of the nurse, 9-1-1 will be called immediately and the parent/guardian will be notified. If transport to the local hospital is needed, an HCA staff member will accompany your child until you arrive.

Handwashing

Children will wash their hands when they arrive at school, before and after snack time, when they return to the classroom from outside play, and anytime they are visibly soiled. Hands will be washed with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; Hand sanitizer may be used when soap and water is not available.

Potty Training

Children do not need to be potty trained to attend HCA. Parents should provide diapers or pull ups for their child, as needed. The teachers and staff will work with families on potty training when the child is ready to do so. Please talk with your child's teacher if you'd like to develop a consistent bathroom routine at school.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

All staff at HCA are mandated reporters. Mandated reporters are required by law to report suspected or known instances of abuse. It is not the responsibility of the staff person or the program to investigate whether abuse or neglect actually occurred, but rather to report probable incidents. Reporting the concerns is not making an accusation.

“Child abuse and neglect is broadly defined as any type of cruelty inflicted upon a child such as mental; physical or sexual assault/exploitation and neglect. The most serious harms committed against a child. What constitutes abuse? Injury by other than accidental means causing death, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, deliberate indifference causing such injury; creating substantial risk of such injury; sexual abuse, permitting such sexual criminal behavior.” *(New York Child Abuse Law)*

- **Neglect** – the failure of a parent or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs. Generally includes the following categories: physical, medical, educational, emotional.
- **Physical Abuse** – a non-accidental physical injury to a child caused by a parent, caregiver of other person responsible for a child and can include punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap or other object), burning or otherwise causing physical harm.

- **Sexual Abuse** – activities by a parent or other caregiver such as fondling child’s genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution, or the production of pornographic materials.
- **Emotional Abuse – (Psychological) Abuse** – a pattern of behavior that impairs a child’s emotional development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant criticism, threats or rejection as well as withholding love, support or guidance. Emotional abuse primarily uses emotion vs. language and/or hurtful tactics.
- **Verbal Abuse** – Language to harm another person, it may involve speaking aggressively or violently, or it could mean not saying a single word. Verbal abuse uses language or non-verbal messages to hurt someone.

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

Children cannot be left without competent supervision at any time. Competent supervision includes awareness of and responsibility for the ongoing activity of each child. It requires that all children be within a teacher’s range of vision and that the teacher be near enough to respond when redirection or intervention strategies are needed. Competent supervision must take into account the child’s age, emotional, physical and cognitive development.

An 8:1:1 ratio will be maintained at all times. At least one certified teacher should consistently be present in the classroom. When toileting students, two adults should be present when possible.

Face-to-name roll call will be taken whenever the class crosses the threshold of the classroom. Use of the student accountability chart will be used for roll call as well as maintained when individual students leave and return to the room for therapy sessions or therapy purposes. The playground is an extension of the classroom. The accountability chart will go to/from the playground with the class; face-to-name roll call will occur as stated above. While on the playground, staff will be actively engaged with the students. If children choose to sit in an area, they must be supervised by an adult.

HCA INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Building Blocks Preschool, 18 Broad Street Johnson City

- HCA on **one** hour delay: Classes begin **one** hour later
- HCA on a **two** hour delay: Morning class will have **Virtual Instruction**
- Early Dismissal before 1pm; Afternoon class will have **Virtual Instruction**
- HCA **CLOSED; NO** morning or afternoon classes

MacArthur Elementary

- Binghamton City SD on a **one** hour delay: Class begin **one** hour later
- Binghamton City SD on a **two** hour delay: Class begin **two** hours later
- Binghamton City SD **CLOSED: No Class**

Linnaeus W. West

- Union Endicott CSD on a **one** hour delay: Classes begin **one** hour later
- Union Endicott CSD on a **two** hour delay: **NO** in person class; **Virtual Instruction Day**
- Union Endicott CSD **CLOSED: No class**

HCA delays/cancellations will be posted on TV-Channel 12 WBNG and our parent communication app.

REMOTE INSTRUCTION (VIRTUAL LEARNING)

Remote instruction is defined as instruction provided by an appropriately certified teacher, who is not in the same, in-person, physical location as the students receiving the instruction, where there is regular and substantive daily interaction between the student and the teacher. This instruction can be synchronous (with the direct presence of a teacher) or asynchronous (without the direct presence of a teacher) and may encompass digital, non-digital and audio-based instruction.

