



Handbook for Parents & Families

Central Campus
1100 S. Harrison-**Mailing Address**
1103 S. Van Buren-**School Location**
Amarillo, Texas 79101
806-373-4245
Fax: 806-374-8743

Grand Street Campus
1525 N. Grand Street – **Mailing Address and Location**
Amarillo, Texas 79107
806-381-0551
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www.opportunityschool.com

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Welcome to Opportunity School

Opportunity School's Mission:

Through high quality early childhood education (0-5) and caring family support, Opportunity School equips low income children and their families to succeed in school and in life.

Dear Parents and Families,

Welcome! We are glad you are here! We know that you are your child's most important teacher. We are here to assist you, not replace you. This booklet is prepared for your use, so that you may be as familiar as possible with the ways we help provide for your young child's needs.

We hope the information in the following pages will be helpful to you. If you have questions, please ask; if you have suggestions, please offer them to us. Only by working closely together may we provide the very best for our children.

Sincerely,

Your Opportunity School Team

Our Purpose:

- Provide high quality early education for young children age 6 weeks to five;
- Reduce the stresses of working families by providing a safe and nurturing environment for their children;
- Lessen the disruptions in children's lives by providing a consistent environment for the entire day;
- Form a partnership with parents to provide excellent care and education for their children. Regular personal visits with parents are required each month.



Charlie the Rooster is Opportunity School's mascot. Charlie symbolizes, "an early start" and pride in oneself. Charlie crows a lot, for he is very proud of our students and their accomplishments and of our parents and staff as well!



In June 2013, Opportunity School was invited to become the first No Excuses University Preschool in the country. The No Excuses belief is that all children, regardless of their background should be equipped for school and college success. And it's up to the adults in the school to teach and encourage every child and family.

The research is clear that school and life success begins in a child's early years. We will focus on school readiness (learning letters, numbers and how to write their names) for our students and also incorporating college awareness in our program.

Our goal is to seed the dream for college and build a love for learning so that every child and parent is encouraged in their education. We want your children to believe that college is in their future and we want to support parents and family members in pursuing their education goals as well.

We are excited to help you create a brighter future for your children and your family!

Getting Started at Opportunity School

Opportunity School has two campuses to meet the needs of families. Each campus varies by the hours of operation and ages served. We welcome you to visit each campus to decide which will best meet the needs of your family.

On enrollment, every parent will need to submit all admission information and review the parent handbook. We will provide an opportunity for you to understand all aspects of our school and will review the parent handbook with each parent. Parent orientation meetings will be arranged by appointment or during **August** when we kick off the school year with a group meeting.

Attendance

To assure children receive the maximum benefit of the Opportunity School program, regular attendance is necessary. Please make every effort to have your child attend. If you are having difficulty, please talk with your child's teacher or the director.

If a student misses ten days or more, during a month, the child can be dropped from the rolls and placed at the end of the waiting list to be re-enrolled unless the parent has made special arrangements with the office. **If your child must be absent, please call the school so we know the reason for the absence and date of expected return.**

NOTE TO CCS Families: If you participate in the Child Care Services program through Panhandle Workforce Solutions (PWSCCS), you must also swipe your card, each day, when dropping off and picking up to record your child's PWSCCS attendance **daily**. Call the number located on the back of their card to report an absence.

If your card is not working, please contact your PWSCCS caseworker immediately. Failure to comply will result in termination. If you are terminated from PWSCCS for failure to comply, then you will not be eligible for a scholarship. It is your responsibility to clock your child in daily. If you have any questions, please contact your case worker. **If you lose your card, you will need to contact your case worker on the same day.**

Arrival and Departure

Children must be at school and in their classroom no later than **9 am**. If your child has a doctor's appointment that would cause your child to arrive past the cut off time, please call the office and bring the doctor's note with you. Children should not be dropped off between 11:30am-2pm regardless of circumstance. Each class is napping during these times and dropping off disturbs the other children.

Please do not leave cars running or leave keys in the car when bringing children into the school. When parents bring children to school, they must leave them **IN THE PRESENCE OF A STAFF MEMBER**. Please sign in your child on the appropriate class sign-in sheet, and sign him/her out when picked up. Please sign your name legibly and include the time you drop off or pick up. **Due to licensing and liability reasons, this policy is strictly enforced.**

NOTE TO CCS Families: If you participate in the Child Care Services program through Panhandle Workforce Solutions (PWSCCS), you must also swipe your card when dropping off and picking up to record your child’s PWSCCS attendance. If your card is not working, please contact your PWSCCS caseworker immediately.

Closure for Holidays

Opportunity School Grand Street Campus and Central Campus full day programs will be closed for the following holidays. Parents will be reminded through classroom newsletters, posters and reminders from the teachers.

Labor Day	Good Friday
Thanksgiving Day + Day after Thanksgiving	Memorial Day
Christmas Day + Day after Christmas	4 th of July
New Year’s Day	Teacher In-service Days For 2018-19, we will be closed for training on August 13-14, October 8 and February 22.

***Central Campus Part Day Program will follow the AISD calendar for beginning, ending, Christmas break and Spring break but not for other holidays unless noted above.**

Closures due to Weather

In an effort to protect the safety of parents, children and staff, the school may initiate early closings, late openings or closures when weather makes road conditions hazardous. When Amarillo public schools close due to weather, Opportunity School will also close. Other late openings or closings outside of Amarillo public schools will take place when the school deems it necessary, and the school will notify parents by posting information on public media including the three local television network affiliates (KAMR Channel 4, KVII Channel 7, and KFDA Channel 10) and KGNC talk radio (AM 710), and/or by phoning parents.

Note for bus students: There are occasions when ice or snow makes the roads too slick to get the buses out. In these instances, Opportunity School will be open for any parents who want to bring and pick up their children.

Clothing, Bedding and Supplies Needed

Children are required to have an extra set of clothing (including underwear if toilet trained) and blanket (if full day) marked with their names. If your child has an accident and no clothes are available, you will be called to bring clothing for your child.

During their time with us, your child will paint, color, play with sand, rice and even mud on some occasions. Sometimes learning activities can be messy and we take precautions with bibs or smocks during our messiest learning experiences. Please dress your child appropriately in comfortable clothing for all activities and weather. **All outer wear and clothes left for changing must have the child's name inside. We are not responsible for lost coats, hats, gloves, mittens or scarves.**

We also love active play at Opportunity School so for safety reasons, we cannot allow children to wear flip-flops or open-backed sandals because they can easily slip off and can be tripping hazards. **There are no exceptions to this policy.** Closed toe sandals with a back are permitted. If your child is going on a field trip they will need to wear tennis shoes, or they will not be able to go on the field trip.

Contact Information

In the event that you move or if the phone numbers of any of the school's contacts for your family have changed, please let us know right away. You can easily update contact information for your child by filling out a change request which are available near the payment box. **Return the changes to the office by placing them in the payment box** and we will update your child's information.

Enrollment Procedures

Grand Street

- 6 weeks to 4 years' old
- Three years old by September 1st
- Eligibility based on Early Head Start or the Head Start program criteria

Central Campus

- 6 weeks to 4 years' old
- Three years old by September 1st
Must be completely toilet trained.
- 6 weeks to 2 years- Eligibility based on Early Head Start program criteria

Because the school's mission is to serve primarily children from low-income families, household income is a factor in admissions, and preference is given to families who are low-income based on the USDA Food Program income guidelines for "Free" or "Reduced" categories. Ten percent of families served may be above these income levels.

