



*Strong Roots, Bright Future.*

# **PARENT HANDBOOK**

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# WELCOME TO ROOTS ACADEMY

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Roots Academy! We are so excited for you and your child to become part of our family. Roots Academy is committed to providing high quality, faith based childcare and educational services to families and our surrounding community. Thank you for trusting us to teach and minister to your child during this special foundational period in their lives.

At Roots Academy, we believe each child is a unique creation and is special in God's eyes. Our desire is that the children grow as Jesus did as described in Luke 2:40 (ESV) "And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him."

Parental Engagement is very important in a child's overall growth and development. Without your involvement, your children will only receive a fraction of what they need and deserve to grow strong in body, mind, and spirit. Parental engagement comes in many forms, such as: volunteering in the classroom, supporting the teachers and staff, reading to your children, helping them with school projects, and positively encouraging them every day. This type of engagement will dramatically help with the overall growth of your children and will help reinforce what they receive from Roots Academy: quality education, continuous encouragement, and a deep understanding of God's unconditional love.

This Parent Handbook is intended to communicate the Roots Academy expectations. Understanding these expectations will help you and your child. If at any time you have a question about the contents of this handbook, please do not hesitate to ask.

Again, I welcome you and your family to Roots Academy! We look forward to developing a wonderful relationship and to watch how God works in and through your child.

In His Service,

Wendy Whitlow  
Director of Roots Academy

# Section I: About Us

## Our Educational Philosophy

Our number one goal at Roots Academy is to build a solid foundation where every child will learn how to grow into a dynamic life in Christ. We do this by caring for the whole child (spiritually, socially, emotionally, physically, and academically). As educators we understand how hard it can be to find the perfect place for a child to grow, thrive and learn in a Christ centered, loving environment. As a team, we will partner together to help each child reach and exceed every developmental milestone, by using the whole child approach.

Roots Academy adheres to the standards set forth by the Florida League of Christian Schools. In addition, we follow the Early Education Curriculum Guidelines. We seek to provide activities that are developmentally appropriate for the children in our care.

## Mission

Our mission is for our students to have strong roots in faith, by knowing the God who created them. While also having strong roots in learning so they are ready for kindergarten. All, so that they will have a bright future with family and a successful career.

## Core Values

We love the God who created us.  
We love others and we are kind.  
We do our best at everything.

## Statement of Faith

### **THE BIBLE // HIS WORD TO ALL PEOPLE**

The Bible is God's written word to all people. Written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. Since God inspired it, the Bible is truth without mixture of error and is completely relevant to our daily lives.

(Deuteronomy 4:1-2; Psalms 119:11, 89, 105; Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 22:29; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 3:16)

### **THE TRINITY // GOD: THREE IN ONE**

God has existed in relationship with Himself for all eternity. He exists as one substance in three persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Although each member of the Trinity serves a different function, they each possess equal power and authority.

(Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 61:1; Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 1:35; John 5:21-23; 14:10, 16; Romans 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 1:8-10; James 2:19)

### **THE FATHER // GOD IS GREAT, GOD IS GOOD**

God is great: He is all powerful, all knowing, ever present, unchanging, completely worthy of our trust, and above all, He is holy. It is in Him that we live, move and exist. God is good: He is our perfect Father, loving, compassionate, and faithful to His people and His promises.

(Exodus 3:14; Numbers 23:19; Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; Psalm 11:4-6; Malachi 3:6; John 3:16; 4:24; 5:26; 14:1; Acts 17:28; Romans 3:3-4)

### **THE SON // IT'S ALL ABOUT HIM**

Jesus Christ is completely human, but at the same time completely God. He is the only plan for bringing people far from God back into right relationship with God. Jesus lived a perfect life so that He could be the substitution for us in satisfying God's demands for perfection. He received the punishment for our sins when He died on the cross, satisfying God's wrath, and defeating death in His resurrection so that we could all have life.

(Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 14:33; 16:16; 28:5-6; Luke 22:70; 24:46-47; John 1:1, 14; 10:30; 11:25-27; 17:1-5; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 8:1-3; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; Gal 4:4-5; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15; 2:9; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 12:2; 13:8; 1 John 4:14-15)

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT // GOD IS ALWAYS WITH US**

The presence of the Holy Spirit assures us of our relationship with Christ, guiding believers into all truth and exalting Christ. He convicts people of sin, reminds us of God's righteousness and the coming judgement. He also is our comforter, the giver of spiritual gifts, empowers us to witness boldly, and make us more like Christ.

