



# ACE ACADEMY SCHOOL

(A Sandor Wiener School of Opportunity)

## FAMILY HANDBOOK



### Children and Youth Department

|                        |   |                    |
|------------------------|---|--------------------|
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Family Empowerment Scholarship  
Unique Abilities Scholarship

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Sandor Wiener  
October 1968 - July 1977

## Welcome

Dear ACE Academy Families,

We welcome you to our school family at ACE Academy, A Sandor Wiener School of Opportunity! We look forward to getting to know your entire family, which will help us to provide the best possible learning experience for your student.

Sandor Wiener, son of Larry and Judith Wiener was a happy boy with special needs who inspired the creation of the school and for whom the school was named. In the words of his mother: *“What he learned best.... was to give love to everyone ....He touched the hearts of many, many people, young and old. That love and smile will never be erased and neither will his beautiful memory.” Judith Wiener (Mom)*

At ACE, we provide a setting geared to the needs and interests, uniqueness, special abilities and talents of each student as we welcome children and youth with a variety of abilities in our schools.

We thank you for allowing us to join with you in providing the education, and nurturing learning environment for your child. This is a treasured time in their life and we are so happy to be a part of it.

In the following pages, you will learn more about our school, its staff, philosophy, accomplishments, policies and your part in the whole school experience. Please take the time to read it, and learn about us, as your student begins their learning days with ACE Academy’s educational program.

Welcome once again,

Yours most sincerely,

*Staff of ACE Academy and The Arc of South Florida*

## **ACE Academy Mission**

ACE Academy's mission is to provide innovative learning opportunities for students with disabilities, Pre-Kindergarten – 12<sup>th</sup> grade, combining current social, educational and therapeutic philosophies and curricula in a warm and inviting learning environment.

## **ACE Academy Vision**

ACE Academy will be the choice for excellence for students with disabilities and their families.

## **ACE Academy Belief**

The teachers, administrators and staff at ACE Academy are united in their belief that ALL children have the power to learn, are curious, creative and can succeed.

## **The Arc of South Florida Philosophy**

The Arc's Children and Youth philosophy centers on several points. First, the family is the most important part of any student's life. Therefore, we make every attempt to include the family in each student's education and therapy. Second, we believe that all children, no matter their level of development, have the ability to learn and to become more productive human beings. Third, the key to learning is **active** learning and interaction with the people and objects in the environment.

ACE Academy and Arc of South Florida enroll children without regard to race, color, gender, familial status, religion, ancestry, national origin or disability to its programs. Furthermore, we have in place standards, policies, and practices necessary to provide services in a manner that respects the diverse worth of the individual and protects and preserves the dignity of people of diverse ability, culture, socio-economic status, race, religion, sexual orientation, and ethnic background.

ACE Academy supports the learning of children of all abilities by working as a team. Our teachers, therapists, para-professionals, and administration all strive to provide the best possible environment where children and families can grow. Students are evaluated regularly and their educational goals are based on their developmental levels. The daily curriculum is developmentally appropriate and meets your student's educational needs. We offer a wide range of activities to stimulate all areas of development, and therapies are incorporated into the daily schedule.

ACE Academy encourages families to be actively involved. Families are introduced to center staff during initial visits and subsequent meetings. Additionally, family support is welcomed in public awareness and advocacy within our community.

We are a non-profit school and rely on funding from outside sources. We have occasional fund raising events and appreciate your support. We also welcome parent volunteers for a variety of tasks, from classroom and office assistance to school projects such as landscaping and painting the buildings. Please let us know what you can do to help your student's school.

## Standards of Ethical Conduct

(Adapted from the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession in Florida and Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida)

1. Our school values the worth and dignity of every person, the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, acquisition of knowledge, and the nurture of democratic citizenship. Essential to the achievement of these standards are the freedom to learn and to teach and the guarantee of equal opportunity for all.
2. Our primary concern is the student and the development of the student's potential. Employees will therefore strive for professional growth and will seek to exercise the best professional judgment and integrity.
3. Concern for the student requires that our instructional personnel:
  - a. Shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning and/or to the student's mental and/or physical health and/or safety.
  - b. Shall not unreasonably restrain a student from independent action in pursuit of learning.
  - c. Shall not unreasonably deny a student access to diverse points of view.
  - d. Shall not intentionally suppress or distort subject matter relevant to a student's academic program.
  - e. Shall not intentionally expose a student to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement.
  - f. Shall not intentionally violate or deny a student's legal rights.
  - g. Shall not harass or discriminate against any student on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, handicapping condition, sexual orientation, or social and family background and shall make reasonable effort to assure that each student is protected from harassment or discrimination.
  - h. Shall not exploit a relationship with a student for personal gain or advantage.
  - i. Shall keep in confidence personally identifiable information obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.
4. Aware of the importance of maintaining the respect and confidence of colleagues, of students, of parents, and of the community, employees of our school must display the highest degree of ethical conduct. This commitment requires that our employees:
  - a. Shall maintain honesty in all professional dealings.
  - b. Shall not on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, handicapping condition if otherwise qualified, or social and family background deny to a colleague professional benefits or advantages or participation in any professional organization.
  - c. Shall not interfere with a colleague's exercise of political or civil rights and responsibilities.
  - d. Shall not engage in harassment or discriminatory conduct which unreasonably interferes with an individual's performance of professional or work responsibilities or with the orderly processes of education or which creates a hostile, intimidating, abusive, offensive, or oppressive environment; and, further, shall make reasonable effort to assure that each individual is protected from such harassment or discrimination.
  - e. Shall not make malicious or intentionally false statements about a colleague.