Parents interested in enrolling their child must complete an application form, USDA Income Verification form, parent permissions and income verification documents, and give updated information to the school as soon as any information changes and when requested by the school. Admission is granted in the order that applications are received, with preference given to low-income families. In addition, to attend Opportunity School, a child must have completed immunizations required by law for the age level (**See Immunization Requirements on p. 14**) and have had a doctor’s examination and wellness statement prior to entrance.

Opportunity School does not discriminate in enrollment because of race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, political belief, religion, or disability. If you feel you have been discriminated against you can call the Office of Civil Rights at (202) 720-5964 or write them at Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410.

Fees

Fees are charged on a monthly basis and may be paid by the month or by the half-month but must **always be paid in advance** of care. On the first business day of the month parents will receive a billing statement for the full month.

Monthly payment: Due on the 1 st	Past due if not paid by the 5th
First Half-month payment: Due on the 1st	Past due if not paid by the 5th
Second Half-month payment: Due on the 15th	Past due if not paid by the 20th

Parents may pay fees by the week on arrangement with the office, but always in advance of care. If paid by the week, payment is due by Friday for the week ahead and is past due if not paid by Monday. If fees become past due, parents will need to come to the office to make a fee resolution in order for their child to continue care. **There are no reductions in fees due to holidays, school closings or absences.**

Full Day Fees

Infant	Toddler	Preschool Age
\$133/week	\$126/week	\$110/week

As a Panhandle Work Source Child Care Services (PWSCCS) vendor, the school abides by PWSCCS fee policies for parents who utilize these services.

Failure to keep fee balances current and to make regular payments on a set schedule can result in losing your child’s spot at Opportunity School. Please notify your director in advance of any circumstances that affect your ability to keep your balance current. If in good standing, scholarships may be available to help on an emergency basis. Please visit with the director about scholarship criteria, assistance with fees and other possible help.

We encourage all parents to set up automatic payments through Tuition Express upon enrollment so that you don't risk falling behind in your fees. We also can accept payments in the form of checks and money orders. We DO NOT accept cash. Payments of check or money order must be placed in a payment envelope and placed in the lock box located on the outside of the main office. **Please do not hand payments to office personnel.** Receipts are issued after payment has been processed and placed in your child's box.

When a parent discontinues a child's care at Opportunity School, fees are refundable for any days that have been paid in advance.

Note to bus families: Parents wishing to send monthly payments by the bus may put a money order or check in an envelope and have the child's first name and last name on the envelope. **Please be sure to hand it directly to the bus driver.** Opportunity School is not responsible for money given to children to hand to the teacher, bus driver or bus rider for payment of fees.

Tuition for the half day program at Central Campus is based on family income. Proof of income is required upon enrollment. Parents are liable for information given and are responsible for notifying the school during the year whenever when their income changes.

NOTE TO CCS Families: It is your responsibility to clock your child in and out each day. If your child is absent, then you will need to call the number on the back of your CCS card to report. If you fail to swipe your card or report an absence, you will be terminated.

Late Fees

Your child is excited to see you at the end of the day! Please make every effort to pick up your child on time. If you are delayed, please call the school to let us know. Parents who are late picking up their children may be assessed additional fees of \$5.00 for every 5 minutes, up to \$20.00 for an hour. If a child is at Opportunity School one hour after closing hours and no one can be located, the Department of Family and Protective Services is notified.

Hours of Operation

Grand Street Campus
1525 N. Grand Street
Full Day, Year Round
6:45 a.m.-5:45p.m.
Children in class no
later than 9:00 a.m.

Central Campus
1103 S. Van Buren
Full Day, Year Round
7:30 a.m. - 5:45 p.m.
Year Around
Children in class no
later than 9:00 a.m.

Central Campus
1103 S. Van Buren
Part Day, Part Year
8:15 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
Children in class no later
than 9:00 a.m.
12:45 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
Children in class no later
than 1:15 p.m.

Release of Children

Staff members release children from school ONLY to the parent or person(s) designated by the parent on the registration form (required to be at least 14 years of age). In an emergency when a parent must ask someone else to pick up the child, the parent MUST inform the school by note or phone call. The person picking up the child MUST show his/her drivers' license to the staff member who is to release the child. Any other changes to the child's release list must be done in person at the school. The school staff **WILL NOT** release a child to anyone not on the release form unless the parent has followed these procedures.

Personal Items

Please do not bring toys from home, jewelry or personal items. Opportunity School is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Audio/Video Recording & Photography

We want you and your child to have a great experience at Opportunity School. In order to ensure the wellbeing and safety of our students, teachers and staff and anyone related to the school, we make limited use of video surveillance system within our school facilities. This is primarily video but also audio in some areas. Areas where audio is being recorded will be posted as such.

It is the policy of Opportunity School to be proactive in addressing issues of concern with regard to safety and security and quality of our program and the people within our campuses. Recorded video is not made directly available to employees, parents, outside entities or the general public. When an event is reported to the campus administrators (Campus Director, Assistant Campus Director or Executive Director if those are not available), they will review the video to make a determination if any video relevant to the incident is available. At that time others may be invited to view the video. Parents are welcome to make an appointment to view recorded video segments relative to situations involving their child. As always, parents are welcome to visit our campus and observe our classrooms.

Also, parents will be asked to sign a release for use of your child's photo. Opportunity School uses photographs and video in its preparation of promotional materials. These promotional materials are used to educate the public about Opportunity School's marketing, charitable and educational programs and may be released for public viewing.

Safety & Health at Opportunity School

Dispensing Medications

We know that there are times when medicines may need to be given while at school. To give your child over-the-counter medications, you will need to sign an Authorization for Medication Administration form. If the medication is prescribed by a physician, you will need to provide a doctor's note. If there is medicine that is reoccurring such as teething medicine or breathing treatments a doctor's note will stay effective for six months after that a new doctor's note will be needed. When a doctor has prescribed medication to be administered several times a day, the school asks the parent to schedule the administration times so that the medication is given at school as few times as possible, preferably just once. If a medication is prescribed to be given just once a day, the parent should not ask the school to administer the medication. Medication must come in the original container w/prescription label; parents must sign an authorization and include times to administer. Medication will not be administered after expiration date or if has another child's name on the bottle.

Anything given or applied to a child will require you to sign an Authorization for Medication Administration form. This does include Tylenol, teething tablets or Orajel, Neosporin, diaper rash creams and Benadryl.

Emergency and Evacuation Plan

Evacuation Procedure:

We take safety seriously at Opportunity School. Fire drills are held monthly, tornado and lock down drills are held at least 4 times each school year to acquaint your child with evacuation procedures. The evacuation routes are posted in each classroom. In the event of a disaster that makes it necessary to leave the building (including fire or toxic fumes), children will be moved to:

Grand Street

1. Harvest Assembly of God Parking Lot @ 1401 S. Apache
2. Opportunity School Central Campus- 1100 S. Harrison, Amarillo, 79101, 373-4245
3. To an alternate location as instructed by Emergency Management Personnel

Central Campus

1. Parking lot of the First Baptist Church that is directly across 12th Avenue to the south of First Presbyterian Church.
2. Opportunity School Grand St. Campus, 1525 N. Grand, Amarillo, 79107, 381-0551
3. To an alternate location as instructed by Emergency Management Personnel

- A. Children who cannot walk out of the building are placed in evacuation cribs and rolled to the designated evacuation location. For children with disabilities, a Teacher, Assistant Teacher or

other designated staff member will be assigned to get the child out safely during an emergency, either by wheelchair or other special assistance as needed to evacuate the child.