(Genesis 1:2; Psalms 51:11; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Mark 1:10; Luke 1:35; John 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4; 13:2; Romans 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Peter 1:21; Revelation 22:17)

### **ETERNITY // IS ETERNAL LIFE SOMEWHERE**

Man was created to exist forever. He will either exist eternally separated from God by sin, or in union with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is Hell. To be eternally in union with Him is eternal life. Heaven and Hell are places of eternal existence. (John 3:16, 36; Romans 6:23; 1 John 2:25; 5:11-13; Revelation 20:15)

### **MAN // GOD'S REFLECTION**

Man is made in the image of God and is the supreme object of His creation. Man was created to have fellowship with God but became separated in that relationship through sinful disobedience. As a result, man cannot attain a right relationship with God by his efforts alone. Every human person possesses dignity, is uniquely created, is worthy of respect, and Christian love.

(Genesis 1:26-30; 2:7, 18-22; 3; Psalms 8:3-6; 32:1-5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; Ephesians 2; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11)

### **SALVATION // HE IS THE ONLY WAY**

The blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross, provides the only way of salvation through the forgiveness of sin. Salvation occurs when people place their faith in the death and resurrection of

Christ as sufficient payment for their sin. Salvation is a gift from God and cannot be earned through our own efforts. Jesus is the antidote.

(Isaiah 1:18; 53:5-6; 55:7; Matthew 1:21; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:12; 3:16; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; Romans 1:16-18; 3:23-25; 5:8-10; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; Hebrews 9:24-28; Revelation 3:20)

## **Marriage and Sexuality**

We believe that the term ‘marriage’ has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one biological man and one biological woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture.

(Genesis 2:24; Mark 10:7-9; Genesis 1:27)

## **Section II: Communication**

### **Daily Reports**

All communications to parents from teachers will be via ProCare. Each caregiver will be provided access to the ProCare application. A Daily Report will be completed by the teacher and submitted via ProCare to inform you of your child's routines, activities, and interactions daily. This will be done via pictures, notes, and/or messages. To communicate with your child's teacher throughout the day, please use the message feature on ProCare. For messages sent after-hours, teachers will do their best to respond in a timely fashion during work hours.

### **Class Schedule**

A daily schedule will provide for a balanced program of child-initiated and adult-directed activities, including individual and small group activities, routines, and transitions. Teachers will develop and provide a classroom schedule that will provide a balanced program and guide children and adults into a secure and orderly day. This schedule will alternate periods of quiet and active play, outdoor/gross motor play, large muscle/small muscle activity. Routine tasks based on developmental needs, such as hand washing, tooth brushing, and toileting will also be incorporated.

Daily schedules will be posted in the classroom in a way that is visible to adults.

### **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Your teacher will conduct two Parent/Teacher Conferences per year. Parent/Teacher Conferences will be scheduled at times that are mutually convenient for you and your teacher.

Parent/Teacher Conferences are conducted to enhance the knowledge and understanding of both you and the teacher regarding the educational and developmental progress and activities of your child. Parent/Teacher Conferences will allow you more time to share your observations of your child, ask questions, discuss your expectations, set shared goals, and express any concerns. They are also opportunities to identify ways to improve your child's learning, both at home and in childcare.

### **Open Door Policy**

Upon enrollment, Roots Academy is open to parents/guardians to come onsite during all program hours. We will also have designated space for any mothers who want to come to the facility to breastfeed. For volunteer opportunities and or to arrange for a tour of Roots Academy, please reach out to the child's teacher and/or Director.



## Section III: Health and Safety

### Health and Immunization Records

As part of the enrollment process, you will be asked to identify your child's health care provider(s) and to give written consent to enable our program to establish communication with your child's provider(s) regarding your child's health status.

