



**McGregor**

**Early Learning Academy**

**2021-2022  
Parent Handbook**

A ministry of:



## Mission Statement

McGregor Early Learning Academy's mission is to spiritually uplift our children and teachers in a Godly, loving and secure environment. This is accomplished by providing quality care, Christian education, and developmentally appropriate activities and by modeling God's love through our actions, words, and lifestyle.

## Philosophy

McGregor Early Learning Academy is a learning center committed to enriching children through center-based education with a Christ-focused foundation. We believe education is a relationship between parents and educators. McGregor Early Learning Academy invites our parents to partner with us in order to provide the highest quality education that reaches all learning styles. McGregor Early Learning Academy strives to allow all children to be ministered to in a caring atmosphere while developing emotionally, spiritually, cognitively, physically, and socially. Our goal is to provide a secure and loving environment that is unique to each child's needs. We are committed to honoring Christ while instilling character that mirrors the example set by Him. (Luke 2:52)

## Statement of Faith

We believe God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has eternally existed in three personalities: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (the Trinity). These three are coequals and are one God.

(Genesis 1:1, 26-27, 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; I Peter 1:2; II Corinthians 13:14)

We believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is coequal with the Father. Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven's glory and will return again someday to earth to reign as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

(Matthew 1:22-23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5, 14:10-30; Hebrews 4:14-15; I Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 1:3-4; I Timothy 6:14-15; Titus 2:13)

We believe the Holy Spirit is coequal with the Father and the Son of God. He is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He also lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. He gives every believer a spiritual gift when they are saved. As Christians, we seek to live under His control daily.

(II Corinthians 3:17; John 14:16-17, 16:7-13; Acts 1:8; I Corinthians 2:12, 3:16; Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18)

We believe the Bible is God's Word to us. It was written by human authors, under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is the truth without any mixture of error.

(II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20-21; II Timothy 1:13; Psalm 12:6, 119:105, 160; Proverbs 30:5)

We believe people are made in the spiritual image of God, to be like Him in character. People are the supreme object of God's creation. Although every person has tremendous potential for good, all of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called "sin." This attitude separates people from God and causes many problems in life.

(Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6a; Romans 3:23; Isaiah 59:1-2)

We believe salvation is God's free gift to us, but we must accept it. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. When we turn from our self-ruled life and turn to Jesus in faith, we are saved. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into his life by faith.

(Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 1:12, 14:6; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26; Romans 5:1)

We believe, because God gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ, the true believer is secure in that salvation for eternity. If you have been genuinely saved, you cannot "lose" it. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power

of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. It is the grace and keeping power of God that gives us this security.

(John 10:29; II Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25, 10:10-14; I Peter 1:3-5)

We believe people were created to exist forever. We will either exist eternally separated from God by sin, or eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is Hell. To be eternally in union with Him is eternal life in Heaven. Heaven and Hell are real places of eternal existence.

(John 3:16, 14:17; Romans 6:23, 8:17-18; Revelation 20:15; I Corinthians 2:7-9)

## **Family Lifestyle Statement**

A Christian family comprises Christian parents, one male and one female who are married, who believe the Bible is the written Word of God and abide by its principles in their daily lives. They teach the Bible to their children through example and as commanded in Deuteronomy 6:7, "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." They share Jesus with their children and establish and maintain a Biblical lifestyle and home atmosphere.

I/We understand that our school regards sex at birth as the identification of the given biological sex of each member of our constituency. The school will not affirm attempted alterations by medical intervention of one's sex at birth. The school views the actions or intentions of those seeking fundamental changes of any kind from one's sex at birth as a rejection of the biblical and theological understandings to which the institution is committed, and hence as grounds for removal from consideration for attendance.

The Christian role model believes in the Bible, follows Biblical principles, and lives as an example of Christ through worship, fellowship, discipleship, evangelism, and ministry.

## **Statement of Non-Discrimination**

The operation of the preschool will, at all times, comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as was amended in 1972. "... No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity..." It is the policy of the Agency to provide equal opportunity in employment to all employees and applicants for employment. Consistent with the rights and obligations under applicable Federal and State law, no qualified person is to be discriminated against in employment because of race, color, gender, marital status, age, national origin, or individuals with disabilities.

## **Licensing**

MELA is licensed through the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and members of Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). Our license number is C20LE0117. Our license and membership is renewed yearly.

## **Contact Us**

7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.  
(239) 936-5015

If you reach our voicemail, please leave a message and your call will be returned promptly.

## Support Staff Contact Information

Cherie Gaither, Director  
Extension - 1243 Email - [cherie.gaither@mcgregor.net](mailto:cherie.gaither@mcgregor.net)

Julie Beard, Assistant Director  
Extension - 1044 Email - [julie.beard@mcgregor.net](mailto:julie.beard@mcgregor.net)

Allison Lunsford, Administrative Coordinator  
Extension - 1244 Email - [allison.lunsford@mcgregor.net](mailto:allison.lunsford@mcgregor.net)

Curriculum Coordinator  
Extension - 1247 Email -

Mona Cossairt, Receptionist  
Extension - 1248 Email - [mona.cossairt@mcgregor.net](mailto:mona.cossairt@mcgregor.net)

Beth Facella, Accounting  
Extension - 1399 Email - [beth.facella@mcgregor.net](mailto:beth.facella@mcgregor.net)

## Registration for Both New and Current Students

Upon acceptance to the preschool, the following elements are required to secure your child's position:

1. Non-refundable registration fee
2. Completed registration packet
3. 680 immunization original record
4. 3040 physical original record, Form 681
5. Copy of your child's birth certificate
6. Create FACTS account created and finalized for tuition deduction.
7. Appropriate forms notarized (notary available at front desk)

## New Student MELA Registration Fees

1st Child: \$260  
2nd Child: \$235  
January - May: \$130  
June - end of school year- \$67.50 (summer only registration fee)

## Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday:  
7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

## Tuition: 2021-2022

	Monthly:	Yearly:
Infants:	\$1055	\$12,660
Toddlers:	\$900	\$10,800
Two's:	\$875	\$10,500
Three's & Four's:	\$850	\$10,200

\*Tuition is calculated on a yearly basis, with holidays and school closures included in the annual tuition rate. For your convenience, we offer a 12-month payment plan. Therefore, credits are not issued for holidays and/or special preplanned/emergency closures as listed in the Parent Handbook.