Sites will follow home district closures, delays and remote instruction days, with the following exceptions:

- 2 hr. delays at Linnaeus West will conduct remote instruction
- 2 hr. delays at building Blocks JC site morning class will conduct remote instruction
- Early dismissals from building Blocks JC site afternoon class will conduct remote instruction

If a closure due to an emergency, including but not limited to, extraordinary adverse weather conditions, impairment of heating facilities, insufficiency of water supply, shortage of fuel, or destruction of a school building, occurs, the following remote instruction plan will take place:

1. Parents will be notified via their local TV/radio news channel, as well as through the Remind App. Number of days of closure will be dependent upon the home school district's decisions and/or HCA's decisions regarding building maintenance and parents will be notified each day.
2. Parents will access the zoom link provided to them by their child's teacher at the set time and help their child participate.
3. Teachers will provide up to one hour of synchronous learning, during the typically scheduled class time. This may include, but is not limited to, Circle time, Read aloud, Music and Movement, and other activities. Asynchronous learning may also be provided, at the teacher's discretion.

A communicable illness outbreak is defined as staffing ratios that fall below appropriate education ratio requirements. If a closure due to a communicable illness outbreak occurs, the following remote instruction plan will take place:

1. Parents of the specified classroom closed due to staff shortage will be notified via TSG or Remind App. Parents will be notified each day of the closure.
2. Parents will access the zoom link provided to them by their child's teacher at the set time and help their child participate.
3. *Certified Teachers will provide up to one hour of synchronous learning, during the typically scheduled class time. This may include, but is not limited to, Circle time, Read aloud, Music and Movement, and other activities. *Certified teachers include current classroom teachers if able, or other substitute teachers as required. Asynchronous learning may also be provided, at the certified teacher's discretion.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

Preschool children are inherently working upon and refining their social skills. At HCA we help the children to develop internal self-control, independence and empathy for others. We utilize the

Pyramid Model, Conscious Discipline, and the Zones of Regulation to help foster skills for children to be able to manage their own emotions, resolve conflict, and develop healthy behaviors.

HCA's behavior management plan consists of the following techniques:

- We redirect and provide choices/alternatives. For example, "You can either sit on the rug or at a table for story time."
- We focus on "Do" rather than "Don't." For example, "We walk inside," instead of "Stop running inside"
- We encourage children to use friendly words rather than physical acts. For example, "This is my work, please do not write on it."
- We praise positive behavior.
- We model desired behaviors in order for children to learn by example.
- We arrange the classroom space to positively impact children's behavior. For example, avoid large open spaces that might encourage children to run indoors.

HCA adheres to the following guidelines when implementing behavior management techniques with a child enrolled in the program:

- HCA applies all rules consistently and appropriately to the ages of the children and their developmental level and abilities.
- We do not use corporal punishment (physical punishment such as spanking, paddling, time-out corners, etc.).
- We do not use methods of interaction that punish, demean or humiliate children. Nor do we physically restrain children.
- Any abuse or maltreatment of a child, either as an incident of discipline or otherwise, is prohibited. Please note that, we do not tolerate or in any manner condone an act of abuse or neglect of a child by an employee, volunteer, or any person under the program's control.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

At HCA we recognize the importance of a strong home/school connection. We understand that you as the parent are the first and most important teacher of your child. Parents are invited to visit the classrooms at any time. Because the teachers are busy with their classroom responsibilities during school hours, we do suggest that you call the teacher ahead of time if you need to discuss your child with them.

There are many ways to volunteer your time at HCA: being an extra set of hands in a classroom, helping with clerical duties, material preparation, or sharing a talent or hobby. Please contact your child's teacher for more information.

COMMUNICATIONS

Parent Conferences

Although parent conferences can be held at any time throughout the year, typically parent conferences are held for children twice during the academic school year. Conferences are in the fall in order for the parents to meet the teachers and therapist and to discuss and formalize the child's individual goals. Conferences are also held in the spring in order to discuss the child's progress, review any re-evaluations and to prepare for the upcoming transitions. A notification for conferences, sign-up for times, and a reminder notice will be provided to parents.

Other Communications

- Quarterly Agency Newsletter
- Quarterly Preschool Newsletter
- Preschool Classroom Newsletter
- Communication app
- Communication Notebooks
- Emails
- Phone calls

Parent Survey

A parent survey is sent home to our families each spring. We encourage you to take a few minutes to complete and return the form with your honest input regarding our preschool program and services. This information will help us to make decisions about which areas are in need of improvement within the preschool program.

If, at any time, you have concerns/comments, please contact your child's teacher, the Education Director or Assistant Director.

Other

In order to adhere to HCA's privacy and confidentiality policies, all communications regarding students must be made through the classroom teacher. 1:1 aides are prohibited from having personal communications with any enrolled child's families. This includes, but is not limited to, facebook, text messages, babysitting, etc.

