



# NORTHDALE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Parent Handbook

Early Childhood Program

2023-2024

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### **Who We Are**

Northdale Christian Academy is a member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). The WELS has a rich tradition of academic excellence in its preschool through grade 12 school system. The WELS has operated highly regarded schools across the United States, the Caribbean, and elsewhere worldwide for over 150 years. Currently WELS churches and associations operate 387 early childhood centers, 294 elementary schools, 27 high schools, and 2 preparatory schools across the nation serving a total enrollment of 41,848 students (2018-2019). Northdale Christian Academy is part of one of the largest private school networks in America.

The Wisconsin Synod has provided excellent instructors to these schools by training its own teachers since 1884. Each of our teachers has a minimum of a Bachelor of Science in Education degree. Continuing education for our teachers is also a priority through participation in various in-services, conferences, seminars, and classes. It is gratifying to report that, on average, students attending WELS schools annually tend to outperform their peers by a considerable margin on national achievement tests. We humbly thank God for His blessings upon our schools. Northdale Christian Academy is proud to continue this rich tradition of academic excellence in the Tampa community!

### **Philosophy**

#### **A Christian Early Childhood Program...**

Northdale Christian Academy's Early Childhood Program is dedicated to providing excellence in education for all its students. Our licensed teachers are committed to achieving this excellence by maintaining developmentally appropriate practices; a safe, nurturing environment; and proactive home-school communication.

In cooperation with our parents, NCA's Early Childhood Program will provide the knowledge and experience students need to become curious, eager learners as they enter their formal education in Kindergarten. We provide children with an environment that allows them to explore, participate, and experience success.

NCA's Early Childhood provides a solid foundation for each child's education by teaching everything from a distinctively Christian perspective. We recognize that each student is a unique child of God. Each child has different strengths and develops at their own pace. We are committed to supporting each student's development according to their own unique needs.

#### **Dedicated to Excellence...**

The staff of Northdale Christian Academy's Early Childhood Program is committed to supporting parents in following God's command to "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6) This is carried out by focusing on all areas of education for a young child: spiritual, social/emotional, cognitive, and physical. Our preschool staff work diligently to provide the best atmosphere and teaching practices for our students. We work closely with our pastor, elementary principal and staff to achieve these goals. We are also supported by the members of Northdale Lutheran Church through their time, talents, and treasures.

Christian early education is Christ-centered education. The Savior and His love for us are at the heart of all we think, say, and do. We want his love to shine as a light to those around us. We want each child to know that they are a valued member of our Academy's Early Childhood family and they are loved, cared for, and taught the truth of God's Word everyday. It is an honor to nurture the faith of a young child and watch it grow.

## Mission/Objectives Statements

### Mission

Northdale Christian Academy exists to assist families by providing an excellent education in a safe, Christian environment.

### Objectives

The early childhood education program of Northdale Christian Academy strives to provide for the complete educational welfare of each child, and to guide him or her in the maximum development of his or her spiritual, social, emotional, cognitive, and physical abilities. Teachers will use their knowledge of curriculum, classroom environment, early childhood development standards, and current best-practices to achieve the best learning experience for students. Teachers and parents will support each other in their respective roles to provide the best experience for each child. The objectives of the early childhood program are as follows:

- **Spiritual:** The teacher will provide daily opportunities for children to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior through Bible stories, songs and activities. This knowledge includes:
  - Recognizing sin and God's forgiveness for us and demonstrating forgiveness towards others
  - Knowing that God loves us and promises us heaven
  - Believing and trusting in Jesus as our Savior from sin
  - Using God's love as our motivation to love others with our words and actions
  - Sharing the good news of salvation with our time, talents, and treasures
- **Social/Emotional:** The teacher will set clearly defined classroom expectations by modeling, role-playing, and consistently reinforcing and encouraging positive social skills such as:
  - Sharing, compromising and taking turns with others
  - Independence and responsibility for themselves and their possessions
  - Participation in group activities and following the school routine
  - Showing respect for others and recognizing how their behavior affects others
  - Learning appropriate ways to express their feelings and respond to others' feelings
- **Cognitive:** The teacher will provide for the earthly welfare of the student by teaching secular material from the Christian viewpoint. This foundation sets the stage for their future education and includes:
  - Following directions and listening attentively
  - Developing problem-solving skills
  - Beginning deductive thinking
  - Learning mathematical skills
  - Beginning letter recognition and sounds
- **Physical:** The teacher will provide active learning opportunities for children to move and develop control and coordination. This opportunities include:
  - Developing small muscle strength needed for writing, cutting, and manipulating objects
  - Developing large muscle coordination by running, jumping, climbing, throwing and catching
  - Demonstrating personal spatial awareness
  - Caring for their own personal needs like eating, dressing, and personal hygiene
  - Developing appreciation for the unique way God made each of them

### **Statement of Non-Discrimination**

On the basis of race, color, sex, national and ethnic origin, no student will be denied the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available at Northdale Christian Academy. This school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational and admissions policies, scholarships and loans, athletics, and other school-administered programs.

### **Media Permission**

Children may be photographed or videotaped for use within our preschool either for educational, promotional or advertising purposes. Parents are asked to sign a release on the registration form granting us permission to photograph or videotape their child. All staff will be notified when a parent denies this activity.

### **Confidentiality**

Relevant student and family information will be shared with other school staff only. Sharing information with other families or any outside source without written consent from parents is prohibited.