## Re-enrollment Fees (for current students only)

(Currently registered students only)

January 17, 2020 - February 28, 2020:	\$160
March 1- March 31:	\$210
After March 31:	\$260

## Classroom Ratios

Infants:	4:1
Toddlers:	6:1
Two's:	11:1
Three's:	14:1
Four's:	19:1

## Payment Plan

FACTS Account Management maintains our tuition payments. Payments are deducted on the 1st of each month. To sign up for FACTS, please go to our website [discovermela.com](http://discovermela.com) and click on the FACTS tab. FACTS customer service can be reached at 866-441-4637. There is a \$50 yearly enrollment fee per family for FACTS Account Management.

It is never the desire that any McGregor Early Learning Academy child be kept from attending the program due to financial situations; however, Non-Sufficient Funds are not tolerated. A \$30.00 service fee from FACTS will be charged (in addition to any service fee your bank may have). Your child will be dismissed due to the parent's negligence concerning multiple NSF's. For further questions, please contact the Administrative Coordinator at (239) 936-5015, ext. 1244.

Tax statements will be issued, upon request. Please contact Accounting at (239) 936-1754, extension 1399 or email at [beth.facella@mcgregor.net](mailto:beth.facella@mcgregor.net).

## Discounts and Refunds

We offer a 10% discount for the 2nd child and 3rd child enrolled in the preschool. Discount will be applied to the oldest child. A 4% discount will be given if the year is paid in full by the first day of school, along with the five-step registration process. No discount is given for six-month tuition payments.

Each student is offered a one-week vacation credit per six-month period enrolled. A formal Vacation Request Form must be obtained and returned no less than two weeks in advance. A student must not be in attendance in order to receive a vacation credit. Vacation credits may not be applied towards a Two-Week Withdrawal Notice. If a child is enrolled and starts later than February 1, vacation allowance will be accrued according to their start date.

## Parent Visitation

You are welcome to visit your child at any time. If you intend to visit your child for longer than thirty minutes, please receive approval from a director, except for special events. You may telephone anytime throughout the day to check on the well-being of your child. Parent Visitation is subject to availability due to COVID-19.

## Parent Concerns

The process by which questions or concerns are to be addressed may include scheduling an appointment with a director through the McGregor Early Learning Academy Administrative Coordinator at 936-5015, ext. 1244, or submitting your concern via email.

## Communication

Located in every classroom will be a Parent Information Board. This board will list your child's daily schedule, lunch menus, snack options, as well as upcoming events.

McGregor Early Learning Academy offers our parents a monthly informational parent newsletter. You will receive a

copy of this via email. Hard copies will be available at the front desk. Curriculum concentrations will be updated bi-weekly and displayed on the Parent Information Board, by the front desk. Signage is provided outside of each classroom to inform parents of the location of your child's class should they be outside of the classroom.

## Withdrawal Policy

McGregor Early Learning Academy is a full time, year around school. Once enrolled, your child has a spot secured for the entire school year and summer (August through July). Removing your child from the program requires the following in its entirety, two weeks prior to your child's last day of attendance:

1. Complete a Formal Two-Week Withdrawal Notice. This can be obtained at the front desk.
2. Hand in all your proximity fobs.

We will not recognize a verbal notice or email notice. This policy is in effect for all ages, including VPK.

VPK is a program offered to our 4-year-old students. While the dates of VPK typically run from August through May, your child is still considered enrolled in MELA through the summer, unless we are notified of a summer withdrawal.

When a spot permits for re-enrollment, full enrollment papers and current registration fees will be necessary upon the return of your child. Vacation time may not be applied toward a Two-Week Withdrawal Notice. Only families leaving in good standing that have abided by all policies will be permitted to return to the school.

## Arrival and Departure

Upon arrival and departure, it is mandatory that all children are checked in/out via EZCare workstations located at the front desk. Your child will not be accepted into the preschool or released to you without a printed receipt of check in/out. We will only release your child to the persons listed on the Permission to Pick-Up Form in your registration packet or a one day only Substitute Pick-Up Form. Each parent will be issued an individual Personal ID (PIN code), which will be required to pick up or drop off a student. Additional PIN codes may be requested for authorized pickups that will be picking up on a regular basis.

We recommend that you have an emergency substitute pick-up in place. All substitute pick-ups must be added to the approved drop-off list, by you, in person. Phone requests to add an approved substitute pick up will not be accepted. Please remind your substitute pick-up that they must show a photo ID in order to pick-up your child. Drop-off (7:00-8:00 a.m.) and pick-up (5:00-6:00 p.m.) rooms may be provided for various age groups at the Director's discretion. Substitute teachers may be placed in drop-off and pick-up rooms and may also be placed in the room on any given day that your child's teacher is absent. Our preschool closes promptly at 6:00 p.m. Late pick-ups are not tolerated. Repeated occurrences will result in dismissal. After 6:00 pm, a late fee of \$2 per minute will be charged to your child's account.