### Training Requirement

All instructional personnel, educational support employees, and administrators are required as a condition of employment to complete training on these standards of ethical conduct.

Legally sufficient allegations of misconduct by Florida certified educators will be reported to the Office of Professional Practices Services.

Policies and procedures for reporting misconduct by instructional personnel or school administrators, which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student, are posted on Bulletin boards in the front office and on our Web site at [Ace Academy School | www.AceAcademySchool.org](http://www.AceAcademySchool.org)

### Reporting Misconduct By Instructional Personnel And Administrators

All employees, educational support employees, and administrators have an obligation to report misconduct by instructional personnel and school administrators, which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student. Examples of misconduct include obscene language, drug and alcohol use, disparaging comments, prejudice or bigotry, sexual innuendo, cheating or testing violations, physical aggression, and accepting or offering favors.

Reports of misconduct of employees should be made to:

Laura Secord, Director of Children & Youth Programs at (305) 215-7272 or [LauraS@arcsofla.org](mailto:LauraS@arcsofla.org)  
Gabriel Parra, CEO at (305) 759-8500 ext. 102 or [GHparra@arcsofla.org](mailto:GHparra@arcsofla.org)

Reports of misconduct committed by administrators should be made to

Liliana Martorella, Director of Human Resources at [LilianaM@arcsofla.org](mailto:LilianaM@arcsofla.org) or (305)759-8500 ext.136  
Paul Sweeney, President, Board of directors, The Arc of South Florida at [psweeney@bellsouth.net](mailto:psweeney@bellsouth.net)

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### Reporting Child Abuse, Abandonment Or Neglect

All employees and agents have an affirmative duty to report all actual or suspected cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Call 1-800- 96-ABUSE or report online at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/report/>.

Signs of Physical Abuse The child may have unexplained bruises, welts, cuts, or other injuries; broken bones; or burns. A child experiencing physical abuse may seem withdrawn or depressed, seem afraid to go home or may run away, shy away from physical contact, be aggressive, or wear inappropriate clothing to hide injuries.

Signs of Sexual Abuse The child may have torn, stained or bloody underwear, trouble walking or sitting, pain or itching in genital area, or a sexually transmitted disease. A child experiencing sexual abuse may have unusual knowledge of sex or act seductively, fear a particular person, seem withdrawn or depressed, gain or lose weight suddenly, shy away from physical contact, or run away from home.

Signs of Neglect The child may have unattended medical needs, little or no supervision at home, poor hygiene, or appear underweight. A child experiencing neglect may be frequently tired or hungry, steal food, or appear overly needy for adult attention.

Patterns of Abuse: Serious abuse usually involves a combination of factors. While a single sign may not be significant, a pattern of physical or behavioral signs is a serious indicator and should be reported.

### Liability Protections

Any person, official, or institution participating in good faith in any act authorized or required by law, or reporting in good faith any instance of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect to the department or any law enforcement agency, shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability, which might otherwise result by reason of such action. (F.S. 39.203)

An employer who discloses information about a former or current employee to a prospective employer of the former or current employee upon request of the prospective employer or of the former or current employee is immune from civil liability for such disclosure or its consequences unless it is shown by clear and convincing evidence that the information disclosed by the former or current employer was knowingly false or violated any civil right of the former or current employee protected under F.S. Chapter 760. (F.S. 768.095)

Rev. 6/6/22 as per FDLOE requirements

## **The Arc's Children and Youth Programs**




### **ACE Academy School (A Sandor Wiener School of Opportunity)**

ACE Academy is a private school offering innovative learning opportunities for students with disabilities, PreK-8<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> grade (varies by location), combining current social, educational and therapeutic philosophies and curricula from August to June following the MDCPS school calendar. Scholarships accepted: Step up for Students Family Empowerment and Unique Abilities Scholarships, & Sandor Wiener Tuition Assistance Fund for eligible families.

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The Arc of South Florida operates many other programs at its different location with varying availability and eligibility.

