

Parent Handbook

2017-2018 School Year



Victory
EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY

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Victory Early Learning Academy

Parent Handbook for 2017-2018 School Year

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Introduction

Dear Parents,

Welcome aboard to Victory Early Learning Academy. We're ready to set sail for the 2017-2018 school year and we're excited that your family is joining us! The teachers at VELA are committed to providing a quality program that is safe, biblically based, educational, child friendly, and fun!

Thank you for entrusting your children to our care during their formative years. We believe that children are a blessing from God, fearfully and wonderfully made as it says in Psalm 139, and that each child possesses unique gifts, talents, interests, and abilities. It's our goal to draw out and inspire the best in our students as we provide them with opportunities to create, explore, and learn.

We strongly believe that at this stage in their lives, children learn best through play and gain self awareness and self esteem through child directed activities. Our curriculum is play and center based and will be tailored to meet each child's developmental needs through well planned, age appropriate learning activities. We want to introduce a love of learning to our students and to lay a strong educational foundation in their lives that will prepare them for the elementary years to come.

The staff at VELA want to partner with your family in nurturing your child's relationship to God. It's our hope that the influence we have on your children in their early years will provide them with a clear understanding of who Jesus Christ is as Lord and Savior and that we will give them a solid foundation of faith to build their futures upon.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the policies and procedures that are outlined in this Parent Handbook. They are in place to ensure that Victory Early Learning Academy is a safe and enjoyable place for your family.

Partnering with you in passing on the heritage of faith to the next generation,

Missy Knechel, M.Ed, Director
Victory Early Learning Academy

A. Enrolling Your Child

Before enrolling any child, parents or guardians must schedule an appointment with the Director(s) for a tour, and the child(ren) can accompany the parents. We believe this provides both the parent and the Director the opportunity to clearly convey their expectations of Victory Early Learning Academy and go through our enrollment package one-on-one. Upon the decision to enroll your child, parents or guardians will be provided with an application, tuition and financial agreement, all health and emergency forms, as well as a copy of our handbook.

To start the enrollment process, parents must submit a completed application with a \$100.00 nonrefundable deposit by using our automated payment system, Tuition Express. Upon enrollment, it shall be understood that the child will be assigned a starting date and all forms (including the emergency contact forms, health assessment, application, tuition and financial agreement, as well as the child's need assessment) are to be submitted on the first day of attendance. No child shall be permitted to attend VELA without these documents submitted by the first day of attendance. The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) strictly mandates that these forms are to be fully completed and on premises in each child's file at all times.

In the event of a class being at its full capacity, we will place you on the waiting list for up to six months. We are sorry that we cannot always meet the needs of parents or guardians when requested, however you may call us and request a place on the list or submit an application to be placed on a waiting list. You will be called by the Director when an opening becomes available.

B. Nondiscrimination Policy

Admissions to Victory Early Learning Academy shall be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, ancestry, national origin, disability, age or gender. Please see Attachment A for addresses if you wish to file a complaint of discrimination.

C. Fee and Payment Policy

Victory Early Learning Academy enforces the following policies and procedures for tuition payments with the backing of Victory Church:

1. Part-time and Full-time tuition is automatically deducted on the 1st of the month.
2. A \$25.00 per month late fee will be charged when a payment is declined.
3. There will be a \$5.00 charge per child for every five minutes elapsed after you scheduled pick-up time.
4. All tuition is due regardless of sickness, behavioral/disciplinary removal, vacations, weather related closings or holidays (including Thanksgiving, Christmas, snow days, and Spring Break).
5. Free Vacation Week:
 - a. A vacation week will be granted after a full-time or part-time student has been enrolled in the school **for a full year**.
 - b. A vacation week **MUST** be taken in five consecutive days.
 - c. A vacation week will not be granted if tuition is not current and paid on time on a consistent basis.
 - d. The school director requires a two-week written notice from parents who want to use their vacation week.
6. If you need to terminate your child's enrollment, a two-week notice is to be given to the school director(s); otherwise you will continue to be charged your monthly tuition. (No reimbursement of tuition will be granted)
7. If you decide to take an extended leave of absence for vacation or to leave the country, we can only hold your child's spot by paying a 20% per month fee.
8. In order to ensure your child's enrollment, parents must re-register their child(ren) for the following year.
9. It is understood that there will be an annual increase each July at the start of the fiscal year.
10. There is a 3% convenience charge for any enrolled family using a credit card. ACH (bank account) can be used with no added fee.