***It is the responsibility of all MELA parents to be available for phone contact and pick up throughout the day. If your child is sent home for any reason, we will contact you via telephone. If a message is left, a return call should be made back to MELA within 30 minutes stating your arrangements for pick-up. Pick up should follow no more than 30 minutes from the return phone call. Failure to contact the school and pick up within the given time frames could result in additional charges for one-on-one care (\$20 per hour). This policy is set in place for the wellbeing of your child and all students at MELA. We always encourage parents to have an alternate pick up available for your child, in the event that you cannot come when contacted.***

## Friday Pick-up

The following items will go home every Friday to be laundered in order for them to return on Monday:

- nap mat covers
- blankets
- pillows
- jackets/sweaters
- soiled clothing
- security object/stuffed toys, etc.

Book bags and all cubby belongings must go home each Friday as well. Items left in the classroom over the weekend are not the responsibility of MELA. These items will not be permitted back into the preschool until

laundered. McGregor Early Learning Academy will not be responsible for any/all misplaced/lost items. \*If your child will not be attending on any given Friday, you are required to take the above listed items home on the day of return and bring it back on the following day laundered.

\*Any items left in the classroom at the close of the school year will be donated to the McGregor Baptist Clothes Closet.

## CURRICULUM

### Wee Learn Curriculum

WEE Learn curriculum is a center-based curriculum that stimulates each part of the brain and reaches every learning style. The purpose of WEE Learn equipment is to provide a framework on which teachers can build an early childhood program that allows children to grow and develop as Jesus did - in "wisdom and stature" and in "favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). A child's growth and development is viewed as a process, not an event. This curriculum is developed around themes which provide opportunities for children to learn about God's Word and how to live in it. Activities which embrace physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual development are included under each theme topic. The themes are designed to help lay a foundation for understanding God, Jesus, the Bible, the church, self, others, and the natural world. Teachers are encouraged to use the activities to plan individual small-group and large-group activities which will meet the specific needs and interests of each child.

### Holidays and Special Events

**\*All events are subject to change or be canceled due to COVID-19 guidelines**

**Fall Season.** Every year MELA celebrates fall and harvest season with class parties, a hayride, hay day and a fall parade. We invite you and your children to dress up for this special celebration with biblical or story-book characters, or otherwise family-friendly costumes.

**Thanksgiving.** Every year we celebrate Thanksgiving with a feast in every classroom. We invite family and friends to participate and join us for this special event.

**Mother's Day.** Every year we host a Mother's Day celebration.

**Father's Day.** Every year we host a Father's Day celebration.

**Art Festival.** For this special event, we display your child's artwork and enjoy a time of fellowship together.

**Grandparents' Day.** At McGregor Early Learning Academy, we recognize the unique, important, and endearing relationship that Grandparents have with our students. We celebrate all Grandparents on this day.

**K-4 Graduation.** At the end of each year, we host a graduation ceremony for our VPK students.

**Extracurricular Programs.** These programs will be available for an additional fee. Please see the school calendar and fall newsletter for more information.

**Monthly Special Events.** These events may include visits from the police department, fire department, doctors, dentists, local science and pet establishments. Seasonal themes and activities are also a part of each month.

**Meet and Greet.** This event is held the week before the new school year begins. It is a time to meet your child's teachers, review sample curriculum, and visit his/her new classroom.

**Picture Days.** Professional photographs will be taken of your child at least twice a year, in addition to class pictures taken in the spring.

### Closures

MELA will be closed on the following dates. Please note, these closures are already configured into our yearly tuition rate and there are no additional financial credits issued for them.

September 6: Labor Day

November 25-26: Thanksgiving Break

December 24- January 1: Christmas Break/New Year's Break

January 17: MLK Day

February 21: Presidents Day

April 15: Good Friday

May 30: Memorial Day

July 4: Independence Day

Teacher Training Week: Each year, MELA is closed for the last week of the school year. This week is for teacher training and school preparation. This date is to be announced. Please be sure to read the newsletters that are emailed to you for this information.

\*Three emergency closure days are included in your annual tuition. In the event of a circumstance beyond our control (loss of power, hurricane, etc.), the school will be closed without financial credit.

## Parent Involvement Plan

McGregor Early Learning Academy offers many ways for our parents to be involved in our preschool. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact a member of our Administration.

## Lunches and Snacks

Two snacks a day are included in the tuition, along with purified water. Snacks consist of a variety of foods that are healthy and geared towards kids. Please stop by the front receptionist desk to receive a list of the variety of snacks we will offer. We do not provide snacks for Infants.

If you wish to bring a special snack or lunch for holidays, birthdays, etc., for your child's class, it must be approved by a member of support staff. Please submit your request to do so with a week's notice. All treats must be store-bought, due to Health Department regulations.

Parents of children with severe allergies will be asked to provide their own morning and afternoon snacks and lunch. It is necessary for all children with allergies, to have an Allergy Action Plan on file. This form is filled out by your child's physician and kept on file at the school.

Please refrain from packing candy or excessive junk food in your child's lunch. These items may not be served to your child.

Microwaves are not provided to heat your child's boxed lunch. If you would like for your child to have a hot lunch, please heat it at home and place it in a thermos to keep it warm until lunch time. We are not permitted by the Health Department to heat up your child's food. Refrigerators are only provided for the Infants and Toddlers. Please pack your child's lunch accordingly.