You will also be required to obtain and provide documentation of an up-to-date physical examination, immunization records, special dietary requests (if applicable), and medication authorization (if applicable) within 30 days of your child's enrollment. Assessment of your child's current health status will include the following screenings, examinations, and information:

- **Child Health History:** You will be asked to complete, with staff involvement, a "Child Health History" and a "Nutrition Questionnaire" which will be the basis for meeting your child's health needs.
- **Physical Exam / Well Child Exam:** Each child MUST have on file a current FL School Entry Health Form DH 3040. These forms are valid for two (2) years from the date the doctor signed it. A copy must be uploaded to your documents tab in ProCare by taking a picture of it AND a paper copy must be handed to the director within 30 days of enrollment or your child will not be allowed to attend.
- **Immunizations:** Prior to the child's first day of attendance, you must provide a FL Health FL Certificate of Immunization for to Roots Academy. It will be your responsibility to make sure that your child's immunization record is up to date and on file in your child's ProCare document tab. A Permanent Medical Exemption, documented on the Form DH 680, can be granted if a child cannot be fully immunized due to medical reasons. In this case, the child's physician must state in writing, the reasons for exemption based on valid clinical reasoning or evidence. Form DH 681, Religious Exemption From Immunization, is issued if immunizations are in conflict with the religious tenets and practices of the child's parent or guardian. This exemption is issued by a County Health Department (CHD) and based on established religious beliefs or practices only.

### Emergency Preparedness

Roots Academy has an Emergency Evacuation Plan and is posted in the facility. The Emergency Evacuation Plan includes a diagram of safe exit routes by which Roots Academy and children may exit in the event of an emergency requiring evacuation. In the event of evacuation or relocation, there will be sign-in and sign-out sheets to compare and account for all children in attendance. Teachers will immediately call all parents/guardians to inform them of the evacuation and where they are currently located so that the children can be picked up. Please be aware that you may be asked to pick up your child early depending on the emergency.

- **Fire Drills:** Fire Drills will be conducted monthly using the Emergency Evacuation Plan. They will be conducted at various times of the day when children are in care.

- **Emergency Plan for Response to Inclement Weather:** Children will be immediately removed from outdoor play areas during rainfall, whenever lightning is visible, or thunder is heard. In the event of inclement weather (observable lightning, thunder, thunderstorms, hurricanes, hail and tornadoes) children in care will be kept in an area of the facility that is away from any windows or doorways that lead outdoors.
- **Power/Utility Outage Procedure:** In case of a power or utility outage (water, electricity) at the facility that lasts for more than two hours, you will be notified to come and pick up your child within two hours of receiving the notification.
- **Missing or Abducted Child(ren):** Active supervision is always practiced by our sites. If a child is not accounted for at any time, the staff member responsible for the child will search the premises. If the child is not located after all potential hiding spots and immediate outdoor areas have been searched along with confirmation that child was not picked up by a parent or guardian, 9-1-1 will be called.
- **Pandemic/Outbreaks:** Proper sanitation processes and procedures are always practiced at our sites. In cases of pandemics and/or outbreaks, the program will follow health guidelines provided by local, state and federal authorities.
- **Hostage Situations:** The staff at our sites are always alert and aware of their surroundings which includes suspicious vehicles and people. In the case of a hostage situation, a staff member will attempt to gain the focus of the individual while others in the building will move to exit the building or locations farthest from the incident as quietly and quickly as possible. Law enforcement will be called immediately.
- **Lockdown Situations:** Roots Academy will conduct a lockdown drill once per year. All children are kept out of view and away from danger in classrooms or other designated safe locations. Staff members ensure that all children are accounted for and present. During this time, no one is allowed to enter or leave the premises until it is declared safe.

In case of emergencies that address an epidemic and/or pandemics programs will follow state and local guidance as it relates to closures. Programs will develop procedures within their emergency preparedness plans to address emergency preparedness around the prevention and the spread of infectious diseases.

## **Weather/Facility Emergency Closure**

Roots Academy will follow the St. Johns County Public School System for closings/delays due to inclement weather. Every effort will be made to alert you if the facility will be closed due to weather or facility emergency. When Roots Academy closes due to weather, facility, or health emergency, parents are still responsible to pay the full tuition cost for the week.

## **Medical Emergencies**

All Roots Academy teachers/staff working directly with children will have current certification for Infant & Child First Aid and C.P.R. First Aid kits and the medical and dental emergency postings will be maintained and be readily accessible to Roots Academy teachers/staff. Any serious injuries (e.g., broken bones, severe bleeding, and loss of consciousness) require a call to 911 and parents will be notified as soon as possible. If the 911 dispatcher does not feel the

injury warrants EMS involvement, Roots Academy will follow recommendations of 911 dispatchers. EMS makes the decision as to what hospital the patient will be transported to.