### **1. Youth Development (Primary) After School and Summer Services (YDP)**

The Children's Trust has been partly funding The Arc's inclusive afterschool and summer services since 2004. Services provided include after school care and full day camps for Winter break, Spring Break and summer camp. Services are available to children ages 5-10 years old.

2.  **Youth Development (Secondary) After School and Summer Services (YDS)**

The Children's Trust partly funds the Arc's inclusive after school/summer services for students in middle and high school. The focus is on entrepreneurship, the arts, fitness, social skills and homework help.

3.  **Early Education Intervention Summer Camp (EEI)**

The Children's Trust partly funds The Arc's summer camp for young children with disabilities 6 weeks-5 years old. Camp activities provide fun developmentally appropriate early childhood learning opportunities for children. Here they can build friendships, as they play and learn together.

4.  **Positive Parenting Program workshops**

The Arc provides parenting workshops in a series of 5 group sessions and 3 phone sessions to give parents the skills to raise confident, healthy children, and to build stronger family relationships. Parents learn to prevent problems and to manage misbehavior.

5.   **Birth-to-Two (B-2)**

The Birth to Two program provides an intensive educational curriculum along with therapies for children aged 1-3 years with identified delays in their development, and/or established conditions of a moderate to severe nature. Services funded through MDCPS include individualized instruction in inclusive classrooms, focusing on development and learning goals using the High Scope Curriculum.

6.  **Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)**

VPK's goal is to ensure all children are intellectually, emotionally, physically and socially ready to enter school and ready to learn. The Arc's VPK program with High Scope Curriculum is part of the state-funded VPK Program which sets standards and provides the necessary resources to ensure that every class funded, offers a high-quality learning environment.

7.  **Subsidized Child Care**

This program provides financial assistance for student care to families with low incomes, through support of The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe. The Arc accepts the subsidy and provides subsidized services in inclusive classrooms using High Scope Curriculum for children 0-8yrs.

**8. Private Pay Early Childhood Education (0-5 years)**

Families may choose to pay privately for student care provided by Project Thrive, if they not eligible for individual programs. These children participate in the same quality educational program and benefit from the small student:teacher ratios, highly qualified staff, High Scope Curriculum and individualized instruction offered in stimulating and inclusive classroom environments.





## Family Involvement

The Arc and ACE Academy believe that the family is the most important factor in a student's life. As your child's first teacher, you play a big part in how well your son or daughter does in school. Because of this, we welcome your involvement in your student's education at our school. Our staff also aims to help students and families ease the transition to the new school setting. We understand that students' and families' needs vary in this area and we aim to accommodate these as individual families require.

### Other ways to be involved

We have special events, celebrations and field trips throughout the year for families where we love your participation. This allows for great family involvement and opportunities for community public awareness and advocacy for your student's school program.

### Individual Education Plan (IEP) Updates

Individual Education Plans (IEP's) from MDCPS are a requirement for applying for some Scholarships. Renewing the IEP's once every three years by visiting your child's home school, helps to update your student's progress and goals achieved, plus the services they need. It also allows for additional assistive technology equipment to be used in schools funded under Federal IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) grants.

### Volunteering and Donations.

ACE Academy welcomes volunteers and also needs a number of types of supplies to help the classroom and school function. Office and classroom supplies are very welcome. Please see the class supply lists that are frequently given out or speak directly with teachers and administrators.



## DAILY SCHEDULE

ACE Academy programs run Monday to Friday. We follow Miami-Dade County Public School calendar, and therefore close the school for most MDCPS holidays, school vacations, teacher workdays and emergency situations. However alternate programming may be provided on these days through afterschool and summer services or private pay programming, detailed later in this handbook. Please check with administrators at your location. Families will receive an ACE Academy monthly calendar with more specific information about days of programming.

Daily schedules are posted inside each classroom. Each classroom has a slightly different schedule which may vary according to the time of year, special events, and student needs. However, the day will have a balance of activities that follow best practice including: academic

instruction, teacher-led large group and small group activities, social and life skills instruction, arts, indoor and outdoor physical education activities, eating, resting, and personal hygiene routines.

Therapy schedules are provided to eligible students during the school day. If you would like to observe a session, please contact the school to arrange a time and date with the therapist.

Regular and punctual attendance to school is very important. Students are expected to be in class at the scheduled start of each school day. Repeated late arrivals cause a major disruption to the whole class's instruction and result in lost learning time for all students including the late student. Repeated late arrivals will result in meetings with School Administrators and possible withdrawal.



## **Attendance**

Attendance is vitally important as consistency in education is linked with benefits to children's learning and development. Children are expected to attend daily unless ill. If your student's attendance is low due to illness, we will meet with you to explore different program options.