Please provide food for your child at the right temperature. We are not permitted to test your child's food to insure the correct temperature. Popcorn and other foods that may present a choking hazard to your child, will not be served.

## Hot Lunch Program

The McGregor Baptist Church Food Ministry offers a hot lunch program to McGregor Early Learning Academy students during the months of August through May. Hot lunches are \$4.25 per meal. If you wish to order a hot lunch for your child, you must first go online to [www.mypaymentsplus.com](http://www.mypaymentsplus.com) and activate your child's lunch account. You can choose any amount to add to your child's lunch account and pay with a credit card online. Once you have activated their account, you must order their hot lunch daily, as needed. **All lunch orders must be in by 9:30 am.** Upon signing your child in, via the EZcare system, you will be asked if you would like to order lunch, simply click "yes", with their desired milk choice. Lunches will be delivered to our younger age groups in their classrooms, while our 3's and 4's go to the school cafeteria to eat as CDC guidelines permit. Should you have further questions regarding Meal Pay Plus, please email [beth.facella@mcgregor.net](mailto:beth.facella@mcgregor.net). For questions regarding the lunch menu, please email [greg.benefiel@mcgregor.net](mailto:greg.benefiel@mcgregor.net).

## Absences

If your child will be absent for any reason, please notify the Receptionist desk (239-936-5015) as soon as possible.

## Toys and Accessories

Toys and other items from home are not permitted in the classroom. "Show and Tell" items must be brought in a shopping bag and placed in your child's cubby in their classroom and will be incorporated during show and tell time only.

## Nap Time

Kinder mats must be at least 1" thick (DCF guidelines) and should be labeled with your child's name. These mats are available from our Mini Mart located at the front desk for \$30. You may also choose to purchase one at a local retailer. All children are required to rest for two hours. If your child's mat becomes torn, which would cause the foam to show, it must be replaced for sanitary reasons. Upon enrollment, a mesh bag will be provided to store your child's nap mat and linens.

## Dress Code

Our dress code is in effect for safety reasons and reads as follows:

- closed-toe shoes ONLY
- shorts/bloomers to be worn under dresses and skirts
- skirts and dresses must be an appropriate length (knee length)
- shirts with offensive slogans will not be tolerated

\*Please dress your child appropriately for the weather.

You will be contacted by a staff member to provide proper attire to meet our dress code if your child is not in compliance.

## Behavior Guidance and Discipline in the Preschool

First, it is imperative to understand that "discipline" at any age level is NOT "punishment for unacceptable behavior." Instead, the very word discipline means "teaching" - the very kind of teaching Jesus did with His disciples! Discipline is a door of opportunity to teach children appropriate ways to meet their needs. First, we will immediately stop inappropriate behavior (behavior that might hurt a child, destroy materials, or disrupt the group), then help the child find another more acceptable way to behave.

Discipline for any student of any age will NEVER include any sort of negative physical touching, which includes, but is not limited to, spanking, slapping, shaking, pulling, sarcasm, threats, or withholding any sort of care or food from them.

Meeting Our Preschoolers' Needs: Our program promotes a positive approach to managing the behavior of all children. Discipline in the program has two primary goals. First, we strive to find a solution to the current situation. Second, we attempt to help the child process feelings, recognize consequences, explore alternative solutions and outcomes, and develop internal self-control. To accomplish these goals, we use the following techniques daily:

Prevention: A well-designed and well-equipped classroom prevents frustration, interruption, and hazards. It offers a clean and safe environment. In addition, the daily routine provides enough time for play, a sense of security, little waiting, and few transitions.

Positive Redirection: The basic procedure used in all classrooms is positive redirection, which is redirecting unacceptable behavior to an acceptable alternative. This may be enhanced by verbal praise and other reward systems. We praise children for their appropriate behavior and successes by describing what we see and how we feel.

Limit Setting: We have a few clear, simple rules that vary according to the developmental level of the children. In establishing rules, each teacher follows these guidelines:

1. Explain rules to students in a positive tone.
2. Specify the benefits of following rules.

3. Apply rules consistently.

**Problem Solving:** We appeal to the preschooler's intellectual growth and moral reasoning by using natural and logical consequences and asking questions to encourage problem solving. Teachers help children identify their needs, feelings, causes, alternatives, and choices. We provide cues such as the statement, "Use your words."

**Managing Behavior:** "Reflection Time" will be used only as a last resort when a child is unable to break a pattern of negative or attention-getting behavior. This is not a punishment, but rather a time of reflection for the child. When the child has regained control, he/she will be allowed to join the group. In any event, the reflection time will not exceed the number of minutes corresponding to the age of the child (for example: three (3) minutes for a three-year-old).

**Prayer:** The teachers and staff will follow up with their discipline with prayer. We will teach the child that Jesus wants them to obey their teacher.

### **Discipline Procedures**

**Behavioral Screenings:** A behavioral screening will be implemented when a director or teacher notices a pattern of disruptive physical and/or verbal inappropriate behavior. This behavioral screening will be completed by your child's teacher. At pick-up you will be asked to sign this report and a copy will be issued to you. The teachers will then continue the behavioral screening process for one week, and at that time the Director will determine if the behavior has improved or the behavior has continued. If the behavior has improved, the child will be removed from the screening. If the behavior has continued or worsened, a conference will be scheduled.

Conferences will be held periodically to follow up on your child's behavior. Behavior screenings will continue until your child's behavior improves. If the behavior does not improve and continues to be a threat to his/her classmates and teacher's well-being, it is at the Director's discretion to dismiss your child from the preschool.