B. Staff Responsibilities:

- **Staff** should remain calm and speak to the children in a reassuring manner. Teachers/caregivers will comfort the children, explain the situation, and model for them how to remain calm.
- **Staff** will count the children in each group being evacuated and count the children again when they reach the evacuation destination.
- Children will stop their activities immediately at the sound of the alarm and proceed to the exit door. **Staff** will give children clear, simple instructions about exiting the facility and moving to the designated location.
- The **Teacher** in each classroom will carry attendance and the emergency contact information from the facility to the evacuation destination. Once at the evacuation destination, the teacher will compare attendance at the evacuation destination to the attendance sheet to be sure no children or staff have been left behind.
- The **Assistant Teacher** in each classroom will carry the classroom First Aid kit and the classroom flashlight from the facility to the evacuation destination. She will open the bathroom door and leave it open before exiting.

C. To assure a complete evacuation has occurred, the **Director** will conduct a final, thorough “sweep” of all areas accessible to children.

D. If reentry into the building is not possible and children need to be relocated:

- Children @ Central location will board the school’s buses/vans and be evacuated to the Opportunity School – **Grand Street Campus located at 1525 North Grand Street, Amarillo, Texas 79107, ph. 806-381-0551.**
- Children @ Grand Street. location will walk to Harvest Assembly of God Church located at **1401 S. Apache**, and if necessary transported by the school’s buses to the **Opportunity School Central Campus located at 1100 S. Harrison, Amarillo, Tx. 79102, ph. 806-373-4245.**
- The Director will notify the Executive Director and the church staff. The temporary shelter will be stocked with supplies and materials necessary for the program to take care of children until parents, legal guardians, or designated persons can take the children home.

Tornado Procedures

A. The Director or person in charge will monitor for weather alerts via radio or computer updates. If tornado sirens sound, children are to be evacuated into the designated tornado location. Teachers are to bring emergency information, first aid bag and sign in/out sheets.

- At the Grand St. location, children will sit in the hallway with their head against the wall and body tucked. Teachers will hold younger children in their laps and put a blanket over the child’s head for protection.
- At the Central location, children will go to the basement. Children will sit against the wall, with their body tucked. Teachers will hold younger children in their laps and put a blanket over the child’s head for protection.

- B. Children and staff will remain in the designated locations until the tornado threat has passed.
- C. If the building is unsafe, staff will move children as directed by Emergency Management Personnel have instructed or by the Director or staff member in charge.
- D. Parents/ Guardians will be notified by telephone of evacuation of children and where children are located. Parents will be advised not to take child until director /person in charge deems it safe.

Communication

- A. The Director will insure that families and necessary local authorities, including TDFPS are contacted. Families will be notified by telephone or radio/television broadcast on KGNC AM Talk Radio 710, KVII CHANNEL 7 TV, KFDA CHANNEL 10 TV, and KAMR CHANNEL 4 TV.
- B. If re-entry into the building is not possible, parents or emergency persons listed on the enrollment form will be contacted to pick up the children. During such evacuation or during a fire or tornado drill, parents who are just arriving may not leave their child in the school's care. Children will be released to parents once the drill is complete. If there is a tornado threat and the classes have been evacuated, the school will not release the child to you until the National Weather Service deems our area safe.

Emergency Preparedness Drill Schedule:

- A. Evacuation drills for outside evacuation (fire and similar emergencies) will be held monthly.
- B. Tornado drills are held at least 4x each school year. The timing of the drills will be varied to include early morning, mealtimes, and nap times.
- C. A lock-down drill for a volatile or endangering person on the premises will be held 4x each school year.
- D. The Director will complete the Fire and Tornado drill logs at the end of each drill.
- E. All new staff will receive pre-service training on the evacuation plan.

Building Lock Down:

- A. If Police or Emergency Personnel notify Opportunity School of a dangerous situation in our area such as: robbery in progress close to school, an armed fugitive, hostage situation or any person deemed dangerous by Police or Emergency Personnel all doors will be locked.
- B. All children will be kept inside the school until Police or Emergency Personnel clear situation and have notified Opportunity School that it is safe.
- C. No one will be allowed to enter or exit the building during a lock down. This includes parents and staff.
- D. If situation continues for an extended period, families will be notified telephone, radio or television broadcast on KGNC radio, KVII Channel 7, KFDA Channel 10 and KAMR Channel 4 of lock down and be given information on when it will be safe to pick up children from center.
- E. If necessary to leave the building, the evacuation procedure will be followed.

Unwelcome Visitor in Center:

- A. Staff along with administration will always be alert to people entering the building to ensure children's safety.
- B. If a person comes into building and makes a threat to the safety of children in care, staff will notify Director or person in charge to notify the police of situation.
- C. If teachers become aware of situation going on in the hallway, they will close their door and move children to the back of the classroom. If situation occurs in classroom teacher will alert administration to call the police. Director or person in charge will move children out of classroom.
- D. All staff will need to help keep children calm and quiet during this situation and follow all instructions given to school by police.
- E. If deemed necessary to evacuate building this will be done with the assistance of the Police Department or Emergency Personnel.

Media Inquiries:

All media inquiries are to be referred to the Executive Director, or, if not immediately available, to the Opportunity School Board President. Staff members are not to allow access by the media to the facility during a crisis situation. Media access will be prearranged at times when staff and families have been informed and when such visits will cause the least amount of disruption to the program.

Gang Free Zone

Please be aware that any area within 1000 feet of child-care center is a gang free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty. We inform our families of this in written and verbal form upon enrollment.

Hand Washing

Good health habits are encouraged at Opportunity School. Children wash their hands upon entering class (**parents please make sure your child washes his/her hands before entering the class at drop off**), before eating, after blowing their nose, before play in water tables, after outdoor play and after using the bathroom.

Hearing, Vision and Language Screening

Opportunity School wants the best start to your child's education. Each student will be tested for hearing, speech, and language development. Opportunity School employs a certified speech therapist who works with children with such needs. Children are also screened for visual impairments. Whenever a child is suspected of having a visual impairment the teacher will discuss her concerns with the parent and recommend appropriate action. Opportunity School works with children with special needs. We will work with you to help address your child's needs with an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Health Policy

Opportunity School's health policy is to provide a clear understanding concerning the measures taken to protect the health of children. Because children's immune systems are not fully developed, they are more subject to illness than adults. There may be times when your child will need to be excluded due to illness.

Children may not attend school if one or more of the following exists:

- 1) Child is unable to participate comfortably in center activities including outdoor play;
- 2) Illness results in a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety and supervision of the other children in care;
- 3) Child has signs or symptoms of a suspected contagious illness including but not limited to:
 - a. Oral temperature of **101.0** or armpit/ear temperature of **100.0** degrees or greater, accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness; or
 - b. Two or more episodes of diarrhea within 24 hours, vomiting (2 or more episodes within 24 hours), inflamed eyes, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, difficulty in breathing, or skin lesions with drainage;
- 4) The child exhibits sign or symptoms of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill;
- 5) A health-care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease; parents must have medical documentation letting us know the child is not contagious, to reenter care.
- 6) When a child has been sent home twice for the same condition or a serious communicable disease, a parent must bring a doctor's release before the child returns.

Children should be free of fever (100.0 oral temperature or greater), diarrhea or vomiting 24 hours before returning to school. An exception may be made if medical evaluation by a health care professional indicates that the condition is due to teething or other non-contagious condition. When children have been sent home because of head lice or ring worm, the parent must send documentation that treatment has been administered.