## **Medication Administration**

At this time, Roots Academy cannot administer medication during operations, except for Epi Pens, which will be properly stored and administered in case of emergency by staff that are trained. If your child needs medication during the school day, an authorized parent or caregiver may come onsite to administer medication. Parents/Guardians must communicate with the teacher if they are administering medication before or during school to the child.

## **Sick Child (Illness) Policy**

To ensure the safety and health of our children and staff and remain in compliance with regulations set forth by licensing authorities, children or adults who have any of the following conditions will be excluded from the classroom/site until either the condition subsides, or we receive communication from that individual's medical provider stating that they are no longer contagious.

Children who have any of the following conditions/symptoms are prohibited from coming onsite:

- An oral temperature over 101o or 100o if taken under the arm.
- Vomiting (more than one time in last 24 hours)
- Diarrhea (more than one time in last 24 hours)
- Deep repeated coughing, difficulty breathing, or untreated wheezing (call or see your doctor).
- Complaints of a stiff neck and headache with one or more of the above symptoms: sore/red throat, unexplained rash, earache, thick green drainage from the nose along with fever or tiredness, an unusual yellow coloring to the skin or eyes, cuts or opening on the skin that are oozing or pus-filled.
- Lice
- A contagious/communicable illness includes, but is not limited to:
  - Covid-19
  - Flu
  - Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease
  - Hepatitis Type A/Type B
  - Measles
  - Meningitis
  - Mononucleosis
  - Mumps
  - Pink eye (conjunctivitis)
  - Roseola
  - Rubella
  - Strep Throat (streptococcal infections)
  - Whooping cough (Pertussis)

If you know or suspect that your child has a contagious illness, it is expected that you keep the child home, take them to the doctor, and return with a note from the doctor.

## **Section IV: Policies and Procedures**

### **Arrival / Departure Policy**

Upon arrival and at departure you must sign your child in and out through the ProCare app. All authorized parents/caregivers will have a unique ProCare QR code through the app to do this. PLEASE DO NOT SHARE CODES. Each person picking up a child needs to use their own code, so we are clear as to who has entered the building. If either parent/guardian is restricted by a court order to have access to their child, a copy of the court order must be provided to the Roots Academy Director and be kept on file at the facility.

Your child will only be released to you, or individuals that have been authorized during enrollment, by completing an 'Authorization for Child Release' form. These persons must provide their identification card to the Roots Academy designated staff. It is your responsibility to inform all authorized persons dropping off or picking up the child that they must follow the proper sign-in and out procedures.

In case of an emergency when you request by telephone for your child to be released to a previously unauthorized individual, you will provide your predetermined password to verify your identity.

It may take some time for your child to adjust to a new environment and to develop a trusting relationship with their Roots Academy teachers and staff. Talk to your child and reassure them that you will be returning to pick them up. Talk with your teacher about any strategies that can help to ease the transition.

### **Attendance**

Our curriculum for ages two and up is taught between 9:00am – 10:00am and we request your child be dropped off no later than 10:00am. If a child arrives frequently late or is not consistent with attendance, the Director will reach out to you to create a plan of action.

Roots Academy reserves the right to restrict access to the front door for parents that continually drop off a child past 10:00AM, and that child may be prohibited from attending class that day to prevent class disruptions. Exceptions may be made for doctor's or other personal or medical appointments, but the parent is required to an advance notice to the teacher regarding any late arrivals via the ProCare app, and late arrival due to an appointment should be the exception, not the norm.

If your child is sick or will not be in, we ask that you please call or message us through the ProCare app to let us know the reason for the absence so we can keep accurate attendance records. In addition, this helps us with adequate staffing and coverage for childcare ratios. We thank you for your support in communication. In extreme circumstances, frequent or extended period absences may be grounds for withdrawal from our program.

## **Discipline, Guidance, and Behavior Policy**

Roots Academy uses positive behavior strategies when teaching children how to manage their own behavior. Child guidance and classroom management decisions will promote positive social skills, foster mutual respect, strengthen self-esteem, and support a safe environment. Teachers will use positive behavioral strategies for guiding and managing behavior of children (praise, encouragement, providing children alternative choices and redirection away from inappropriate behavior, and avoiding power struggles with children whenever possible.)