1st attempt: Behavioral screening procedure

2nd attempt: One-day at home suspension

3rd attempt: Three days at home suspension

\*If the child's behavior persists and is detrimental to the well-being of other classmates, teachers or directors, the child will be expelled from the program.

### **Daily Discipline Procedure:**

1st offense: Redirect unacceptable behavior

2nd offense: Redirect negative behavior and give the child a verbal warning

3rd offense: Remove the child from the activity

4th offense: The child will be removed from the classroom and a Parent Communication Form will be sent home to notify the parent.

5th offense: If the safety and welfare of the other children or staff are diminished due to your child's behavior, the parent will be called for immediate pick-up and a conference will be scheduled with the Director.

### **Bullying and Extreme Behavior Policy:**

The following are examples of bullying or extreme behavior; inflicting physical or emotional harm to a student or staff member, using vulgar language, explicit gestures, or displaying uncontrolled behavior.

First offense, the child will be sent home for the day

Second offense, the child will go home for the day and will also be placed on a one-day-out-of-school suspension.

Third offense, the child will be expelled from the school for the current school year

The above offenses do not reset until the following school year.

\*The Directors have the authority to send any child home immediately if the physical aggression or foul language is directed at classmates or adults.

## Biting Policy

Consistent, loving boundaries help children learn about safety and living with others. Reasonable, realistic guidelines in an enriched learning environment give children the opportunity to choose appropriate, pro-social behavior.

Redirection, providing choices, consistent actions, praise and encouragement help to prevent discipline before they happen. Logical or natural consequences for wrong choice behavior help children learn self-control by reinforcing acceptable behavior and letting children know what to expect. Children experience and respond well to feelings of security, warmth, and love.

In the sensitive case of biting, there are necessary boundaries that have been established by McGregor Early Learning Academy for the benefit of every child enrolled in the preschool. It is important to understand that biting is a common stage among children who are around the age of two years. Beyond this age it is not common. Continued biting after the age of two may be an indication that something physically, emotionally, or mentally is a source of the biting. Thus, any child who does bite will be closely monitored.

The following steps will be taken in the event of a biting incident:

- A child biting any toy or play objects will be closely monitored.
- A child biting art supplies or any non-play material will be redirected. Loving verbal guidance will be given about what is not acceptable to put in his/her mouth.
- A child biting himself/herself will be redirected. Loving verbal guidance will be given about what is not acceptable to put in his/her mouth.
- A child biting another child will result in immediate redirection. Verbal guidance will be given about what is acceptable to put in his/her mouth, and the parents of the biter will be contacted. Both parents will be notified with an incident report.

### Safety precautions/consequences for biting another child or teacher:

**Stage 1:** 3 bites within a 21-day period-1 day in-school suspension with one-on-one care or 1 day out-of-school suspension. A Parent conference will be scheduled.

**Stage 2:** 3 additional bites within the 2nd 21-day period-3 day's in-school suspension with one on one care or 3 days out-of-school suspension

**Stage 3:** 3 additional bites within the 3rd 21-day period-1 week in-school suspension with one on one care or 1 week out-of-school suspension

**Stage 4:** 3 additional bites within the 4th 21-day period-1 week out-of-school suspension only

**Stage 5:** 3 additional bites within the 5th 21-day period-expulsion until the biting subsides

**\*If a child bites more than one time in a day, he/she will be sent home for the remainder of the day.** (All required pick-ups must be completed within thirty minutes of the initial phone call from MELE, to avoid additional charges for one-on-one care).

\*It is at the director's discretion to analyze the severity and circumstances of each bite and appropriate action as necessary.

Our in-school suspension with one-on-one care will be subsidized by the parent paying \$40/day (in addition to the tuition) and MELE will pay the remainder. One-on-one care is contingent upon the availability of a substitute teacher for a maximum of 8 hours a day (typically between the hours of 9 am- 5 pm, standard late fees of \$2 per minute will apply after 5 pm). If a substitute is not available, the child will have to follow through with the out of school suspension on some or all of the days.

If a child is removed from the program for any amount of time, payment is still required for missed days except in case of immediate expulsion.

If at any time the safety of another child is at stake, the Director has the right to immediately remove a child in order to protect the other students in the class. All incidents of biting will be documented and placed in the students' files. At no time will the names of the children involved be released to other families. The parent of the biter will be contacted and will be required to adhere to the policy above. The parent of the victim will be called if the bite results in an open wound or the bite is located from the neck up.

If there is anything at home that may be affecting your child's behavior, please let us know. Having a strong partnership with you is imperative in allowing us to know how to help your child.

We understand that children bite for various reasons, and precautions will be made. Our goal is to provide a safe, happy learning environment for all our children, and we will make every effort to ensure that you are always provided with clear communication from your child's teacher.

The above policy is in place to protect your child by providing a safe and secure environment. It is never our intention to punish the parent or the child.

Young children have trouble taking another person's point of view and communicating theirs. They may not realize that biting will hurt. Biting can occur for a variety of reasons. Here are some reasons to consider:

- An attempt to communicate
- Anger
- Fear
- Frustration
- Too much stimulation or activity
- Not enough adult/child interaction
- Imitation of behavior
- Confusion
- Reaction
- Avoidance of a task
- To gain access to something denied
- Sadness
- Not enough activity
- Attention seeking
- Noisy environment
- Curiosity
- Difficulty waiting for a turn
- Teething

Parent and caregiver must cooperate to prevent children from biting. If children are permitted to demonstrate such behavior at home, there will be no chance of eliminating it in the preschool setting. Working as a team, educator and parents may identify possible reasons for a child biting and respond accordingly. While early childhood professionals may be more familiar with positive discipline techniques, parents are experts on their own children's behavior. McGregor Early Learning Academy teachers and staff will take the time to look for a pattern in the biter's environment and emotional state at each episode. Does the child always bite the same individual? Is the biter simply exhausted? Or hungry? MELA staff will be ready to intervene immediately, but carefully. Teaching children age-appropriate ways to control themselves encourages the development of confidence and self-esteem. We will guide children toward self-control and away from biting. The key is understanding for adults and children alike.