When parents request administration of any medication, including over-the-counter medications, the school must have written instructions from the doctor. When a doctor has prescribed medication to be administered several times a day, parents are asked to schedule administration times so that the medication is given at school as few times as possible, preferably just once. Medicine should be in original container with prescribed label. If a medication is to be given just once a day, the parent should not ask the school to administer the medication. When a child has a diaper rash that has persisted two weeks, the child must be seen by a doctor and instructions given to the school.

In all cases, Opportunity School staff reserve the right to use discretion and professional judgment in order to maintain a healthful environment for the children in care.

Illness

We want all of our students, teachers and families to stay well. If your child is not feeling good, please do not bring them to school. In case of illness, we will contact you and let you know to pick your child up. Children are excluded from care whenever they have symptoms of a communicable disease. (For a full explanation of the school's illness and exclusion policy, please see the Health Policy, in the previous section). Parents are asked to read carefully and sign a copy of the health policy upon enrollment. We will inform parents when there are cases of serious communicable diseases have been identified at the school.

Immunization Requirements

In order to attend Opportunity School, children must be up to date on their immunizations and we must obtain a copy of the shot record for our files. Through the year we will keep up with your child's record and inform you when it is time to obtain the next immunizations. Any delays in this will result in a delay of your child being allowed back to school. We must follow the Health Department's guidelines on Immunizations.

House Bill 2292 allows parents to exempt their children from vaccines required for entry into school and child-care facilities. In order for you to apply for this exemption, you must request the form in writing from TDH. (Parents cannot request the form over the phone.) Written requests for the form should be directed to:

Monica Gamez, Immunizations Compliance Coordinator
Immunizations Division
1100 W. 49th Street
Austin, TX 78756

Upon completion, the form must then be notarized and submitted to school officials within 90 days of notarization. Opportunity School does not keep a record of staff immunizations. It is up to the staff to keep up with immunizations.

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

In the case that an enrolled child has an identified special need by medical diagnosis, or a teacher has identified a possible concern about a child's developmental progress or behavior, the teacher will document their observation. The concerns will be discussed with parents and if necessary, the teacher, Director and parents will develop a plan for possible solutions. Depending on the situation, the school may suggest that a referral be made for further evaluation. If a child is receiving specialized services and has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in place, the school will address the child's IEP in our services.

Medical Emergencies

In case of a serious medical emergency, a trained staff member will provide First Aid and/or CPR, and immediately call 911 if necessary. We then will make every effort to reach the parents. If the parents can't be reached, we will call the designated emergency persons provided by the parents on the emergency medical release form.

If the parent cannot be contacted, we will call for ambulance to transport child or take your child to the doctor or clinic stated on your child's application. If your child needs to be transported to the hospital by ambulance, a staff member will accompany your child.

All parents are asked to be sure they or the persons they designate can be reached in case of an emergency by providing:

- 1) At least two working phone numbers where parents/ Guardian can be reached and two working numbers where alternative contact persons may be reached during hours of operation at Opportunity School.
- 2) A class schedule and phone numbers if the parent/ Guardian attend school.
- 3) Complete phone numbers and addresses for hospital, and doctor's offices.

This is why it is very important that you sign the medical release on the application in case of a medical emergency. If the phone numbers of any of the school's contacts for your family, emergency contacts, doctors or hospital have changed, please let us know right away. You can easily update contact information for your child by filling out a change request, which are available near the payment box. **Return the changes to the office by placing them in the payment box** and we will update your child's information.

Opportunity School cannot assume responsibility for payment of medical services. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to assume any cost incurred for emergency care.

Pest Control

Pesticides are periodically applied indoors in a manner that protects the safety of children. Information on the times and types is available upon request.

Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

Opportunity School is committed to protecting the well-being of children, and therefore our staff is trained in recognizing and preventing child abuse and neglect. Additionally, we are under ethical and legal obligation in accordance with the Child Care Licensing Standards and the Family code of the State of Texas to report instances of suspected abuse or neglect. All suspicious indicators will be documented and reported. The center is required by law to cooperate with any investigation of child abuse and neglect.

Signs of abuse and neglect include unusual physical marks or behavior. It is not our responsibility or intention to offer interpretation or explanation of our observations - the investigation is handled by the State. Failure of educators to report is a crime, and Texas law establishes immunity of any person reporting in good faith. State law assures strict confidentiality of reports and reporting persons.

Should an employee be under an investigation of child abuse, the school will take measures to protect children during the investigation, including preventing the employee from unsupervised contact with children or removing the employee from contact with children, as appropriate. Should allegations be substantiated, the school will follow its policies regarding employee discipline and termination.

Safe Sleep for Infants

All staff, substitute staff, and volunteers at Opportunity School will follow these safe sleep recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) for infants to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome/Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS/SUIDS):

- Always put infants to sleep on their backs unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant's health care professional [§746.2427 and §747.2327].
- Place infants on a firm mattress, with a tight-fitting sheet, in a crib that meets the CPSC federal requirements for full size cribs and for non-full-size cribs [§746.2409 and §747.2309].
- For infants who are younger than 12 months of age, cribs should be bare except for a tight-fitting sheet and a mattress cover or protector. Items that should not be placed in a crib include: soft or loose bedding, such as blankets, quilts, or comforters; pillows; stuffed toys/animals; soft objects; bumper pads; liners; or sleep positioning devices [§746.2415 and §747.2315]. Also, infants must not have their heads, faces, or cribs covered at any time by items such as blankets, linens, or clothing [§746.2429 and §747.2329].
- Do not use sleep positioning devices, such as wedges or infant positioners. The AAP has found no evidence that these devices are safe. Their use may increase the risk of suffocation [§746.2415 and §747.2315].
- Ensure that sleeping areas are ventilated and at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult [§746.3407(10) and §747.3203(10)].
- If an infant needs extra warmth, use sleep clothing such as sleepers or footed pajamas as an alternative to blankets [§746.2415 and §747.2315].
- Place only one infant in a crib to sleep [§746.2405 and §747.2305].
- Infants may use a pacifier during sleep. But the pacifier must not be attached to a stuffed animal or the infant's clothing by a string, cord, or other attaching mechanism that might be a suffocation or strangulation risk [§746.2415 and §747.2315].

- If the infant falls asleep in a restrictive device other than a crib (such as a bouncy chair or swing or arrives to care asleep in a car seat), move the infant to a crib immediately, unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant's health care professional [§746.2426 and §747.2326].
- Our child care program is smoke-free. Smoking is not allowed in Texas child care operations (this includes e-cigarettes and any type of vaporizers) [§746.3703(d) and §747.3503(d)].
- Actively observe sleeping infants by sight and sound [§746.2403 and §747.2303]. ☐ If an infant can roll back and forth from front to back, place the infant on the infant's back for sleep and allow the infant to assume a preferred sleep position [§746.2427 and §747.2327].
- Awake infants will have supervised “tummy time” several times daily. This will help them strengthen their muscles and develop normally [§746.2427 and §747.2327].
- Do not swaddle an infant for sleep or rest unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant’s health care professional [§746.2428 and §747.2328].

Sunscreen and Insect Repellant

The playground provides shaded areas to help prevent sunburn. With written parental permission and parent-provided sunscreen, teachers may apply skin protection to exposed skin. We cannot apply sunscreen without written parental permission. Teachers help to ensure that when in the sun, children are wearing sun-protective clothing if available, applied skin protection, or both.