As a private school, ACE Academy has attendance requirements that meet Florida Department of Education Regulations for Private schools (Rule 6A-1.09512). School is open for 180 school days and students must attend for a minimum of 170 days. Families of students with repeated absences will receive notification of their absences and warning of possible withdrawal should absences continue. Unexplained absences after 3 days, will result in meetings with School Administrators. If student absences are greater than 10 days throughout the school year, families will be required to meet with School Administrators and discuss the situation and possible withdrawal.

Frequent absences may prevent openings becoming available for other students in need of services. ACE Academy waiting lists are kept to invite waiting students into the school program to fill the openings.



## **Assessment**

Assessment is a broader term than "testing," and includes other ways of finding out what students know and can do. This is often based on real demonstrations of skill in the classroom. Assessment should lead to better decisions in the classroom, such as what activity to do next, what teaching point is more appropriate, or how to organize instruction. It answers questions like, "Is Joe ready for the next step, or does he need more practice at this level?" Assessments, linked with standards, give parents and teachers information about whether a student is making appropriate progress.

ACE Academy's teachers complete student assessments at the start of the school year. All teachers have been trained in giving and interpreting the assessments plus planning activities and strategies based on the assessment outcomes. Quarterly report cards inform families of progress made throughout the year. Ongoing and more informal class observations of students are completed daily by all class staff, and provide a "snap shot" of what each student can do. With all assessments, teachers learn students' current knowledge and needs, and use this information to plan class activities where students can practice and develop skills. Assessments are again completed at the school year's end.

In order to keep families informed, we share assessment information with you so that you too can see the progress of your student, and play a part in deciding your priorities and preferences for your student's learning goals. Scheduled parent/teacher conferences and informal meetings are arranged upon request.



### **Technology in the Classroom**

Computer learning games and activities are used in classrooms to extend learning within the classroom. Specialized and adapted computer programs further learning of academics. Smart Boards and lap tops may be used to extend learning as their activities link with curriculum activities.

Families are required to keep their student's IDEA status eligible by updating IEP's every three years at your child's home school, as this increases the amount of educational technology available to students in the school.



### **Documentation of Authorized Caregivers**

The School Registrar will maintain files with written authorization by the student's parent or legal guardian of the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of individuals whom the parent or legal guardian have approved to care for the student, to pick up from school, and to take out of the facility on trips.

Telephone authorization to release a student to someone who does not usually pick up the student will only be accepted with prior written authorization from the custodial parent or legal guardian for such an exceptional release. No student will be released without the presence or permission of the custodial parent or legal guardian.

Any authorized person who is not recognized by the staff will be required to provide photo ID such as a driver's license, work or school ID before the student is released. ACE Academy staff will notify police if an unauthorized person seeks custody of the student.

### **Handling Persons Who May Pose a Safety Risk**

A person who may pose a safety risk includes strangers as well as abusive parents or legal guardians and any adults who cannot take the student safely from the facility. The student will not be released to anyone who cannot safely care for the student.

ACE Academy staff will notify police and call **911** to manage adults under the apparent influence of drugs/alcohol or an individual posing a safety risk. Staff will contact the emergency contact to make arrangements for the student's transport to a place of safety. If no one is available to care for the student, staff will contact the Department of Children and Family Services for guidance.



### **Health Policy**

Regular attendance is very important. If your student is sick and cannot come to school, please call and inform the school office. The teacher and/or administrator should be notified of absences of a more serious or lengthy matter. There will be some instances in which we will require a doctor's note before your student may return to school:

- absences of 5 or more days
- any medical condition that ACE Academy believes requires a medical release

Any absence requires a written parental note brought when the student returns to school explaining the circumstances of the absence for our information and attendance records.

In order to promote the health and well-being of our students we ask that you not send your student to school with any of the following conditions:

- a known communicable disease such as chicken pox or whooping cough
- severe coughing
- difficult or rapid breathing
- diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose stool in a 24 hour period)
- vomiting
- conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- fever of more than 100 degrees for 24 hours
- untreated skin patches or rashes
- yellow or green nasal discharge (along with one or more other symptom)
- stiff neck

- unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool and yellowish skin or eyes
- any other unusual symptom of illness that has not been treated by a doctor

In any of these cases contact your student's doctor and keep your student at home until the symptoms are no longer present. After having a fever, a student should be kept home for at least 24 hours without fever.

Students may at times be excluded from school if:

- the teacher or administrator believes the student has symptoms of illness
- there is a change in the student's condition while at school
- any symptoms of communicable illness are still present

Thank you for helping us to reduce the spread of illness at our school.



## Medication and Immunizations

We ask that parents adjust their child's medication schedule so that medications are given at home whenever possible. However, with the proper permission forms we can administer medication at school. For prescription medications we will need medications in original containers, with student's first and last names, name and strength of medication, date prescription filled, name of health care provider who wrote the prescription, instructions on how to give the medication, and a signed permission form. Ask your student's teacher for the correct form. We are required to have these forms for all medications and health procedures including aerosol treatments, catheterization, tube feeding, Epipens, and seizure medication. All medications, refrigerated or unrefrigerated, will have child-resistant caps, will be kept in an organized fashion, will be stored away from food at the proper temperature, and will be inaccessible to children. Medication will not be used beyond the date of expiration.