The staff will separate the child who bit from the child who was bitten and place the biter in a reflection time. The teacher will then focus her attention on the victim. The child's wound will be cleaned with soap and water. The teacher will then educate the biter that our teeth are used for food and that biting his/her friends hurts them. The teacher will then notify a director by filling out an incident report. If it is a severe bite, we will then contact the appropriate parents. We will then suggest to the parent that a pediatrician should be consulted if the bite breaks the skin. We never identify the biter to the parents of the child who was bitten, to protect all children. Our top priority is to protect all children and create a safe learning environment for all students to thrive.

## Forms

### Daily Report Form:

A daily report will be sent home with your child (Infants-Two's). This report explains how your child behaved in school with their mood, toilet training, diapering, snacks, nap, lunch, etc.

### Health Report Form:

This form will notify the parent of any health-related incidents that occur, while your child is at school. This form must be signed by Teacher, Support Staff, and parent on the day of the incident.

### Parent Communication Form:

This form will communicate any details of your child's day, which are not pertaining to their physical health or well-being while at school.

### Vacation Request Form:

This form is required to be filled out and submitted one week prior to your child's first day absent.

### Substitute Pick-Up Form:

If a friend or family member will be picking up your child for one day only and you do not want him or her to be added to the list permanently, please fill out this form for the particular day he or she will be picking up.

### Two-Week Withdrawal Notice Form:

If you will be leaving the program at any time, you must fill this form out two weeks in advance to avoid additional fees.

Influenza Virus Form: Per DCF, all parents must sign that they have read and received this form during the months August and September each year.

Distracted Driver Form: Per DCF, all parents must sign that they have read and received this form during the months of September and April each year.

## Injury Procedure

Accident/Incident/Biting Report: When an accident, an incident, or a bite occurs at school, a report form will be filled out documenting this event. This report will be signed by a director or a support staff member, and then upon pick-up, you will be asked to sign before taking a copy.

Ice bags are available to the children for injuries and accidents. Each room is provided with a "boo-boo bag", which accompanies the teacher each time they leave their room.

If the child receives a severe injury, a support staff member will notify you of this accident.

## Health Guidelines

- **See separate COVID 19 policy for additional guidelines**

You will be notified to pick your child up within 30 minutes if any of the following occurs:

- Vomiting (one bout for any reason)
- Two bouts of diarrhea
- Fever (over 100.4 degrees)
- Questionable rash or markings
- Head lice \* (no nits remaining)
- Excessive coughing
- Conjunctivitis (or the appearance of)
- Sudden allergic reactions
- Excessive crying

If any of the above occurs, the child may not return for 24 hours after symptoms cease or without a doctor's note.

The doctor's note must state that the child is not contagious and may return to school. If this is due to allergies or a permanent physical condition of a child, a doctor's letter will be required for admittance and kept in the child's permanent file. Doctor's notes that do not specify the length of time a child is clear to come back without being contagious will only be active for one week.

At any time, the Director may request a doctor's note in order to return to school. This note must state that the child is not contagious and may return to school.

\*If a child is diagnosed with head lice, they may return when there is no lice or nits. Head check is required by a support staff member in order to return to school.

Please be prepared for such emergency situations and make arrangements for occurrences ahead of time. Keep your work number and emergency phone numbers current in your child's file. In the event of an emergency, we will call the numbers on our student records. After 30 minutes, we will begin to call individuals that you have approved in your child's file to pick up your child. If you need to update your records, please email [julie.beaird@mcgregor.net](mailto:julie.beaird@mcgregor.net). In the event that you or an authorized pick up are unable to pick up your child within thirty minutes, upon a requested pick-up phone call, we will seek to find a staff member for one-on-one care for your child. One on one care is not included in your child's monthly tuition; you will be charged \$10 per hour for this service.

If you have taken your child to the doctor, a note from the doctor stating the diagnosis, stating the child is not contagious and the return date will be required for the child to return to school. If your child has any of the above symptoms at home, we do trust that you will follow our strict medical policies for the well-being of your child, other students, and teachers in the program. Regardless of medical policies stated in this handbook, the Director is to determine whether a child may attend school on any given day.

No medication (prescription or non-prescription) of any kind will be administered by McGregor Early Learning Academy associates. If your child has a life-threatening condition, that requires medication, please speak with an Administrator.

Diaper creams and sunscreen are treated as medication and will require a Medical Release Waiver to be signed and kept in your child's file. If desired, sunscreen should be applied by the parent, each morning prior to being dropped off. If you desire an evening application of sunscreen, please contact an Administrator.

## **Communicable Disease Policy**

HRS County Public Health Unit Director / Administrator reserves the authority to invoke quarantine powers under 232.032 Florida Statutes, which could lead to the removal of your child if proper immunization documentation or medical exemptions are not provided. Parents are given the option to exempt immunizations with proper documentation.