When public health authorities recommend use of insect repellents due to a high risk of insect-borne disease, only repellents containing DEET are used, and these are applied only on children older than two months. **Opportunity School will have appropriate insect repellant on hand, but staff may only apply insect repellent with written parental permission.**

Tuberculin Testing Requirements/ Immunizations

Opportunity School has no Tuberculin Testing requirements for attending children at this time. We will be following any recommendations from the Health Department. All staff that comes in contact with children is tested regularly for tuberculosis. Opportunity School does not keep up with employee immunizations.

Parent Involvement and Communication

Classroom Visits

We love to have families visit Opportunity School at any time during your child's day. You do not have to call and set an appointment to observe your child's classroom. You are always welcome. If you will be coming to have lunch, please let us know so we can let the cook know.

Would you like to help in the classroom at Opportunity School? Contact your child's teacher to see if there is a way you can help in the classroom.

Communicating with Parents

We know that your child's experience will be better with good communication between school and home. There are several ways to keep you informed. All parents will receive a handbook regarding school policies and procedures. A signed acknowledgment will be required for each child's file. A written notification will be given regarding any changes in policies and practices.

We will release information about the child's progress or any issues only with the enrolling parent(s) or others as legally required. It is our policy to maintain the confidentiality of the student and their family and will not speak with grandparents or other family members unless that person is named as the parent or legal guardian of the student.

Other forms of communication can include:

- Monthly newsletter of parent tips, coming events, highlights of classroom activities.
- Parent reminders to remind you of field trips, classroom celebrations or holidays.
- You may receive a behavior incident report if your child has repeated occurrences of behaviors that require attention. Refer to the discipline policy in this handbook for more information.
- Incident/Illness reports are provided if your child has a minor injury or becomes ill. If a child becomes ill at school, you may receive an exclusion notice stating what conditions must be met before your child can return to our care.
- Daily Communication Sheet for children ages 2 years and younger.

Other communication methods include but are not limited to: Parent/Teacher conferences, signs/fliers posted by door, on the Parent Information Board or sent home, lesson plans posted in the classrooms, menus, and Book Bag materials including Scholastic "Let's Find Out" and Parent and Child magazine.

Copies of the most recent licensing reports are kept in the hallway for review. A copy of Minimum Standards is kept in the office for parents to review.

Confidentiality

Some of the information shared between families, teachers and administrators is of a personal and private nature. We will share this information only with those school employees and professional consultants (for example, speech therapists, etc.) who have a “need to know.” We will not share this information with other parents at any time or with employees who do not “need to know.”

Student records including the application, income verifications and other information collected during enrollment are kept in a secure filing cabinet in the school office. Children’s assessment information is kept in a secure location by the school’s teacher. Only administrators, teachers or specialized professionals who work directly with your child (for example, the Speech Therapist), appropriate regulatory authorities, or persons to whom you the parent or legal guardian have given permission have access to this assessment information. Information about the usage, interpretation and representation of assessment and screening information are described in the handbook section entitled “Monitoring Children’s Progress.” The school values family and student privacy and follows all applicable regulations regarding confidentiality (not subject to the Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act).

Maintaining a Peaceful School Environment

Opportunity School desires to maintain a school environment that is supportive, respectful and harmonious for every child, parent and staff member. To support a peaceful school environment, staff members agree to follow the school’s professional conduct practices.

Similarly, parents are asked to demonstrate courtesy and respect in their interactions with other parents, with staff, and with their own and other children while they are at Opportunity School. Please do not be on your cell phone when coming to pick up your child. This is a time for teachers to communicate to you and for you to talk to them.

Everyone is expected to use language that is suitable and appropriate for children’s ears at all times when on the school grounds, parking area, or inside the building. Language or behavior that appears threatening, disrespectful or disruptive will not be tolerated, and appropriate measures will be taken. For conflicts or grievances, parents should follow the procedures described in the “Parent Questions and Concerns” section of this Handbook.

Monthly Home/School Visits

Children will do best when there is good communication and partnership between parents and teachers. The school honors parents’ concerns and preferences for their children. In turn, the school requires parents participate in regular individual parent visits and monthly group parent meetings. We believe that the most and the best learning goes on in the home between parents and children. We work with families to provide a variety of activities for use at home.

There will be one individual parent visit and group meeting, or visit required each month. Teachers will visit the homes of their students in August and May. Other monthly visits can take place at the school. Individual parent visits take place at a time agreed upon by parent and teacher. Teacher visits continue during June and July, but there are no group meetings during these months.

Individual parent visits with the child's teacher provide:

- Opportunities for parents and teachers to set learning goals for the child;
- Books and activities for use at home;
- Information on child development and needs.
- Review lesson plans, test results and have paperwork signed.

The group meetings provide:

- Information on topics of interest and help to parents;
- Opportunities to build relationships with other parents.

Parents are responsible for keeping their individual parent visit appointments, for participating in the activities and returning the books and materials in good condition. Parents are financially responsible if materials are lost or damaged. Involving parents in their child's education is an important part of your child's learning. If you are unable to participate, please talk to your child's teacher. Children whose parents do not consistently participate in the Home/School visits may not be able to continue at Opportunity School.

Through Parent Visits and Parent Education Activities, Parents will:

- Understand the importance of reading with young children, experience pleasurable times reading with their children and enjoying a related activity and develop skills in evaluating books that are appropriate for and interesting to their children.
- Understand their child's cognitive, physical, emotional and social developmental needs, and gain increased skills in supporting their child's healthy development.
- Build a strong, mutually satisfying relationship between the school and home.
- Learn how to use common materials found around the home for stimulating their children's learning and form closer bonds with their children through play activities

Parent Advisory Committee

The Parents' Advisory Committee is composed of one or more parent representatives from each classroom. Monthly meetings are scheduled by the Committee and the Director. If you are interested in serving on the Committee, please speak with your child's teacher or the Director. The Parents' Advisory Committee's purpose is to:

- Share ideas and concerns in order to promote high quality education for children and support for parents;
- Advise the school concerning school policies that affect parents and children;
- Plan events and activities involving parents and children;
- Assist in implementing school projects.

Parent's Questions and Concerns

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the policies and procedures of Opportunity School, we encourage you to first contact your child's teacher. If further consideration is needed, call or visit the Director. If your concern is not adequately addressed by the Director, please contact the Executive Director at 373-4245 or 381-0551. Concerns not satisfactorily addressed by the Director or the Executive Director should be brought to the Board of Trustees by providing your concern in writing to the Executive Director who will present your concern to the appropriate person on the Board.

Both Opportunity School campuses are licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and are in compliance with their rules and regulations. Parents may review the licensing minimum standards at any time. Our most recent licensing inspections are always posted for parents to look at. Previous reports are available by request from the office.

If you feel a grievance is not being addressed, parents may contact local licensing at:

Main number: 358-6211

TDFPS abuse hot line is:

1-800-252-5400

Intake line: 354-5307

The TDFPS website is: www.dfps.state.tx.us

Resources for Parents

We know that families struggle at times. Our staff is here to work with you and provide referrals to any services that may help you meet basic needs. We have resources for basic needs (food, clothing, housing, utilities) and a wide range of social services including mental wellness, stress management, parenting skills, legal aide, or other support. Please let your child's teacher or the director or our Family Services Coordinator know if these resources might be helpful to you. Situations revealed to staff will be handled with confidentiality and respect.

Classroom Experiences for your Child

Animals

Sometimes we have the opportunity to learn about real, live animals. Parents will be informed about animals that will be present at Opportunity School. Caregivers and staff will practice good hygiene whenever handling the classroom animals. Animals that require vaccinations will be vaccinated according to local animal health ordinances and a record of their vaccinations will be on hand at center.