D. Parental Code and Expectations

Victory Early Learning Academy considers the following Parental Code and Expectations to express the appropriate response of each parent or guardian in their support of the Christian education program and environment at VELA:

1. To continually pray for VELA.
2. To cooperate with the functions of VELA, seeking to make Christian education effective in the life of the enrolled child, that they may love and serve God all of their lives.
3. To undertake volunteer positions at VELA as opportunities arise and as God provides time, ability, and strength.
4. To attend meetings and parent functions of VELA as regularly as possible.
5. To fulfill all financial obligations to VELA on or before the due date.
6. To resolve conflicts or dissatisfaction on a person-to-person basis, thus honoring the Lord Jesus Christ, Victory Church, and VELA.
7. To never harass any child and/or parent due to a harmful circumstance that occurred within the classroom.
8. To never harass or verbally assault any staff member. All issues and concerns will be addressed through the directors of the school.
9. To understand that when we come to drop off and pick up children, we will be dressed appropriately with no hazards that will have possible harmful effects on children.
10. To understand that VELA has an open-door policy, but will be respectful and mindful of interrupting learning time.

E. Parental Communication

Communication between the home and school is vital for a successful school experience. We believe that the foundation of educational and spiritual success starts at home, and so we are honored to partner with you in that process. Here at VELA, we do several things to ensure this happens on a regular basis:

- a. Dailies- Any full-time and/or part-time student will receive a electronic log of what your child has done during their time in our facility. This will include food intake, bathroom needs, daily activities, mood, nap schedule, and disciplinary concerns.
- b. Parent and Teacher conference- Twice a year we hold meeting times for you to see how your child is progressing. These times are based on weekly and monthly assessments/observations that each classroom teacher is responsible to monitor over the school year.

- c. Getting To Know You- Every year we host a “Back To School Night” where you and your child can come and ask any questions you have about our program, faculty and staff. If you cannot make this date, we will do a private meeting with you within 60 days of your child’s enrollment.

F. Health and Medications

Children who are obviously ill with fever, diarrhea, vomiting, green-runny nose, puss/oozing eyes, disease or condition (i.e. - ringworm, head lice, chicken pox, measles, mumps, pink eye, fever over 100 degrees, etc.) **will not be admitted** to the program. It is a danger to other children and staff members at our facility. If you have any doubts about your child’s health, please call us at (610) 676-9085 to be sure they may attend. If your child appears to be sick or has any of the above while at school, we will notify the parent or guardian immediately, and it is necessary that the child be picked up within one hour of notification from VELA.

The child will be permitted to return when his/her temperature is normal for 24 hours and other signs of the condition are absent for a minimum of 24 hours. Your child must have any medication, such as antibiotics, in his/her system for at least 24 hours before returning. In the event your child is sent home with one of the above health concerns, they will not be permitted back to VELA without a doctor’s note. The doctor’s note must be written on their letter head and read that the child is allowed to return to school because what they have is no longer contagious. In the case of Ringworm, children are permitted to attend school the following day provided they have a formal written note from their doctor stating that the child is being treated with appropriate medicine and is no longer contagious.

Permission for a child to be administered medicine in the school must be approved by the Physician and parent utilizing the “Authorization for Administering Medication” form. Medications for maintenance will be administered throughout the day as required. The medication must be given to the Director/Front Desk in its original bottle, which contains the pharmacist’s directions. The medication log must be signed by the parent at this time and will be kept on file. Children will be given their medication according to the prescription specifications only.

a. Admission and Exclusion

Exclusion will be based on whether there are adequate facilities and staff available to meet the needs of the ill child and the other children in the group.

Children will be excluded if:

1. The child's illness prevents the child from participating in routine activities.
2. The illness requires more than the child care staff are able to provide without compromising the needs of other children in the group.
3. Keeping the child in care poses an increased risk to the child or to the other children or adults with whom the child will come in contact as defined in the exclusion guidelines.