FIELD TRIPS

As part of HCA's philosophy, "to provide an enriching experience where children are motivated to learn by having opportunities to explore their environment", we have incorporated the surrounding community as part of our learning environment. Thus, our preschool program provides opportunities for classes to engage in field trips periodically. All children who attend class on the scheduled trip day are expected to attend. (Scheduled class trips may not be used as make-up days.) Transportation will be arranged by the agency. Parents are always welcome to join us at the field trip site. Current health and safety protocols will be taken into consideration.

HOLIDAYS, BIRTHDAYS & CELEBRATIONS

Traditional holidays celebrated in our community are incorporated into the curriculum and activity plans of each classroom in a non-religious manner. In addition, we try to include those holidays from the diverse ethnic and national backgrounds represented by the children and families of our preschool. Teaching about holidays is done through art, story-telling, music, games, and foods typically associated with that holiday. We encourage you to share with your child's teacher any special days or holidays that your family celebrates.

Birthdays are recognized and celebrated individually in each classroom. Some parents choose to send in a small birthday snack. This is entirely optional and should be discussed in advance with the teacher*. It is requested that the ages of the children in the group and nutritional value of party

food items be considered if you decide to bring in cupcakes or other birthday snacks. Smaller and healthier is always better in this regard. (Mini cupcakes are more appropriate than full size cupcakes.) **Currently it is necessary to avoid bringing peanut or nut products into the classroom.** **Store bought snacks are requested with the original package and label, please.*

If parents would like to have a birthday party outside of school that involves some classmates, it is requested that parents mail invitations to the home. If **all** children in the class will be receiving invitations, teachers will send home invitations in backpacks as a courtesy. The school cannot provide addresses or phone numbers of classmates.

MEDIA USE

Technology has many valuable instructional and recreational uses with the ability to enhance our preschool program. At HCA, we understand the need to limit the use of computer and Smartboard usage during the school day. We do not have televisions or VCRs in any of our classrooms. Our policy regarding the use of media in classrooms reflects New York State's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Educators:

Section 5.5 i: Ensures that children under 2 years have no screen time (TV, computers, DVDs, etc.) and that children 2-5 years have no more than 30 minutes once a week of high quality, education or movement-focused, commercial free programing, and never during meal or nap times.

Content shown on the classroom Smartboard will reflect developmentally appropriate and educationally sound material such as calendar activities, music and movement, or other interactive learning. Computer/iPad use by individual students will be allowed as stations during Choice Time but will be strictly monitored so that students experience all the activities available to them in the classroom. Passive media use will not be allowed during times when the children are eating or at rest.

MISCELLANEOUS

Transportation in Personal Vehicles

The staff from HCA is prohibited from transporting children in personal vehicles at any time.

Babysitting Release

HCA discourages staff from babysitting for enrolled children after center hours. In the event that outside care arrangements with an HCA staff member are made, HCA is not responsible for any losses, injury claims, actions or damages of any kind arising from that care arrangement. Once a child or staff member leaves for the day, neither the child nor the staff member are under the supervision, control or clearance statements of HCA.

Parking

When dropping off or picking up your child, park in a designated area either in the parking lot or on the street. Refrain from leaving unattended vehicles running. Be mindful that at HCA's Broad Street site, buses pull into the parking lot and stop at the playground gate to load/unload children. Please do not pull up or park in the bus lane. Also, avoid blocking in park cars located in the front parking area.

If the buses' red lights are flashing, **YOU MUST STOP**. It's the law! This includes buses in parking lots and on school grounds. Please help keep our children safe as buses are loading and unloading.

NOTE: The **only** exception to this law is if the bus driver or a police officer signals that you may pass the bus.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

There are many resources and supports available for individuals and families in Broome County. If you are looking for information, support, or resources check out 211-Susquehanna River Region by the United Way. 211 is a free and confidential service that helps people across the U.S find the local resources they need. They are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Susquehanna River Region Contact Center provides information and referrals to agencies and programs in Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego, and Tioga Counties. If you need help finding resources in your area, dial 211 to speak to a representative now. You can search the online database to access more than 6,000 different programs and services by visiting <http://www.helpme211.org/>.

Resources and information on early childhood education can be found on the National Association for the Education of Young Children website: <https://www.naeyc.org> or New York State Education Department website: <https://www.nysed.gov/early-learning>

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HCA Parent Handbook Signature Page

I have received, read, and understand the contents of HCA’s Education Parent handbook. By signing below, I agree to abide by all policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.

Print Name

Signature

Date

The parent/guardian must return this signature page to an HCA staff member within 10 days of receipt. Thank you!