## **Medical Information**

In the event of a medical emergency and the parents cannot be reached, Program Directors will first attempt to reach the emergency contacts listed in the registration packet. If we are unable to reach an emergency contact and the accident warrants, we will call 911.

If your child's injury results in an open wound, we will clean the area with soap and water, hydrogen peroxide or an antiseptic solution. All the MELA staff members are certified in First Aid and CPR.

## **Parental Custody**

In the event of a "family dissolution," McGregor Early Learning Academy is bound by law to enforce the rulings of the court. A copy of any restrictions, injunctions, restraining orders, or visitation schedules must be presented to the preschool. It is necessary that we have a copy of an official document with valid dates. We will not be responsible, nor can we enforce anything outside the court's decision.

## **Videos and Television Viewing**

Movies are only viewed as a special event and must be approved by an administrator. No movies may be brought in from home. Television programs are only viewed if in direct relation to the curriculum or a learning activity.

## Toilet Training

Children who are toilet training should have 2-3 changes of clothing, including an extra pair of shoes. Our desire is to work as a team when your child is undergoing toilet training. If a child has an accident and he/she does not have a change of clothes, the parent will be notified to bring in a change of clothes immediately. MELA may not have extra clothing on campus, so it is required that all students have an extra set of clean clothing including shoes. We strictly enforce that those children having multiple training accidents must be in a pull-up. This is a health issue, as other children sit and play on the floor and with MELA equipment. Please supply pull-ups for emergencies.

McGregor Early Learning Academy does not begin to train the children to use the toilet until the final stage of the older toddler classroom. During this time, children are introduced to the toilet. If a child in the toddler room is requesting to use the potty on their own, a staff member will assist the child in using the toilet. Most toilet training occurs in the two-year-old classroom.

All students entering the three-year-old classroom must be fully toilet trained without accidents. Three-year-old students must be fully able to change their clothes and properly clean themselves after restroom use, without assistance.

## Infant Requirements

The following information will help you prepare for bringing your infant, toddler, or super toddler to our facility and will also help our staff provide better care for your child:

Correct supply of prepared bottles for the day with lids, labeled with first and last name  
Cereal, labeled  
Food, labeled, unopened  
Change of clothing (socks and shoes) (2), labeled  
Wipes, labeled  
Diapers, labeled (cloth diapers are not allowed, due to sanitary reasons)  
Diaper cream, labeled  
Pacifier, if needed - Must be labeled  
Sippy cup, if needed, labeled with first and last name  
Security blanket or toy, if needed, labeled  
Schedule of feeding, napping, etc., for your infant, labeled with your child's name  
When infant is ready to transition to the Toddler Room, a mat will be required.  
Glass bottles are not permitted

Refrigerators are available in all infant rooms to keep bottles, food, etc., cold.

Mothers are welcomed to come and breastfeed throughout the day.

We require all who enter the infant room to remove shoes or wear disposable shoe covers provided for you. Siblings should not enter the Infant classrooms. We strive to keep our rooms clean and sanitary.

The following lines up with the advice of local pediatricians and the Health Department to insure the highest level of safety and health for your infant:

Infants will be placed on their back while sleeping. This is continued until we feel confident that they can roll over to their tummy on their own.

All infants 6 weeks to 12 months will be held while consuming their bottle.

All meals and bottles must be prepared prior to dropping off your child and will be sent home daily. This includes cereal, jar foods, and snacks. No food will be stored in the classrooms.

Once a bottle has been offered, we are only permitted to continue to offer it for one hour. After one hour, the contents will be discarded.

## Toddler Requirements

Bottles in the Toddler Room are permitted for a transition time only, labeled with first and last name  
Lunch must be in a thermos, labeled, if a hot lunch is desirable to your child.

There are no microwaves in the rooms.

Refrigerator will be provided for lunches.

Diaper cream, labeled

Diapers, labeled

Pacifier will be permitted at nap time, labeled.

Nap mat must be 1" thick, labeled.

Blanket, pillow, sheet, and security blanket or toy, labeled

Sippy cup, labeled with first and last name

Change of clothes, socks and shoes, labeled

Mesh bag for nap mat and bedding, labeled

Lunches and snacks must be finger foods.

All meals must be prepared prior to dropping off your child and will be sent home daily. No food will be stored in the classrooms.

## Super Toddler Requirements

Sippy cups, labeled with first and last name

Lunch must contain a cold pack or a thermos, labeled

Change of clothes, socks and shoes, labeled

Diaper/pull-ups, labeled

Diaper cream, labeled

Pacifier to be used only at nap time for a transition period, labeled

Nap mat must be 1" thick, labeled

Blanket, pillow, sheet, and security blanket or toy, labeled

Backpack, labeled

Mesh bag for nap mat and bedding, labeled

All meals must be prepared prior to dropping off your child and will be sent home daily. No food will be stored in the classrooms.

## Two, Three & Four-Year-Old Requirements

Change of clothes, socks and shoes, labeled

Lunch packed with an ice pack or in a thermos, labeled

Nap mat must be 1" thick, labeled

Blanket, sheet, pillow, labeled

Backpack, labeled

Mesh bag for nap mat and bedding, labeled

No sippy cups, please

\*Every item brought into our facility MUST be labeled with the child's name in permanent marker.

## Pacifier Policy

If a pacifier falls onto the floor or if another child places it in his/her mouth, it will be washed with soap and water. A disinfectant steamer is available for disinfecting purposes on an as needed basis.

Pacifiers are permitted in the Toddler room for nap time only and in the Super Toddler room at nap time, for a transition time only.

## Sanitizing Policy

- **See separate COVID 19 policy for additional guidelines**

All toys and items in the classrooms will be sanitized daily with an approved disinfectant.