If the child care staff are uncertain about whether the child's illness poses an increased risk to others, the child will be excluded until a physician or licensed nurse practitioner notifies the child care program that the child may attend. Children whose illness does not meet any of these conditions listed above need not be excluded

b. Admission and Permitted Attendance:

Specific conditions that do not require exclusion are:

1. Children who have a type of germ in their bowel movement or urine that can cause disease, but that is not giving any symptoms to the child whose stool or urine contains the germ.
2. Children with conjunctivitis (pink eye) that have a clear, watery eye discharge and do not have any fever, eye pain, pus coming from the eye, or eyelid redness.
3. Children with a rash and no fever or change in behavior.
4. Children with cytomegalovirus infection, carriers of hepatitis B or HIV infection.

c. Procedure for Management of Short Term Illness:

The director decides whether a child who is ill will be permitted to come for the day or remain in the program. If the child appears mildly ill but will be staying for the day:

1. The child's caregiver will complete a symptom record to document date, time, and symptoms of illness.
2. Caregiver and the parent will discuss treatment and develop a plan for the child's care. The child's health care provider should be contacted if the

caregiver has questions or does not understand the instructions provided by the health care provider.

3. The caregiver will complete the symptom record during the period the child is in care and give a copy of the symptom record to the parent when the child leaves the program for the day.
4. The symptom record will be given to the parent or legal guardian so that the parent or legal guardian has the information needed to continue the child's care and if necessary, to consult the child's health care provider for the management of the child's illness.
5. If the child is too ill to stay in care, the child will be provided a place to rest until the parent, legal guardian, or designated person arrives. The child will be supervised at all times by someone familiar to the child.

G. Emergencies

- a. Emergencies with Children- Whenever an emergency occurs with a child, such as a serious injury or illness, parents will be notified by phone as soon as possible. If immediate medical attention is required, the child will be taken to the hospital with his/her medical and insurance information. In the event we will have to call 911, they will transport the child to the nearest hospital. A written report will be filed with the Department of Human Services, and a copy will be kept in the child's records in the event of such an incident occurring.
- b. Emergency Contact Form- An updated emergency form must be on file at all times in the office. The staff of VELA also carries with them at all times a copy of the Emergency Contact Forms. Please notify VELA immediately of any changes of address, work and/or home phone number, cell phone or emergency contacts. This will be updated every six months in accordance with DHS regulations.
- c. Injuries - In the event of a serious injury, every effort will be made to contact the parent before a child is transported to the hospital. An ambulance may be ordered before a parent can be reached. The Director or his/her designee will determine this necessity. If treatment at a hospital or doctor's office is required, the parent/guardian assumes full responsibility for costs incurred.

Minor first aid is administered in the school office. A call will be placed to the home and/or workplace to inform parents of the incident. An incident report is filled out by the staff member present when injury took place. Parents are asked to sign the report when picking up children. These are kept on file at the school. Photocopies of reports can be made and sent home at parent's request.

- d. Emergency/Winter School Closing – When it becomes necessary to close the facility due to inclement weather, please call our main number, (610) 676-9085, to confirm our closing or delay. You can also watch the following news channels for our closing or delays: 6(ABC), and 10(NBC). We follow what the majority of school districts in the area do. We ultimately make the decision based on safety for families and for staff. Please be sure to sign up for our texting/email alerts.
- e. In the event of an emergency early dismissal, we will contact all parents or guardians via phone and email if applicable. Parents or guardians are expected to pick up their children within one hour of that call.
- f. Two Hour Delay – IF we call a two hour delay, this means that the time of opening is TWO hours after 6:30am. It does not affect the preschool start time. All programs will begin at 8:30am.
- g. Fire Drills/Emergency Drills – Fire drills/emergency evacuation drills are necessary for the safety of the children and staff. Information is reviewed in the beginning of each year and is posted in each room. Each month we conduct a fire drill and an emergency evacuation drill to ensure familiarity to each child and staff member as to what to do in the case of emergency. To be sure of our abilities, we perform several unannounced drills as well as to give both staff and children practice and preparation for these situations.