ACE Academy will send a weekly medication authorization for signing to confirm prescriptions are up to date and any changes can be documented.

All students attending the program must have their immunizations up to date. Whenever your child visits the doctor and has immunizations please bring the immunization record to the school so we can update our files. Students who do not have the proper immunizations may be excluded from school. In cases where students are under-immunized because of a medical condition (documented by a health professional) or the family's belief, this is noted in the student's records. Staff immediately inform the families of these students if vaccine preventable diseases, to which the students are susceptible, occur in the program. Students are isolated in the program until they are picked up by their parents and will stay absent from school until notified that they can return.

## Incidents and Accidents

The health and safety of your student is of prime importance to us at ACE Academy. However, rare occasions, accidents or incidents may occur. When this is the case, ACE Academy follows a consistent procedure.

1. The student and/or staff member is treated on the spot.
2. The incident is reported immediately to the school supervisor, who completes the accident/incident report with input from the staff member witnessing the incident.
3. The school supervisor notifies the student's parents. The parent will review and sign the accident/incident report.
4. The school supervisor sends a copy of the report to The Arc's Children and Youth Program Director within 24 hours.
5. All Accident/Incident reports are kept in binders in locked locations in the Principal's office.
6. Accident/Incidents that occur in our **Children's Trust** programs (Youth Development AfterSchool & Summer camp, Early Education Intervention (EEI) summer camp and Positive Parenting Program (PPP) of a significant/serious nature must be reported to the program's Contract Officer at The Children's Trust within 3 days by the School Supervisor. (Other funding sources will be notified where necessary.)
7. The Children and Youth Program Director will also provide The Children's Trust's program Contract Officer with written notification of any legal action which is filed as a result of such an injury within 7 working days.
8. Schools will send Youth Development and EEI monthly logs of numbers of incidents requiring both site only care and ER care to the main office during the first week of each new month.
9. The Accident/Incident Log will be reviewed by the school administration and, if needed, the nurse, monthly, to identify hazards for corrective action.



## Positive Behavior Support & Discipline Procedures

One of the most important goals for students is to gain control of their own behavior. Effective discipline begins early in life and helps prevent problems as the student grows older.

ACE Academy staff use Positive Behavior Support which helps to understand why the student has challenging behaviors and then teaches new skills to replace the challenging behaviors. Positive Behavior Support is different from traditional behavior modification in four ways:

- it focuses on positive individualized strategies that are respectful of the student
- individualized interventions are based on an understanding of the student, their communication and unique situation,
- strategies focus on helping the student gain access to new environments, have positive social interactions, develop friendships and learn new communication skills so they can explore their world and learn successfully and
- never uses physical punishment.

With a variety of resources from the Peace Education Foundation, MDCPS, Conscious Discipline, and Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence, staff plan ahead to prevent problems, encourage appropriate behavior by teaching specific social and behavioral skills, give consistent clear rules, use positive guidance, redirect, and involve students in problem solving (when possible) to encourage the student's own ability to regulate their own emotions and behaviors. These strategies include:

- Interactions that are characterized by supportive responses
- Adults who model the appropriate behavior they want the students to have
- Adults who redirect or distract students from potential problems
- Adults who recognize and accept typical behaviors of students with special needs
- As a last resort, students may be moved from an activity but are always supervised nearby
- Adults follow a consistent pattern of responses to students' behavior
- Documentation of behaviors in case notes.

At times, students may have difficult behaviors that the family and school would like to stop. students who are demonstrating repeated patterns of challenging behaviors require team planning and a written behavior plan with strategies for prevention, replacement skills and consequences for behavior both at school and at home. If there are circumstances that are beyond our program's ability to manage, the administrative staff will seek an appropriate referral outside the program for the student/family.

*Rev. 6/30/20, 3/17/22 as per DCF requirements*



## **Code of Conduct**

All students have the right to learn, and no student has the right to disrupt the learning activities of others. Students must follow the school Code of Conduct before, during and after school. The Code is in effect inside school buildings, on school grounds, at school-related activities, on field trips, and in transportation buses and vans.

ACE Academy is committed to providing a safe and orderly school environment where students may receive and teachers may deliver quality educational services without disruption or interference. Responsible behavior by students, teachers, administrators, parents and school visitors is essential to achieving this goal. Disrespectful profanity and intimidation or destruction of property by students or family members will not be tolerated and will result in meetings with School Administrators and possible withdrawal.

School expectations are that students will

### **1. Be Safe** and will:

- Obey the rules of the school and laws of the community.