Sorry, pets may not be brought to school. An exception may be made if the school staff has made special arrangements with you to bring a pet for a classroom learning experience. You will have to provide proof of current vaccinations and have a written approval from the vet.

Field Trips

Outings to interesting places in or near Amarillo are a part the curriculum for preschool-aged children (three- and four-year-olds) at Opportunity School. These trips expose children to new experiences and enhance the classroom curriculum. Field trips are always supervised by a teacher and an assistant teacher. Parents are informed of field trips by given specific information at least two days in advance. The children are transported on field trips by Opportunity School's 23-passenger bus. We only transport children by bus on field trips. Parents are always welcome to accompany their child, but you will need to provide your own transportation.

If you allow your child to participate in field trips permission must be given by checking the appropriate area in the enrollment packet. If you check no, you will need to transport your child to the field trip destination or keep your child home the day of the field trip.

Water Activities

Opportunity School children participate in water play as appropriate to children's ages and developmental needs. Activities include water sprays and spouts and water tables. Water tables and classroom pouring activities that do not normally result in a child getting wet (except for hands) are included as a part of daily lesson plans. For activities where children or clothing may get wet, notices will be sent home in advance so that parents may prepare by providing bathing suits and towels. Parents who do not wish children to participate should provide written notice to their child's teacher.

Outdoor Play

Weather permitting all children will go outside twice a day. Opportunity School may accommodate the weather, air quality, and seasonal changes by adjusting the schedules of outdoor time and the length of times outdoors. Please make sure that your child is dressed appropriately for the weather. Outdoor time is a great time for children to play vigorous structured activities as well as have unstructured play. This is also a great time for children to explore nature and observe the changes in the weather.

TV / Video, Computer and Video Games

For children under the age of two there will be no media or screen time of any kind. For older children, some media may be incorporated appropriately into lesson plans or in technology centers. Media activities using TV / video, computer or video games may be used as a supplement but will not replace hands-on activities for children. The use of media will be a

planned activity, age appropriate and will not exceed more than two hours per day (alternative activities will be made available for children who don't want to participate)

Behavior Guidance Policy

Policy Statement:

Children face many challenges throughout their lives including learning acceptable behaviors and being able to regulate their own behaviors in different social and emotional environments or when interacting with peers or adults.

The purpose of the Behavior/Guidance Policy is to encourage acceptable forms of behavior by using strategies that build children's confidence and self-esteem; and provide children with support, guidance and opportunities to manage their own behavior.

OS recognizes and understands that a child's behavior may be affected by:

- Age and development, special or additional needs;
- General health, wellbeing and disability;
- Relationships with their family;
- Play and learning environments, which includes the physical indoor/outdoor setting, the weather, the time of year, the time of day;
- Staff and caregiver's caregiving strategies and practices, which includes how these strategies are implemented
- Relationships with other children, staff and visitors.
- External factors, such as family, home life, school or peer group experiences, or media coverage of certain events.

While staff are aware and respect individual children's and family's backgrounds and beliefs, it may be necessary to balance the individuals needs with staff knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices and current best practice recommendations from recognized authorities.

Challenging behavior is defined as any behavior that:

- Interferes with the children learning, development and success at play
- Is harmful to the child, other children or adults
- Puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure.
- It can be direct (hitting, pushing, biting, or kicking) or indirect (teasing, ignoring rules or instructions, excluding others, name calling, destroying objects, having temper tantrums).

The Opportunity School staff sees working with children's challenging behavior as an important part of our job. The word discipline has, at its root meaning, "instruction" or "training". This meaning, rather than punishment is the foundation for our approach to guiding children's behavior.

The foundation of our discipline approach comes from Conscious Discipline (need Trademark) by Becky Bailey. Conscious Discipline helps build schools based on safety, connection and problem-solving. With these components, everyday events and conflicts become opportunities to teach life skills. The approaches we use vary by age group, but have the following elements in common:

Adults model positive behavior. We show that we can accept, control and express feeling in direct and non- aggressive ways; we let children know that we are not afraid of their intense emotions and will not punish, threaten or withdraw from them. By showing children how to handle strong emotions by calming ourselves, asking what we need, and using positive problem-solving, we model what is acceptable behavior.

Teachers design the physical environment to minimize conflict. We provide multiples of toys and materials for groups of children, define classroom and outdoor areas clearly to allow for both active and quiet play, and strive to maintain an appropriately calm level of stimulation. We use pictures and picture schedules to help children learn and follow classroom routines.

Teachers maintain age-appropriate expectations for children’s behavior. We attempt to minimize unreasonable waiting and transition times and limit the length of large group and teacher directed activity ties according to children’s developmental levels. We give children large block of uninterrupted time during which to make their own activity choices.

Adults closely observe and supervise children’s activities and interactions. With our low child/staff ratios and our emphasis on attentive observation, we can often intervene to guide children before situations escalate.

Adults help children verbalize their feelings, frustrations and concerns. The staff will help the children describe problems, generate possible solutions and think through logical consequences of their actions. The adult role is to be a helper in positive problem solving. We want children to value cooperation and teamwork. We help them learn to peaceful approaches to interacting.

Children whose behavior endangers others will be supervised away from other children and encouraged to use the “Safe Place.” This is not the same as “time out” (the traditional chair in the corner) for a child. An adult will help the child move away from a group situation. The child will then process the problem verbally with the staff member and other concerned parties. An adult will stay close to any child who is emotionally out of control and needs private time to regain composure.

Discipline, i.e. guidance, will always be positive, productive and immediate with behavior is inappropriate. No child will be humiliated, shames, frightened or subjected to physical punishment or verbal or physical abuse by any staff member, student, or volunteer.

In general, when an incident occurs, the staff member lets the child know that the behavior is not Ok as explained in detail below. They:

1. Acknowledge the act (what action has occurred),
2. Acknowledge the feel or hurt the behavior has caused the victim,

3. Move the offending child away from the situation,
4. Suggest an alternative way of behaving before returning to play, and
5. If the child continues to offend, a behavior strategy will be implemented.

When a pattern of behavior persists that endangers self, others or property or significantly disrupts the program, we will work with a child family to find solutions, up to and including referral for outside services. Parent’s cooperation and participation in finding solutions to these behaviors is essential to continued care in the program. If these actions do not help in reducing or changing the behavior the following will take place:

1. Staff will report behavior and what strategies have been attempted to the Director. (This should include conferencing with the parent)
2. The Teacher/Director will determine if referral for a formal behavior observation is needed.
3. Behavior observation will be completed, and behavior plan put into practice.

*** If a child’s behavior becomes threatening to themselves, other children, staff or teachers, the child will be removed from the classroom and possibly the program for a period of time. If all efforts to correct the child's pattern of behavior fail, permanent removal from the program may result.*

Scope

This policy and procedure applies to the OS community, including all children, staff, parents, guardians and visitors.

Nutrition and Meals

Both of Opportunity School’s campuses provide meals service including breakfast, lunch for full-day students, an afternoon snack therefore parents will not need to bring food from home.

Meal Times

Grand Street Meal Times
Meal times vary by the
classroom age.

Central Campus Meal Times
Breakfast 8:30-9:30
Lunch 11:30-12:30
Snack 2:30-3:00

Menus

Opportunity School has partnered with Kids Café for our meal service. Menus are created, by Kids Café, in accordance to the guidelines of the CACFP program. Monthly menus are posted in classrooms and on the parent information board. Your child will receive healthy, balanced meals. We will also introduce your child to new foods and encourage them to try a variety of foods.