H. Arrival and Departure Procedures

Our facility is operational from 6:30am – 6:00pm, Monday through Friday. Please remain straight at our entrance through the parking lot and then up to the top tier for dropping off students. Please park in designated parking spots.

We ask that when dropping off your child in his/her classroom, please do not engage the teacher in lengthy conversations as this keeps them from giving their undivided attention to the children and classroom. If you need to have a conversation with your child's teacher, please arrange for a meeting or phone call at a more convenient time. If you will be picking up your child early, please notify the front desk, and we will then have the child brought up to the front to meet you.

Please inform directors as well as your child's teacher, both verbally and in written form, if someone other than yourself will be picking up your child. If for any reason you have not informed us or we are uncomfortable with the situation, we will not release the child to any person(s) without verbal consent from parent or legal guardian.

Parents should never ask another person to pick up their child from VELA without calling or giving a verbal notice as well as a written note to the office. No child will be released from VELA until this is done. We are obligated to check that person for your authorization and release on a specified form and ask for picture ID with name and address. This procedure often requires additional time but please remember that is for the protection of your child. Please do not leave messages regarding this matter on our voice mail. Report these changes directly to the front desk or directors.

Late Pick-up: Any family picking up late from the contracted time with the school will be charged according to the fee schedule. \$1.00 will be charged for every minute you are late after our closing time, 6:00pm. Thank you for understanding that our staff would like to get home to their families at a decent time.

I. Visitors

All visitors, including parents or guardians delivering messages, lunches, clothing, etc. must check in. We have special days like “Grand Pals Day” and others like that to allow for family and friends to participate in your child’s school day. Guests are asked to come on designated days or to sign up to volunteer with the teacher so as not to disrupt learning time. Guests must be made known on emergency contact forms and have picture ID available.

J. Behavior Policy

In order to insure the safety and positive classroom experience for all students, VELA has adopted the following behavior/discipline policy:

STEP 1: Meet with parents and teacher.

At classroom teacher’s discretion, including but not limited to: multiple classroom disruptions, continual, inappropriate behavior and/or language, and physical violence such as hitting or kicking.

STEP2: Meet with parents, teacher, and school director and establish a behavior plan.

Discussion with parents, teacher, and school director about resources and goals for obtaining outside help for child.

STEP 3: Discussion with parents, teacher, and school director to determine appropriate action for child’s behavior.

Removal of child for the remainder of school day, removal of child for set amount of days, removal of child for remainder of week, or plan for obtaining outside help/appointment for evaluation.

Step three may be revisited with subsequent offenses if School Director deems it necessary.

FINAL STEP: Removal/Dismissal of child from Victory Early Learning Academy.

***We take aggressive, physical behavior towards children/staff very seriously and can/will respond accordingly with an acceleration of these steps. Any days missed because of discipline or behavior problems will not be eligible for tuition reimbursement.**

Biting Policy

We understand that when a child is between the ages of infant through 2 ½ years old, biting is developmentally appropriate. At some point, parents should understand that a child may get bitten and/or your child may bite another child. Staff are diligent to try to prevent such actions and will redirect a child if biting occurs. Incident reports are written for parents of the child who was bitten and for the child who bites. Staff must keep the other party anonymous when discussing such incidents with families. We do not have a “three strikes and you’re out” policy since all studies show this to be developmentally appropriate. When needed, we may come up with an individualized behavioral plan for the child who continually bites, but it usually is a phase that goes away once he/she becomes more verbal.

K. Field Trips

Classes take trips to interesting and educational places in the area and are part of the instructional program. A notice will be sent out prior to each field trip. Fees will be charged to cover the expenses. If parents decide that their child will not participate in a field trip, the student will then have to stay home for the duration of the field trip. There will be no tuition reimbursement for this missed time.

There will be field trips where the school will be responsible for transportation and/or there will be field trips where all students participating must ride in parent’s cars. Advance notification will always be given for these events.

L. Parties and Celebrations

Birthdays- If you wish to celebrate your child’s birthday at VELA, please check with your child’s teacher at least one week in advance with what your plans will be for that celebration. Children may distribute treats to classmates as long as no class member is left out. The use of candles is prohibited due to safety reasons. Note: All birthday treats must be nut free.