Some basic rules that the children will be expected to follow at Roots Academy are:

- No Hitting, No Pushing, No Biting  
No Name Calling or Foul Language  
No Fighting, Shooting, or Sword Play
- No Rough Housing or Playing on Furniture  
No Running Indoors, No Yelling Indoors (use indoor voice)
- Respect the Property and Feelings of Other Children

In cases when a child presents dangerous behavior with the potential for hurting themselves or others, staff will intervene immediately and ensure the Director is aware of what is going on. Additional strategies could include removing the child from the immediate situation, organizing a parent meeting to discuss interventions, providing time to calm down, problem solving, and planning how to re-enter the play environment. We will work with the parent or guardian to create a necessary behavior plan and when necessary, in extreme cases remove the child from Roots Academy.

The following means of child discipline are strictly forbidden:

- The use of corporal punishment (hitting, spanking, physical force.)
- Withholding food or access to the bathroom
- Name calling, or any other form of demeaning treatment
- The use of isolation as a form of disciplining.
- Using any form of verbal abuse, including profane, sarcastic language, threats, or derogatory remarks about a child or a child's family.

**Biting:** In instances of biting, classroom staff will work together with parents and try to reach the cause as to deter future biting – charting location, who was involved, time, other behaviors, staff present, and circumstances. Staff will “shadow” children who indicate a tendency to bite, to head off biting situations and reinforce appropriate behavior. After repeated biting incidents, the Director will meet with parents to go over a written behavior improvement plan and offer resources for assistance.

## **Child Abuse and Neglect Policy**

All Roots Academy staff members are mandated reporters and is required by law to report incidents where there is a reasonable suspicion that abuse or neglect has occurred, or there is a substantial risk that abuse or neglect may occur, either in the care of a Roots Academy program or outside of it.

Childcare personnel will be alert to physical and behavioral indicators of child abuse and neglect and will report incidents where there is reasonable suspicion that abuse, or neglect has occurred to the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800- 96-ABUSE.

Records of reported cases of suspected child abuse or neglect will be kept confidential.

## **Procedures for Caring for a Sick Child**

The child will be provided with a comfortable space that will prevent his/her exposure of illness to the other children, using as much classroom/office space allowable, but also in a way that is nurturing to the child. When needed, the child will be provided with a resting mat to lay on while they are waiting. Rest mats and toys will be sanitized after each use.

Child's temperature will be taken when any of the following signs are present: nausea, vomiting, flushed cheeks, warm to the touch on the back of your hand, diarrhea, excessive coughing, or fatigue.

## **Bathroom Policy**

Roots Academy adheres to all state health and safety guidelines related to children using the bathrooms and for diapering.

### **For children that are toilet training or independently using the toilet:**

- A child will NEVER be alone in a closed bathroom with one adult. The door must be open, or at least three people must be present (2 children and 1 adult, 2 adults and 1 child, etc.) Assistance may be provided to help a child wipe when he/she requests it.
- Staff will not put a child on the toilet unless the child is willing.
- Staff will follow all regulations set by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). When a child has an accident, they are not allowed to wash out soiled clothing. Soiled clothing will be put in a plastic bag for the caregiver take home and wash.

### **For children in diapers:**

- When children in diapers are in care, there will be a diaper changing area with an impermeable surface which is cleaned with a sanitizing solution after each use.
- Children will be always attended to when being diapered or when changing clothes.
- Soiled disposable diapers shall be disposed of in a plastic lined, securely covered container, which is not accessible to children. The container shall be emptied and sanitized at least daily.

## **Dress Code Policy**

Your child should be dressed in comfortable, washable clothing that is appropriate for indoor and outdoor play. It is encouraged that items are labeled with the child's name.

Your child must wear closed-toes non-skid shoes. Sturdy sneakers are recommended and promote better health and safety. Please note that shoes are required to stay on feet all day long per DCF standards. Including during nap time. Please keep jewelry at home. Roots Academy is not responsible for any lost items. For safety reasons, please do not send your child to school with beads in their hair.

Your child should be dressed in clothing that encourages their independence. Examples are:

- Shoes with Velcro fasteners.
- Pants with elastic waist.