If your child does not like what is being served for breakfast, please be sure to feed your child at home. **If your child has a food allergy or cannot have milk you will need to have a doctor's note to alter their diet.**

In the operation of the food program and all operations, there is no discrimination because of race, sex, color, national origin, age, political belief, religion or disability. If you believe you have been discriminated against, write immediately to:

Texas Health and Human Services Commission
Director, Civil Rights Department
P.O. Box 149030, MC W-206
Austin, Texas 78714-9030 OR
USDA Director, Office of Civil Rights
Room 326-W, Whitten Bldg.
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington D.C. 20250-9410

Note for Parents of Infants: Parents of infants ages 6 weeks to 11 months have the options to bring the child's prepared bottles or expressed breast milk, extra formula, and instructions for the child's feeding. All bottles should be marked with the child's name. Parents of infants also have the option of having the school provide formula under USDA guidelines, if they wish to have their child receive the standard formula offered by the school (all parents of infants will be given specific information and authorization forms regarding infant feeding options). The school encourages and supports breast-feeding for infants and provides a comfortable and appropriate space in the infant room for nursing mothers. If a mother is having problems with breast feeding the following resources are available:

WIC-Women Infant & Children
411 S Austin St Amarillo, TX 79106
(806) 371-1119

Snacks from Home

Throughout the year, parents may bring snacks or foods from home for classroom celebrations, birthdays, or other occasions. Food that comes from home for sharing among the children must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers.

Bus Policies

General Rules

Opportunity School's bus policies are to ensure the safety of our students, teachers, bus driver and bus riders during regular bus routes for the Central Campus and during field trips.

When riding the bus, there are some key things everyone should know.

- Children must wear seat belts when riding in the bus.
- Children must follow the directions of the bus rider.
- Children may not bring food or toys on the bus.

Bus Route

In order to assure that classes, start on time, parents must have children ready when the bus arrives. If the bus arrives to pick up your child 3 days in a row with no one home and no one has called the school, the bus will no longer pick up your child. Communication is very important. Parents must be at the return address or have a designated adult at the return address to receive the child upon return from school.

Drivers honk to pick up and return children. When the child is returned, the adult at home is asked to wave to the driver so that the driver will know the adult is there. If no one is home to receive the child, or the person at the house is not on the release list, you will receive a Pink Slip and your child will be returned to the school. If you receive 3 pink slips your child will no longer be able to ride the bus. If your child is returned to the school, there will be an extended care charge of \$5.00 for every 15 minutes the child is in extended care.

Please allow fifteen minutes' variance either side of the "usual" pick up and deliver time. The school will notify parents when there are major changes in the bus schedule.

There can be no daily changes in the regular pick-up or return addresses. If your child cannot be at the designated address, or if a designated adult can't be at the address for the child's return, please find other transportation or keep your child out of school that day. All permanent changes in the pick-up and/or delivery address must be made in person at the school office. The bus drivers and riders cannot make route changes so please do not ask them to do so. The school is unable to accommodate daily changes to pick-up and drop-off schedules. Parents cannot call every day, to say, don't pick up or drop off. This confusion is difficult for the office staff, teachers and bus driver.

Opportunity School does not transport children to or from other childcare centers or schools. **Children may be removed from the bus routes when families do not follow by these rules.**

About Opportunity School

History

Opportunity School was begun in 1969 by the First Presbyterian Church. Its purpose is to provide optimum developmentally appropriate experiences for preschool children, thus preparing them for successful subsequent school life. The Grand Street Campus opened in 2000 to expand services to working families.

Accreditation

Opportunity School programs meet high quality standards including those of the **National Association for the Education of Young Children** and the **Texas Rising Star program**. Our ratio of teachers to children (1/4 for infants and toddlers, 1/9 for preschool) provides intensive one on one interaction for every child

Future Scholarships

Churches support Opportunity School, as do individuals, organizations, foundations, and businesses in this area. Student fees cover approximately 15% of the cost of the school.

Opportunity School's interest in its students does not end when the student graduates from Opportunity School. We hope you will let us know of your child's whereabouts, progress, Success and problems throughout his school career.

Amarillo College maintains a scholarship fund for former Opportunity School students. Please keep your child informed of this opportunity. Application can be attained from the financial aid office at Amarillo College.

Every year St. Andrews provides a scholarship to an Opportunity School student to attend their K-8 program. Children are nominated by staff recommendation. A scholarship committee chooses the recipient of this award.

Opportunity School's Educational Philosophy

All children deserve early childhood experiences that help them achieve their fullest potential in life. Opportunity School families come from varied backgrounds; however, we exist primarily to ensure that children who are at risk of delays or from low-income families receive high quality early education and care at affordable costs in order to help them become lifelong learners.

To ensure a child's future success, we must fully meet each child's developmental needs today. Opportunity School students enjoy an enriched learning environment that meets the needs of the whole child at every stage from birth to age five, until kindergarten age.

While attending to each child's individual needs, we hold the following principles as "cornerstones" of Opportunity School's Educational Philosophy:

- **Respect**: We respect each child and value their dignity, their ideas and their work.
- **Excellence**: We believe every child wants to succeed. Through quality interactions with their teachers, children build high self-esteem and enjoy many opportunities for achievement.
- **Safety**: We believe all children and adults deserve a peaceful and safe place for compassionate care and education.
- **Parent/School Partnership**: We believe that children's education is most successful when parents and school staff work together in a climate of mutual support and respect.
- **Diversity**: We nurture children's understanding that they are part of a diverse community. As an educational team coming from diverse backgrounds, we work together to help children appreciate and become effective citizens of their community and their world.
- **Readiness to Explore**: We believe children function at their highest levels when they are both nurtured and stimulated - when they are reassured and challenged.
- **Individuality**: We allow children to progress at their own pace, and we carefully observe and build on the strengths and interests of each child to individualize instruction.
- **Lifelong Learning**: We value experiences that foster children's curiosity, love of learning, and responsibility. Teachers work diligently to establish classrooms where children's sense of wonder, capability and independence is nurtured.

Curriculum

Opportunity School is committed to providing high quality classroom instructions. All classroom instruction supports the ***Texas Infant, Toddler and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines*** and the ***Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines***.

Our teachers primarily use The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschool to create developmentally appropriate lesson plans and expectations for the students in their classroom. Depending on the teacher, these resources can be used in total or in combination with other materials as a tool box of ideas that allow the teacher the creativity and flexibility they need to meet every child's individual needs.

Our curriculum and supporting enrichment materials cover the whole child's developmental needs including social, emotional, gross and fine motor skills, emerging literacy and language skills, math and scientific discovery concepts, creativity and artistic expression, music, self-help and cultural and community awareness.

Daily schedules include learning time in individually-chosen work centers and, for preschoolers, small- and large-group time as well as music and outdoor play for all ages.

Parent Support

We believe that children's parents are their most influential teachers, and that all parents appreciate support from caring, informed professionals. Parents, teachers and administrators form strong partnerships that help parents feel confident in their parenting roles long after their children leave Opportunity School. Teachers visit students' homes and conduct two monthly parent-visit sessions (or one group session and one individual session for parents of children in the full-day program) to support parents in their role as their child's foremost teacher.

Program Goals

- Young children will receive high quality early education and care to meet their needs today;
- Children will become lifelong learners and successful citizens; and
- Parents will become skillful supporters of their children's achievement.
- Opportunity School will encourage parents to assist in making decisions to improve the program.
- Opportunity School will provide continuous improvement and innovation using information from surveys to plan professional development.
- Collaborative and shared participation will help to build trust and enthusiasm for making program changes.
- Opportunity School will monitor program quality and improve operations and policies so that goals and objectives are met.
- Results will be shared through orientation, handbook, memos, newsletters and home visits.