M. Food

- a. **Lunch:** We ask that you do not bring in lunches that need to be heated.
A packed lunch is acceptable.
- b. **Snack:** A morning and afternoon snack is included in your monthly tuition amount. Snack is provided at 10:00am and 3:00pm daily.
- c. **Food Allergy:** We are a peanut free facility, so please do not provide lunches that contain peanuts. If your child has an allergy to any foods, please be sure that it has been indicated in your child's paperwork and put in writing. This should be given to the teacher AND director. All allergies will be posted in the classroom.

N. Lost and Found

The Lost and Found for our facility is located behind our welcome center. If your child has misplaced something, inquire at the welcome center. If it is an item of value, notify us immediately. VELA asks that children not bring any objects of value or large sums of money to school. VELA takes no responsibility for lost items. Please be sure to mark all clothing with child's first and last name.

O. Clothing

A child's dress should always be in accordance with the weather conditions of the day. Outdoor play will occur year-round, and children should be dressed in an appropriate manner. Also, keep in mind the types of activities that could occur on any given day such as free play, painting, walks, learning centers, napping, etc. Clothing should be modest, comfortable, and functional.

VELA is not responsible for any clothing that may become stained due to normal, everyday activities within the classrooms. It is the responsibility of the parent to dress the child in appropriate clothing for these activities.

Parents must provide a complete change of seasonally appropriate clothing (skirt, pants, shirt, underwear, socks) which is kept in your child's backpack that is labeled with the child's name and is brought to school every day.

- d. **Skirts/Dresses-** Please ensure to have underneath each skirt or dress a pair of shorts. This avoids any embarrassment when playing outside or sitting in a circle.
- e. **Music and Movement Days-** Please ensure to have sneakers on children's feet for these days. Any children wearing boots or heels will not be permitted to participate due to safety reasons.

P. Toilet Training

Once children are enrolled in our two-year old program, we will begin the toilet training process. Once the potty training process has begun within the classroom, we ask that the parents support our efforts and continue the same process at home. The decision to begin this process will be made with parental consent. We also ask that the parents supply each backpack with enough underwear for the entire day. Daily communication will provide you with information on your child's daily progress.

***It is mandatory that all children three years and older who attend VELA be fully toilet trained. Children are not allowed to be in any type of diaper, including pull-ups, unless medical reasons are involved.**

Q. Back To School Night

At the beginning of each new school year, we will schedule a "Back To School Night" for children in our **preschool program**. Both parents and children are welcome to attend. At the meeting time you will meet your child's new teacher, learn about the developmental goals for the year, classroom schedules, and any new school routines or policies. This night will also include a time of questions and answers for both teachers and school directors.

"Back To School Night" will be this year on September 22, 2017. If for some reason you are unable to attend, your teacher will schedule a private appointment with you where you can come in and discuss your child's school year.

R. Transferring to a New School Policy

VELA will gladly release a child's file for information to be transferred to another facility. To release your child's file, the parent/guardian must submit a request in writing to the school director or ask for a "release of records" form from the welcome center. Requests will be honored once full payment of tuition is paid and is current. Records will be held if there is any outstanding balance of your accounts.

S. Phone Numbers and Addresses

To speak with your child's teacher between 9am-5pm, dial (610) 676-9085. When someone answers, state your name and the teacher's name with whom you'd like to speak.

To speak with your child's teacher before 9am or after 5pm, dial (610) 676-9085. As soon as the voicemail picks up, dial **"4" and the classroom number**. There will be silence for a few seconds while the phone dials the classroom.

Phone numbers and addresses of students will not be given out unless written or verbal permission is given to the office. Phone numbers and addresses of teachers will not be given out. It is up to the individual teacher if he/she would like to give personal contact information out to families. It is recommended that any communication between teacher and parents should be done within the hours that the teacher is working.