## **Personal Belongings**

Please clearly label ALL items that come off with your child's name (i.e., jackets, extra clothes, backpack, blanket, pillow, lunchbox, etc.). Toys from home are fun to share on specific days, but we cannot be responsible for lost or misplaced items and ask that you do not bring in toys, jewelry items, etc. if possible.

First and last names are required per DCF to be on all water bottles. If your child comes to school without belongings labeled properly, Roots Academy will write names on water bottles in permanent marker.

Pacifiers will be allowed at nap time, but other than that, we ask that children leave all "pacis" and blankets in their bags and cubby until rest time. Children may keep their favorite stuffed animal and blanket for rest time. It will remain in their bag and cubby until rest time and put away after rest time.

## **Sleeping and Napping Routines**

All full-time students will have a rest period during the day. Children in the Two's and Three's classes will have a two-hour rest and children in the Four's and VPK classes will have an hour rest.

Parents are required to provide an all-in-one nap mat with a blanket and pillow that rolls. If you are unsure what is an acceptable nap mat, please contact the Director. Roots Academy will provide a one-inch-thick pad to go under your child's mat for nap and rest time. Parents can also bring in small blanket, small pillow, and/or stuffed animal for your child. We will send home your child's blanket/pillow/stuffed animal every Friday to be washed and ask that you return it with your child on Monday. Please refrain from bringing large stuffed animals or other distracting items for your child as it disrupts other children.

Please note that children are required to always have shoes on - even during napping. This is a state mandate and safety issue and required by Department of Children and Families (DCF.) Please talk to your child about keeping shoes on while at school and during nap time to help with the transition into their first week at Roots Academy.

Children will not be forced to sleep but may be encouraged to lie quietly for the designated period. Children will be provided alternative quiet activities if unable to rest.

## **Tuition Policy and Discount Benefits**

Roots Academy requires a one (1) week deposit to be made at the time of enrollment. This deposit will be used to cover your last week with us if when proper notice is given. Proper notice is two (2) weeks and needs to be in writing and sent to the Director via Procure or to [info@rootsacademy.tv](mailto:info@rootsacademy.tv) RE: Attn: Director. In the case you do not provide a two (2) week notice if you withdraw your child(ren) from the Academy, your deposit will not be refunded.

Tuition is due on Friday for the upcoming week. If by noon Monday payment has not been received a late fee will be applied. If payment is not received by close of business on Tuesday, service will not be rendered until the account is paid in full.

Should your account be past due (nonpayment by noon Monday for current week) you will receive one email or more of the following contacts regarding payment: email and or telephone call from director/assistant director/ account staff.

We have these forms of payment:

1. ProCare time clock: paying by credit card or debit card (Mastercard, Visa, Discover). \*
2. ProCare time clock: paying with ACH / bank account. \*
3. Online payment: [www.myprocare.com](http://www.myprocare.com). \*
4. Recurring tuition express: your credit card or bank account will be charged every Friday for the upcoming week tuition. \*

\* **FEES:** You have the option to pay your tuition with ACH or CREDIT or DEBIT. If you choose ACH, there will be no fee. If you choose credit or debit as your form of tuition payment, there will be a convenience fee of 3% added to each payment processed.

Please be advised that auto pay can be turned off or turned on. All weeks are payable excluding approved vacation weeks. Any absences due to holidays, vacations, illnesses, and closures due to extreme weather are payable.

Families who have more than one child enrolled will receive a 10% discount for any other enrolled children. In addition, those who are active military are also eligible to receive 10% off total tuition cost.

## **Holidays and Vacation**

As a benefit to our families, those whose children enrolled full-time are granted one week where they do not have to pay tuition while their child is not in school. This can be used for vacation or other personal family purposes. Guidelines:

- The one week must be taken Monday through Friday
- Only families whose child(ren) are enrolled year-round (August-July) qualify.



- The week off may not be taken until after three months of continuous enrollment with no late payments is met.
- A minimum of one-week advance notice must be given.
- If you have an overdue tuition payment, you are ineligible to take a vacation week until your account has been paid in full.
- Vacation cannot be applied to clear up past due balances.
- The free vacation week may NOT be used to fulfill a 2 week notice period to withdraw your child from school.

When Roots Academy is closed for the holiday (the week after Christmas, Memorial Day, Independence Day, etc.), families are still expected to pay tuition, as this ensures teachers can get holiday pay. Thank you for supporting our teachers! For a full list of holidays, please refer to the Master Calendar.