- Choose peer groups that demonstrate safe, respectful and responsible behavior.
- Solve problems peacefully.

## **2. Be Respectful** and will:

- Be respectful to all adults and peers.
- Listen to and follow the directions of school staff.
- Be respectful toward property and take care of school materials.
- Demonstrate positive social skills and use polite words.
- Consider the feelings of others.
- Resolve conflicts in a positive manner.

## **3. Be Responsible** and will:

- Bring or request needed materials.
- Tell the truth.
- Ask before borrowing and stay out of others' property.
- Complete own work on time

## **Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusionary Measures**

The Arc's goal is to limit or eliminate the use of suspension, expulsion and other exclusionary measures. The Arc and families can work together to prevent expulsion by building strong relationships and talking about your child's culture, social, emotional, and behavioral strengths and concerns, approaches to learning, and strategies that work at home and in the school setting.

Exclusionary measures should be used only as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances. These circumstances include when there is a determination of a serious safety threat that cannot otherwise be reduced or eliminated by the provision of reasonable modifications. All other possible interventions must have been exhausted. There must be agreement that exclusion is in the best interest of the student.

The Arc works with families to seek the best care and alternative placement for your child if all parties agree that our program can no longer meet the needs of your child.

*Rev. 11/22/19 as per NAEYC Accreditation Standards*

## **Dismissal**

Unlike expulsion and suspension, which are typically the result of behavior related to the child, dismissals occur as a result of parental actions or behavior. Reasons for dismissal include, but are not limited to:

- Documented habitual disregard for drop off and pick up times
- Documented habitual disregard for sick child policies



- Documented abusive behavior toward staff or other parents
- Documented pattern of chronic absences without documentation of illness or any special circumstances
- Failure to comply with medical and immunization requirements
- Documented consistent non-payment of fees

*Rev.4/16/20 as per NAEYC Accreditation Standards*



## **Students' Food / Snacks**

ACE Academy supports families in their decisions regarding their student's food and eating needs. Before any student enters ACE Academy, the staff will obtain a written history of any special nutrition/feeding needs the student has to develop or modify individual feeding plans if needed. Disciplines related to special nutrition needs, including nursing, speech, and occupational and physical therapy, will participate when needed.

Reasons for modification of the student's diet or special feeding techniques may be related to allergies, food idiosyncrasies, and medical special needs. Written instructions from the student's parent or legal guardian **and** the student's health care provider (Pediatrician, Pediatrician's Assistant, Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner or Registered Dietitian) will be provided in the student's record and carried out accordingly. Dietary modifications will be recorded.

These written instructions must identify:

- a) The student's special needs;
- b) Any dietary restrictions based on the special needs;
- c) Any foods to be omitted from the diet and any foods to be substituted;
- d) Limitations of life activities;
- e) Any other pertinent special needs information.

ACE Academy (South only) offers meals that are nutritionally balanced and healthy provided by USDA approved caterers. A national team of nutritionists has carefully determined the menus and portion sizes. Eligibility for free/reduced meals or private pay is determined at each school location with completion of appropriate and timely documentation.

Food brought from home will be labeled with the student's name. Other students will not be allowed to share food provided by a student's family. Leftover food from home will be discarded—unless it did not require refrigeration or holding at a hot temperature, or is commercially wrapped and was never opened. Food brought for the classroom to share must be commercially prepared and purchased. Homemade treats are not allowed for safety reasons.



## Uniforms, Clothing and Supplies

ACE Academy has a uniform policy. This uniform program is to help us promote safety, easily identify our students, instill pride, respect and to keep costs to a minimum. Tops are pale blue polo shirts with the ACE logo and bottoms are khaki or navy blue shorts, skirts, skorts or trousers. Shirts with logos may be purchased at local uniform stores. Please contact your school location for available stores near your school.

Children must wear closed toe shoes for safety in all school activities.

Students learn by doing and many of the things we do at ACE Academy involve getting messy! It is important to have a change of clothes available at school. Please label all of your student's personal belongings. We ask that you send the following supplies to school and we will send reminders as supplies are needed.

Change of clothing in a plastic bag

A backpack or bag for your student's personal items

Diapers, wipes and diaper cream if needed (weekly or monthly supply)

Please remember that the public school system, state and local government, The Arc, and charitable organizations and community donations support our educational services. There is a large gap between funds coming in and the costs of our intensive educational and therapeutic program. While there is little cost to families for the program, there are many other supplies that are needed for the classroom and the school to function properly. Families are asked to help the school find community support and donations for the following types of supplies.

### Classroom

Batteries—AA, C, and D's

Kleenex type tissues

Paper towels

Lysol spray

### Office/Art

Copy Paper, white-out, hi-liters

scotch tape, envelopes, glue

construction paper

non-toxic paint, etc...

We will send occasional notices of which supplies would be most helpful. We need and appreciate your support.