Texting/Email Alerts

To receive alerts for important announcements like closings, dismissals, and reminders, we ask ALL parents to sign up for our texting/email alerts. See below for how to get set up:

Infant class: Text @infantr to 81010 or send an email to infant@mail.remind101.com

Ones class: Text @littlee to 81010 or send an email to littlee@mail.remind101.com

Twos class:Text @dood to 81010 or send an email to dood@mail.remind101.com

Threes class: Text @mrskneche to 81010 or send an email to mrskneche@mail.remind101.com

Pre-K class: Text @missyk to 81010 or send an email to missyk@mail.remind101.com

T. When Problems Arise

Problems do occur and should be addressed in a Christian manner. If you have a concern about a school related matter, that concern should first be addressed with the classroom teacher. In many cases, the concern may have stemmed from miscommunication. If the problem persists and you feel that your concern has not been addressed, the next step is to contact the director. The director will then investigate the issue and will schedule a time where the teacher and parent can meet with the director to resolve any issue that might exist.

If a question or concern would arise from something that is written on your child's daily sheet, please write your concern in the area noted, "parent communication".

Then please place the daily back in your child's folder to return it the following day. The teacher will call you that same day to address any questions/concerns that you might have.

U. School Closings

The following dates are when our facility is closed due to holidays or teacher in-service days:

September 4	Labor Day
November 22	Close at 3pm for Thanksgiving Break
November 23,24	Thanksgiving Break
December 25	Christmas Day
January 1	New Years Day
January 15	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
March 2	Teacher In-Service Day
March 30-April 2	Easter Break
May 28	Memorial Day
July 4	Independence Day
August 30	Close at 3pm for Teacher In-Service
August 31	Teacher In-Service Day

V. Special Events

There will be a number of special events during the school days and evenings to help build our community. These events are designed to help foster lasting relationships between our enrolled families as well as our staff. Here is the list of special events planned for this school year. Items that are in **bold** are evening events. Please note that events are subject to change.

September 15	Picture Day
September 22	Back to School Night
October 11	Grandparent's Day
October 23-27	Parent/Teacher Conferences
October 31	Character Parade
November 10	Veteran's Day breakfast
December 8	Christmas Craft Night
December 15	Christmas Program
January 22-26	Kindness Challenge Week
January 29	100 th Day
February 14	Wear red for Valentine's Day
February 23	Pajama Day
April 21	Wear green for Earth Day
April 23-27	Parent/Teacher Conferences
May 14	Muffins with Mom
June 1	Pre-K graduation
June 15	Summer Bash
June 18	Donuts with Dad
August 10	Movie Night

CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE

Admissions, the provision of services, and referrals of children shall be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, age, sex, national origin (including limited English proficiency), age or sex.

Program services shall be made accessible to eligible persons with disabilities through the most practical and economically feasible methods available. These methods include equipment redesign, the provision of aides, and the use of alternative service delivery locations. Structural modifications shall be considered only as a last resort among available methods.

Any parent/guardian who believes he or she has been discriminated against may file a complaint of discrimination with any of the following:

Complaints of discrimination may be filed with any of the following:

Victory Early Learning Academy

2650 Audubon Road

Audubon, PA 19403

Department of Human Services

Bureau of Equal Opportunity

Room 223 Health and Welfare Building

P.O. Box 2675

Harrisburg, PA. 17105

PA Human Relations Commission

Philadelphia Regional Office

110 N. 8th Street, Suite 501

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

U. S. Dept of Health and Human
Services

Office for Civil Rights

Suite 372, Public Ledger Building

150 S. Independence Mall West

Philadelphia, PA. 19106-9111

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

DHS Bureau of Equal Opportunity

Southeast Regional Office

801 Market Street, Suite 5034

Philadelphia, PA. 19107

Victory Early Learning Academy

Parent or Guardian Handbook Receipt Form

Parents or Guardians,

Please thoroughly review the Parent Handbook for the 2016-2017 school year, which contains the policies and procedures for Victory Early Learning Academy. After reading the handbook, please complete this form and return it to the school welcome center as soon as possible. This form will be kept in your child's file for the duration of the school year.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Missy Knechel, M.Ed
Director, Victory Early Learning Academy

I, _____ (print your name), the parent/guardian of _____ (print child's name), hereby acknowledge receipt of Victory Early Learning Academy's Parent Handbook for 2017-2018 School Year. I have read and agree to adhere to all of the policies and regulations set forth in this handbook.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____