Our teachers strive and attempt to sanitize all hard-surfaced toys in between the use of each child. Cloth toys and linens are laundered daily.

Cloth seat covers, nap mats, and straps are laundered/sanitized every Friday.

Carpets will be sanitized quarterly.

## Hand washing Policy

Our teachers wash their hands with soap and water before the children arrive, before feeding the children, and after changing diapers or toileting a child.

Any MELA employee entering any classroom is required to wash her hands. Any MELA employee entering the infant room will also wear socks or foot covers. Foot covers are provided for you.

Children's hands and faces are washed numerous times a day: Upon morning arrival to class, after snack/lunch time, after playground time, after diaper changing and before the child goes home.

## Student placement

**All students are placed according to their age as of September first of the current school year.**

### All children under the age of 2

Each student that enrolls into our program will be assessed and placed according to his/her developmental and behavioral needs.

### Infants

Our infant room cares for ages 6 weeks and older. Once an infant is 12 months of age and/or walking we will begin to assess the availability of placement in the Toddler room. We may move a child earlier or later depending on their behavioral and developmental needs.

### Toddlers

Our Toddler room is for children 12 months of age and older. We have multiple toddler classroom and children are placed in them according to their developmental needs. Toddlers may be promoted mid-year to an older toddler room but will not be promoted to the two-year-old classroom until the following school year begins. Once a child is placed in the two-year-old classroom, they will remain in that class for the entire school year.

At the start of each new school year (typically in August, date TBD) children will be promoted to the appropriate age group which is determined by their date of birth as of September 1st of the current school year. This is applicable to all MELA students, infants through five years of age.

## Indoor Playground

An indoor facility is available for our students when the weather is inclement. Children must be walking, 12 months or older, and be registered as a current student at MELA to use the playground.

## Outdoor Playground

All children will go outside, either to the playground or on a buggy ride, two times per day depending on their age.

MELA onsite, age-appropriate playgrounds contain state of the art equipment. Children must be 12 months or older and must be enrolled as a current student at MELA to use the playground. MELA has two playgrounds. One is designed for our Twos, Toddlers, and Super Toddlers, and the other is designed specifically for our three and four-year-olds.

Please make sure that you dress them appropriately for the weather. If you would like your child's teacher to apply sunscreen before going outdoors, please contact an Administrator. We only offer afternoon application and ask that the parent applies the desired product before coming to school in the morning.

## Heat Index

MELA observes the heat index twice daily. If the heat index is between 90 and 95 the children will play outdoors

for a maximum of 20 minutes. If the heat index is above 95, children are not permitted to play on the outdoor playground and will instead use one of our indoor activity rooms.

## **Bye-bye Buggies**

Bye-bye buggies will be used to take toddlers and infants outdoors to enjoy the fresh air and a change of scenery. Our toddlers and infants enjoy a buggy ride once in the morning and once in the afternoon.

## **Teachers and Volunteers**

No one is permitted to work until a level two background check is completed. Paid associates are required to have FBI, FDLE background checks and drug tests. No one under 18 years of age will be employed by the department.

## **Security**

McGregor Baptist Church provides a Security Team, as well as the security measures taken to provide each child with a safe environment. A member of the Security Department is always on campus and is available to respond to the needs of our program if necessary. We continue to raise the bar to attain high standards at McGregor Early Learning Academy.

Two Fobs will be issued per family, which are included in your initial registration fee. Beyond these two Fobs, you may purchase additional Fobs, if permission has been granted by a director. Additional Fobs are \$15. Every parent who has been given a Fob must always have the Fob to access the MELA Campus. If you have misplaced, lost, or damaged your Fob, you will be charged for a replacement. Upon your child's final day of enrollment, please return your Fobs.

Located at every MELA entranceway is a proximity reader. This system was installed to provide protection and security for our children. Parents will be able to scan their Fob to enter the department. No one will be permitted to enter without a Fob unless approved by one of the MELA support staff members. If your Fob is lost or stolen, please report this information to the MELA Receptionist so the Fob can be deactivated. For your child's safety, please use the east entrance to drop off and pick up your child. The west entrance of the Joy Building will be used for rainy days only. We ask that you never hold or prop any doors open and allow each parent to access the building with his or her own fob.

## **Fire Drills & Emergency Evacuation Procedures**

Fire and emergency evacuation routes are posted in each room. Every Infant and Toddler Room has at least one crib with evacuation casters. In the event of a fire drill or emergency, the infants and the toddlers are placed into these cribs at six per crib and wheeled outside to the designated area. Super Toddlers, two, three, and four-year-olds, will have a long, knotted rope for each child to hold onto and will proceed with the fire drill in this orderly manner. All rooms are to evacuate to the designated meeting area on their evacuation plan and wait there until the Director has given you the information that the building is clear to re-enter. The teachers will take their attendance sheet with them and will count the children as they evacuate and again when they get to their designated meeting area. At no time can a parent pick up or drop off their child during a fire drill. They must wait until the children are back in their classroom. At that time, another head count will be taken and then reported to the Director, and then the teacher can release or accept your child.

McGregor Early Learning Academy will have monthly fire drills. The teachers are trained to quickly evacuate in an orderly manner to the designated area. The directors and support staff will assist in these drills.

## **Hurricane Procedures**

For Media/Hurricane Advisory Information, visit [www.mcgregor.net](http://www.mcgregor.net) or call to listen for updates at 936-1754 or contact the local news station for updated information. Three emergency closures are included in your yearly tuition.