## **Notice of Termination Policy**

A two-week written notice must be given to the Director if you decide to terminate childcare. If we do not receive notice of termination in writing, you will be charged for two additional weeks after your child leaves the center. Please direct all notices to [info@rootsacademy.tv](mailto:info@rootsacademy.tv) or hand deliver to office.

Please note that your free vacation week (see Holidays and Vacation policy) cannot not be used to fulfill a 2 week notice period to withdraw your child from school.

## **Meals, Food and Snacks**

Roots Academy provides two healthy snacks each day to our full-time students and one snack for VPK students. The menu of snacks can be found on our Roots Academy website.

Lunches and alternative snack options coming into the facility are to be provided by the parent/caregiver. Food containers and items should be properly packed (ice packs to keep cool, silverware, etc.) Meals and food items are not permitted to be heated by teachers or staff. Each teacher arranges a snack time that suits the schedule and needs of the class and will post it on the daily schedule.

If you are bringing in food for your child, we ask that you please pack a well-balanced nutritious meal and make sure that your child's name is clearly marked on his/her food containers. Students are encouraged to eat nutritious foods. Specifically, soda, candy, and overly caffeinated drinks are not allowed at snack time or at lunch.

Please note that we are a peanut-free facility. If your child has allergy and/or food restrictions, please make sure the teacher and appropriate staff is aware and complete the necessary food allergy form.

## **After Care Policy**

If you have an elementary-aged child is participating in the Roots Academy After Care program, please refer to our Roots Academy After Care Guidelines and Procedures.

### **Late Pick Up**

Roots Academy closes at 6:00 p.m. at which time, the doors will be locked. If you know that you are running late, please call to notify Roots Academy immediately through ProCare. If you cannot access ProCare, you can contact us at 904-481-8843.

Due to the operational and staffing costs incurred when a parent/guardian is late, a late fee will be charged. There is a late fee of \$10.00 PLUS a \$1.00 per minute fee until 7 p.m. (up to a maximum charge of \$60.) *Example: If you pick your child up at 6:05pm, the fee will be \$15.00.* Parents will be required to complete a Late Fee Payment Form, which is to be signed by the parent/guardian acknowledging that they are late and agrees to the amount due. Fees not paid within 48 hours will be automatically charged and added to your statement.

A minimum of two staff will remain at the Academy until all children are picked up. Staff will attempt to contact the parents/guardians. If they cannot be reached, emergency contact(s) will be notified. If the parents/guardians/emergency contact(s) are not available, and it is 7:00 pm, the Department of Child Services will be contacted.

Parents who are repetitively late may be subject to higher fines and/or subject to removal from admission at Roots Academy.

## **Section V: Classroom Practices and Operations**

### **Schedule of Operations**

Roots Academy normal operating hours are from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM Monday through Friday. Roots Academy will close on federal holidays and periodically to conduct staff training. A school year calendar is published on the Roots Academy website and up to date. Please refer to the website for further details of operating hours.

### **Staff to Child Ratios**

Roots Academy follows Florida and St. Johns County Statutes and will not exceed the following staff-to-child ratios

- 12 months and under – 4:1
- 12 to 23 months – 6:1
- 24 to 35 months – 11:1
- 36 to 47 months – 15:1
- 48 to 59 months – 20:1
- Age 5 and older – 25:1

### **Curriculum**

Our curriculum includes the child-initiated and teacher-directed activities and experiences offered to young children that support and enrich their development physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively. Roots Academy proudly uses Frog Street for preschool-age and Think Orange for Bible and chapel lessons.

Each classroom has weekly or monthly lesson plans, posted in the classroom. These plans contain several activities, designed to foster each child's development, and the development of the group. Lesson plans will be changed to accommodate the children's changing interests.

We expect children enrolled in our center to attend on scheduled days and be present no later than 10:00 am to participate in our curriculum.

Each classroom is set-up in centers, which include blocks, dramatic play, books, gross motor, fine motor, and art. Outdoor play is important to a child's physical development and will be included in both the morning and afternoon schedule. Self-selection or "free-play" is a daily part of the curriculum and means a child can choose which center or activity he/she participates in. This promotes creative expression and development of important social skills.