## Payments

Department of Education Scholarship payments or authorized payments from an account are made at different intervals throughout the year. Failure to endorse a scholarship check or authorize payment from an account in a timely manner could result in the loss of scholarship and/or an outstanding balance at the eligible, participating private school.



## Transportation

Transportation is not an automatic included service in ACE Academy's school program. Limited transportation is available however on a minimal basis for eligible families in special circumstances. Families must discuss their needs with School Administrators.

Students enrolled in the Arc's after school program funded through The Children's Trust will be eligible for transportation. This transportation will be from ACE Academy to The Arc's Youth Afterschool and Summer program (YAS/YEN). It does not include transportation to the children's homes after school or after the YAS/YEN Afterschool program ends.

Please note: A cost for transportation service may apply at any time due to funding availability. If Arc vehicles are unable to transport for weather or mechanical reasons, parents are requested to drive their children. The Arc will provide as much advance notice as possible. Staff members cannot ever transport children in their own personal vehicles.



## Field Trips

ACE Academy offers occasional field trips to a variety of places. Field trips require the same appropriate student : staff ratio as is required in the classroom. Field trips are planned and approved in advance, and you will be notified in advance in writing, about upcoming field trips. We require written parental permission and at times, parental attendance if your student is to attend. Field trips may be partially funded, but parents may also be asked to contribute to the cost of the trip for your student.

If a student is not able to attend a field trip due to illness or behavior, because it raises an issue of safety, this will be communicated to families in order for other options to be discussed.



## Available Programs for Non-School Days and Before/After Care

ACE Academy follows the Miami-Dade County Public Schools calendar, and therefore closes the school for most MDCPS holidays, school vacations, teacher workdays and emergency situations. Information regarding school drop off and start times for regular school days are provided at each location.

### Late Pick Up Reminder:

**Any student that is not picked up by the required program closing time will be charged per minute until pick up. When children are not picked up by one hour after program closing time, and neither parents nor authorized adults can be contacted, ACE Academy staff members are required to contact DCF as per DCF requirements. At no time are staff permitted to transport children in their own vehicles.**

The Arc has limited Children's Trust openings for after school services, Winter /Spring Breaks and Summer Camp at some ACE Academy locations. Information about these programs' availability, service dates, registration deadlines and fees are provided throughout the year.



## Transition and Referrals

At ACE Academy, we understand that leaving a place of familiarity can be difficult for both students and their families. As a result, we aim to ease that transition with referrals, community resources and assistance when the time comes for students to age out of our programs or move onto other programs or public school options to meet their changing needs.



## Teacher Qualifications

ACE Academy staff meet all Florida Department of Education requirements for teacher qualifications. All teachers must meet one of the following requirements:

- Bachelor's Degree or higher in any subject or
- Three or more years of K-12<sup>th</sup> grade teaching experience or
- Special skills, knowledge or expertise that qualifies them to provide instruction in K -12<sup>th</sup> grade subjects.

ACE Academy is proud of its qualified staff. Over 90% of ACE Academy's teaching staff holds a Bachelor's Degree or higher degree.

*Rev. 1/17/20 as per FLDOE requirements*



## Conflict Resolution Plan



Although we aim to make your student and your whole family's time with ACE Academy as positive as possible, we do recognize that there may be times when families will have issues or concerns that need addressing. For this reason, The Arc has created a plan for a successful resolution.

1. For classroom, therapy, or student services issues  
**please see the classroom teacher**



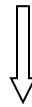
2. If your concerns have not been resolved at this level,  
**please contact the School administrative staff:**

**ACE North – (Dana Cummings, Principal) (305) 623-9631 (Elem – H/School)**  
**ACE Central - (Irma Alvarez, Principal) (305) 279-3064 (PreK – H/School)**  
**ACE South Campuses (Maria Barros, Site Director) (786) 650-2030 (PreK- Mid School)**



If your concerns have not been resolved at this level,  
**please contact The Arc of S. Florida Director of Children & Youth:**

**Ms. Laura Secord**  
**(305) 215-7272**



If your concerns have not been resolved at this level,  
**please contact The Arc of S. Florida Executive Director**

**Mr. Gabriel Parra**  
**(305) 759-8500 ext. 102**

*Rev 8/14/19, 1/17/20 with new contact names*



## Confidentiality of Records and Information

Confidentiality of the records of children and families means that ACE Academy and The Arc staff will not disclose material in the records without the written consent of parents (with legal custody) or legal guardians for children. All staff, both paid and volunteer, at the time of hire must read The Arc's confidentiality policy and sign in writing their understanding and agreement to abide by it. Failure to maintain confidentiality is a serious breach of responsibility and cause for immediate dismissal.