Monitoring Children's Progress

A variety of formal and informal assessment methods are used to help teachers meet the needs and interests of individual children and those of the class. The following are the purposes for which Opportunity School uses assessment:

- identifying children's interests and needs,
- improving curriculum and adapting teaching practices and the environment,
- communicating with families to help meet children's learning needs at home,
- arranging for developmental or other screenings when indicated,
- adapting curriculum for groups of children and to individualize instruction for each child,

For information regarding confidentiality of screening and assessments, see the handbook section entitled “Confidentiality.”

Teachers for all our Pre-K classes will gather information about each child’s progress. Data is collected in a number of ways. Our primary assessment tool is called Galileo.

Observations		Year-round
Checklists		Year-round
Anecdotal	Notes	Year-round
Work Sampling		Year-round
Book Bag	Summaries	Monthly

In addition, teachers gather information about children’s and families’ interests, values, and cultures in order to make learning meaningful for you and your child. Teachers gather information through observations, through book bag summaries, conversations and other questionnaires during Home Visits, and by asking families to share information such as family photos with the class throughout the year.

Twice each year, in January and in May, your child’s Teacher will share a written Progress Report with you to help you understand your child’s strengths and areas of emerging skills. Every child develops at his or her own pace, and your Teacher will work with you to develop learning goals suited to your child’s developmental path.

Goals for Children

Through their daily activities in the following areas to prepare them for kindergarten and beyond. Opportunity School students will:

Social and Emotional Development - Self Concept:

- Begin to develop and express awareness of self in terms of his/her specific abilities, characteristics and preferences.
- Develop growing independence in a range of activities, routines and tasks.
- Demonstrate growing confidence in a range of abilities and express pride in her/his accomplishments.

Social and Emotional Development - Self Control:

- Show progress in expressing feelings, needs and opinions in difficult situations and conflicts without harming themselves, others, or property.
- Develop growing understanding of how his/her actions affect others and begin to understand and accept the consequences of her/his actions.
- Demonstrate increasing ability to follow rules and routines and use materials purposefully, safely and respectfully.

Social and Emotional Development - Social Relationships:

- Demonstrate increasing comfort in talking with and accepting guidance and instructions from a range of familiar adults.

- Show progress in developing friendships with peers.
- Progress in responding sympathetically to peers who are in need, upset, hurt, or angry; and in expressing empathy or caring for others.

Approaches to Learning - Initiative and Curiosity:

- Participate in an increasing variety of new tasks and activities.
- Develop increased ability to make independent choices.
- Approach tasks and activities with increased flexibility, imagination and inventiveness.
- Demonstrate an increasing eagerness to question and explore ideas independently or with the support of peers or teachers.

Approaches to Learning - Reflection and Recollection:

- Develop the ability recall and reflect on his/her own activities; begin to assemble activities into meaningful experiences.

Science - Reasoning and Problem-solving:

- Increase ability to classify order, sort and compare objects, events and experiences.
- Construct knowledge of the world through testing ideas, reasoning, and discussing relationships among objects, people and events.
- Gain knowledge of the physical world and increased understanding of cause-and-effect relationships.

Science – Time:

- Demonstrate increased awareness of rates of movement and time intervals, and be able to anticipate, remember and describe sequences of events.
- Gain an understanding of common time units including weekdays and months.

Early Math - Number Concepts:

- Show progress in his/her understanding of quantity including “more, fewer, and same amount”, number representations, and one-to-one correspondence.
- gain an understanding of measurement and an awareness of the physical dimensions of objects

Early Math - Patterns, Geometry and Spatial Relations:

- Demonstrate increased ability to identify and describe shapes and patterns, to manipulate the shape of objects, and to describe positions and directions of objects in space.

Language - Communication Skills:

- Show progress in using spoken language and increased vocabulary to effectively communicate ideas, thoughts, feelings and desires.
- Demonstrate increased attentiveness to and comprehension of spoken language including stories, songs, rhymes, instructions and social conversations.

Language - Early Literacy:

- Gain an increasing appreciation of the many uses for printed language.
- Become familiar with basic written forms including letters, names and words.
- Increase his/her enjoyment of reading for information and personal satisfaction in many forms including shared group reading, one-on-one reading with a teacher, reading to oneself and peer-to-peer reading.
- Demonstrate an increased interest in communicating through writing and drawing.

- Build proficiency in understanding the relationship between language in its written form and in its spoken form.

Creative Expression/Arts Appreciation - Dramatic Play:

- Participate in a variety of dramatic play activities that allow them to use expressive language, explore feelings, and apply skills across domains and foster imagination.

Creative Expression/Arts Appreciation - Music, Dance and Visual Representation:

- Gain enjoyment and confidence in creating and responding to music through multiple means including his/her own voice, musical instruments, dance and rhythmic movements and finger plays and gestures.
- Gain competency and enjoyment in creating visual representations through a multitude of open-ended media including paint, crayons, markers, play dough, clay, collage materials and other two- and three-dimensional media.

Health and Safety - Personal Responsibility:

- Gain knowledge about the care of his/her body and what is needed to maintain personal health and fitness.
- Become competent and independent in the management of her/his body and personal effects including clothing and other personal belongings.

Physical Development - Physical Fitness and Awareness:

- Gain enjoyment and mastery in a variety of large motor skills including running, throwing, jumping, balancing, riding, climbing, and moving fast and slow,
- Demonstrate increasing control and competence in fine motor skills including cutting, drawing, writing, gripping, and lacing, stacking, and nesting items.

Social Studies - Our Community:

- Build an understanding of the people, characteristics, cultures and traditions of the surrounding community, including the people who serve the community.
- Gain awareness and respect for varied cultures found in our local community and the world.

Goals for Parents

Through Home Visits and Parent Education Activities, Parents will:

- Better understand the importance of reading with young children, experience pleasurable times reading with their children and enjoying a related activity and develop skills in evaluating books that are appropriate for and interesting to their children.
- Better understand their child’s cognitive, physical, emotional and social developmental needs, and gain increased skills in supporting their child’s healthy development across all domains.
- Build a strong, mutually satisfying relationship between the school and home.
- Use common materials found around the home for stimulating their children’s learning and form closer bonds with their children through.



Opportunity School - Parent Acknowledgements

Child / Children's Names: _____
(Please Print)

Parent's Name: _____
(Please Print)

Parent Handbook

I, _____ acknowledge that I have received and discussed with the Director or Assistant Director, the Parent Handbook for Opportunity School. If you have any questions about the policies or procedures please feel free to call Lesley Webb- Program Director, Kris Opitz – Grand Street Site Director(381-0551), Vonda Grantham-Central Campus Site Director (373-4245) or Jill Goodrich- Executive Director at (373-4245).

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Behavior Policy

I, _____ have read and understand the Behavior Policy.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Speech & Hearing

I give permission for my child _____ to be evaluated for speech, hearing and vision. I understand that I will be informed as to any abnormal findings, and appropriate measures to correct the findings.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Health Policy

I, _____, have read and agree to abide by the Opportunity School's health policy.

Signature _____ Date _____

Arrival and Departure Policy

I, _____, have read and understand the Arrival and Departure Policy. I further understand that my child should be dropped off by 9:00AM and picked up by 5:45PM or late fees will be added to my account.

Signature _____ Date _____