## **Confidentiality**

Roots Academy staff will keep information regarding children, families and other items associated with the Academy confidential whenever possible. Incident/behavior reports will not include another child's name on the report.

## **Field Trips**

We plan field trips throughout the year for various educational outings. Parent volunteers are encouraged to join us; however, you can only transport your own child. We will notify you at least week in advance. We may require you to sign a release form for your child to attend. All field trip fees will be applied to the invoice prior to the field trip date. Parent volunteers who participate in offsite field trips are required to complete a background check.

## **Celebrations**

Birthdays are a very special event. Parents should communicate with teachers if they would like to celebrate their child's birthday. Bringing in a sweet or treat to the classroom will be at the Teachers' discretion. Fun alternatives to bringing in food, such as being a Special Reader in the class, are encouraged. If outside food and/or drink is brought for the class, it must be store bought and labeled with a full ingredient list.

## **Ethical Conduct**

Roots Academy staff members are required to maintain a professional relationship with both parents and children. Staff members are prohibited from arranging meetings outside of the Academy. This includes "dating" clients (parents) or making "play dates" with students/children involved in the center.

Staff members are allowed to provide private childcare for families enrolled in the center. However, it must not be solicited during work hours. Any private childcare provided by a Roots Academy staff member to a family is NOT affiliated with Roots Academy or its operations.

## **Developmental Screening and Disability Services**

Teachers will work throughout the year to identify concerns regarding a child's developmental, sensory (visual and auditory), behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive, perceptual, and emotional skills with parents. If there are concerns with your child's development, you will be contacted by the teacher and/or Director.

Children with disabilities and their families should work with Roots Academy to review the specific needs of each child with a current Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), Intervention Plan (IP) or Individual Education Plan (IEP) to determine what supports your family may need and work towards your goals.

## **Parent Involvement**

Parental and/or caregiver involvement is critical. Without your involvement, your children will only receive a fraction of what they need and deserve. To get involved, please contact the teacher and/or Director to participate in volunteering in the classroom, supporting the teachers and staff, or getting involved in committees.

## **Forms & Policies**

There are forms and waivers parents are required to complete and upload into ProCare within 30 days of enrollment of a child. This includes a child's birth certificate, immunization record, and the FL health form from the pediatrician, sunscreen policy, and other necessary forms.

If you have questions or have trouble with any forms, please inform the appropriate administrative personnel.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PARENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Parent participation and involvement are essential to the success of the Roots Academy. We believe that parents and family members are their child's first teachers and are valuable contributors to our program. For this reason, we have very high expectations for families.

## **My rights as a parent or guardian in the program include:**

- To be recognized as my child's first and most important teacher.
- To be treated with respect by Roots Academy staff.
- To be welcomed in my child's classroom. There is an open-door policy, and I may visit the program at any time during its hours of operation.
- To receive information and guidance from Roots Academy about my child's progress and development, including regular progress reports from my child's teacher.
- To participate in discussions about my child's progress and setting goals for my child's learning and development.
- To take part in decisions regarding Roots Academy. My ideas and suggestions will be valued, and I will have opportunities to share them with staff.
- To review and ask for clarification on policies and procedures.

## **My responsibilities as a parent or guardian in Roots Academy include:**

- Adhere to the policies and procedures as outlined in this Parent Handbook
- In cases my child is ill, arrange pickup from Roots Academy within one hour of contact.
- Keep my contact information and all other information needed by the program up to date. Return phone calls and messages in a timely manner.
- Actively participate in parent/teacher conferences, volunteer, and/or be involved whenever possible.
- Help make Roots Academy better by offering my opinions, constructive feedback, and suggestions.
- Reinforce what my child learns at Roots Academy by working with my child at home.
- Ensure that my child is up to date on all required medical, developmental, and health screening needs. Agree to access follow-up care when health concerns are identified.

I have received a copy of the Roots Academy Parent Handbook. I have read and I understand the policies and procedures of the Roots Academy Parent Handbook and I agree to abide by them. I/we am/are aware that instances of low attendance, lack of health forms, repeated policy violations, non-tuition payment or other instances of non-participation will result in a meeting with the Director for my child to continue at Roots Academy.

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Parent / Guardian #1 (NAME)

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Parent / Guardian #2 (NAME)

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Parent / Guardian #1 (SIGNATURE)

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Parent / Guardian #2 (SIGNATURE)

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Date

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Date