The student's file and all other information concerning the student and family, compiled by ACE Academy, are stored in a locked cabinet or locked office and will be accessible only to the parent or legal guardian, The ACE and Arc staff and our partners on a need to know basis. Information will not be made available to anyone, by any means, without the expressed written consent of the parent or legal guardian. Children's files are kept in a locked cabinet and access is restricted. Anyone who does review a student's file will sign the log kept by administration staff. Likewise, staff will not disclose or discuss personal information regarding children and their relatives with any unauthorized person. Confidential information will be seen by and discussed only with staff members who need the information in order to provide services. Caregivers will not discuss confidential information about families in the presence of others in the facility.

The Arc and ACE Academy administration is authorized to make decisions about the sharing of confidential information. The student's central file shall not be a public record and no part of it shall be released except: The file may be released to physicians, attorneys, and government agencies having need of the file to aid the student as designated by the parent or legal guardian. The file shall be produced in response to a subpoena or released to persons authorized by order of court excluding matters privileged by other provisions of law.

The file or any part thereof may be disclosed to all qualified researchers, a staff member of the facility, or an employee of the department when the administrator of the facility or the secretary of the department deems it necessary for the treatment of the student, maintenance of adequate records, compilation of treatment data, or evaluation of programs.

Information from the files may be used for statistical and research purposes if the information is abstracted in such a way as to protect the identity of individuals.

The content of these written procedures for protecting the confidentiality of medical and social information is consistent with federal, state, and local guidelines and regulations, including HIPAA. Confidential medical information pertinent to safe care of the student will be provided to facilities within the guidelines of state or local public health regulations. However, under all circumstances, confidentiality about the student's medical condition and the family's status will be preserved unless such information is released at the written request of the family, except in cases where abuse or neglect is a concern. In such cases, state laws and regulations apply.

The parent or legal guardian of the student shall be supplied with a copy of the student's central file upon request. Requiring written releases ensures confidentiality. The Arc and ACE Academy has a written release of information both to and from our program contained in the Enrollment Packet which is to be used when a release of information is required.



## DIRECTORY

### The Arc Administrative Office

15280 NW 79<sup>th</sup> Ct Suite 251  
Miami Lakes, FL 33016  
(305) 759-8500 (ph.)  
(305) 754-9223 (fax)

### ACE Academy - North Campus

3450 NW 199<sup>th</sup> St.  
Miami Gardens, FL 33056  
(305) 623-9631(ph.)  
(305) 623-9621 (fax)

### ACE Academy - South Campuses

303 W. Palm Drive  
Florida City, FL 33034  
(786) 650-2030 (ph.)  
(786) 410-5401 (fax)

### ACE Academy - Central Campus

11025 SW 84th St. Cottage #10  
Miami, FL 33173  
(305) 279-3064 (ph.)  
(305) 279-2922 (fax)

### ACE Academy South 2

777 West Palm Drive  
Florida City, FL 33034  
(786) 650-2030 (ph.)  
(786) 410-5401 (fax)

### ACE Academy School

616 West Palm Drive  
Florida City, FL 33034  
(786) 650-2030 (ph.)  
(786) 410-5401 (fax)

## ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL

### The Arc of South Florida, Main Office

Laura Secord, Director - Children & Youth Department (305) 759-8500 ext. 149  
Gabriel Parra, Executive Director - The Arc of S. Florida (305) 759-8500 ext. 102  
Myrna Charlton, Coordinator (305) 759-8500 ext. 150

### ACE Academy North

Dana Cummings, Principal (305) 623-9631

### ACE Academy Central

Irma Alvarez, Principal (305) 279-3064

### ACE Academy South Campuses

Maria Barros, Site Director (786) 650-2030  
Scarleth Figueroa, Registrar (786) 650-2030

*Rev. 3/17/22 with new contact names*



## Receipt of Family Handbook

By signing below, I acknowledge receipt of ACE Academy’s Family Handbook.

I acknowledge that the contents cover:

- Philosophy (ACE Academy & The Arc)
- Standards of Ethical Conduct
- The Arc’s Programs
- Family Involvement (Volunteering, and donations)
- Daily Schedule
- Attendance
- Assessment
- Technology in the Classroom
- Authorized Caregivers
- Handling Persons who May Pose Risk
- Reporting Student Abuse/Neglect
- Health Policy
- Medications and Immunizations
- Incidents and Accidents Procedure
- Positive Behavior Support, Discipline
- Code of Conduct
- Suspension, Expulsion, Dismissal
- Student Food and Snacks
- Uniform, Clothing and Supplies
- Payments
- Transportation
- Field Trips
- Available Programs Non-School Days
- Transitions and Referrals
- Teacher Qualifications
- Reporting Misconduct
- Conflict Resolution
- Confidentiality of Records and Information
- Staff Directory

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student’s Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Family Member / Guardian Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Family Member / Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
ACE Academy Witness Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
ACE Academy Witness Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
ACE Academy Family Handbook