### **Daily Routine**

**7:00-8:30** Free Play/Wake Up Work  
**8:40-9:10** Story Time  
**9:10-9:30** Circle Time  
**9:30-9:45** Bible  
**9:45-10:00** Snack  
**10:00-10:30** Outside  
**10:30-11:00** Small Groups  
**11:00-12:15** Centers  
**12:15-12:45** Lunch  
**12:45-1:15** Recess  
**1:15-2:15** Rest  
**2:15-2:45** Centers  
**2:45-3:15** Table Time  
**3:15-3:30** Snack  
**3:30-4:15** Free Play  
**4:15-5:00** Outside

### **Drop-Off Times**

**Full time: 7:00-9:00 AM**  
**Part time: 7:30-9:00 AM**  
**Half day: 8:30-9:00 AM**

### **Pick-Up Times**

**Full time: 12:00-5:00 PM**  
**Part time: 12:00-3:15 PM**  
**Half day: 12:00-12:15 PM**

### **Curriculum**

Our most important goal is to teach children about Jesus. We use a series of Bible stories in our ChristLight curriculum to teach specific Bible truths. In addition, God's Word is woven into all that we do throughout the day. This includes singing songs, praying before meals, attending weekly chapel services, etc. For other aspects of a child's development, we strive to meet or exceed all the standards required by the state of Florida's VPK (Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten) program by utilizing the High/Scope curriculum. High/Scope is a research-based program that focuses on the philosophy that children learn through play. This active learning occurs when activities are child-centered, developmentally appropriate and children are actively engaged. Our daily lessons will be carefully planned based on these concepts.

### **Admission/Registration**

Children must be 3 years old by September 1 to be eligible for 3K and 4 years old by September 1 to be eligible for VPK. Parents must first submit an online application along with an application fee. There is no fee when applying for VPK only. Once the child is accepted, parents must submit a valid VPK voucher to be eligible for VPK enrollment. Enrollment priority is given to members of Northdale Lutheran Church or families currently enrolled in Northdale Christian Academy. All information in your online registration must be filled out in full before a child will be allowed to attend.

### **Arrival and Departure**

Our hours of operation are 7:00AM-5:00 PM, Monday-Friday. VPK hours are 9:00AM - 12:00PM with drop-off from 8:30-9:00AM and pick-up from 12:00-12:10 PM. Extended hours of 6:30AM-6:00PM will be offered if a minimum number of requests are received. Please arrive before 9:00AM as we start promptly and VPK hours are strictly recorded. Please see the tuition section for all available options. There is a fee of \$1/minute if a child is picked up after this time frame, after 3:10PM if the child is enrolled in part time extended care, or after 5:00PM if they are enrolled in full time extended care. Only those adults listed on your pick up authorization form will be allowed to pick up your child. Written consent must be given to release them to anyone who is not listed on the pick up authorization form.

### **Daily Attendance/Absences**

Every child must be signed in and out promptly every day. Parents of VPK students must also sign a Student Attendance and Parental Choice Certificate to verify your child's school attendance each month for VPK records. Parents must notify the center, in writing, as soon as possible if their child will be absent. Children can be absent no more than 20% of their scheduled hours for the year. If they are absent more than 20% in any three months of the program, we reserve the right to terminate their enrollment.

### **Enrollment Options**

**3K/VPK Only:** Our VPK hours are 9:00AM -12:00PM. There is no charge to parents for VPK hours.

**Part-Time Child Care:** This includes early morning care from 7:00-8:30 AM as well as afternoon care until 3:00 PM.

**Full-Time Child Care:** This includes early morning care from 7:00-8:30 AM as well as afternoon child care until 5:00 PM.

### Tuition & Fees

Northdale Christian Academy charges a non-refundable \$100 application fee for children enrolled in 3K and VPk students who are also enrolled in our extended care program. This fee is paid during the online application process through a third-party tuition management system called TADS. **This fee does not guarantee enrollment.** Enrollment is based on space available and the needs of each student. All payments are non-refundable. VPK is a state-funded program provided at no cost to parents. Any child care outside of the scheduled VPK time is the financial responsibility of the parent. Any care beyond a child's tuition agreement will be charged to parents at a rate of \$7/hr if teachers are notified. If teachers are not notified, a late pick up fee will be charged at a rate of \$1/minute. Please see our tuition reference guide for a full description of tuition options. Tuition payments are charged monthly and due the 15th of each month. If payment is not received on time, a late fee will be assessed. The procedure for delinquent accounts is as follows:

- Current delinquency- Contact will be made with the family by the principal to arrange immediate payment.
- 30-day delinquency- Contact will be made with the family by the principal to arrange a conference with the SMB to discuss payment.
- 60-day delinquency- Student(s) is/are placed on probation until payment is made.

### Discipline Policy

Preschoolers are developing in many ways. They are learning new independence, how to communicate their needs appropriately, and that their actions affect others. Our job as Christian educators is to guide them in learning to make God-pleasing decisions in whatever situation they may face. We take advantage of opportunities throughout the day to teach strategies for problem-solving, self-calming, dealing with social conflict, and making positive choices and decisions. The more practice they get with these situations, the more confident they will become.

At school, you can expect that teachers will be guiding children with the biblical perspective that Jesus, our Savior, loves us and that is our motivation for how we treat others. We show our love and faith in Jesus in all we think, say, and do. Christian guidance starts by building a positive relationship with each child. Teachers make positive comments about children's behavior often to reinforce positive behavior. Teachers show love and concern for children by setting clear limits and expectations and following through. They give clear directions, anticipate problems and plan accordingly.

Preschool is a great starting point for children to begin thinking for themselves, correcting their own mistakes, and solving their own problems. They will be encouraged by staff to try working out their problems as independently as possible. When intervention is needed, teachers will use modeling, redirection and negotiation to change children's behavior and assist in conflict resolution. Sitting apart will be used when negotiation or redirection does not resolve the problem. The child will be directed to the calming area in the classroom with an explanation of why they are leaving the group and what they need to do to return. They may return as soon as they are ready. Time-out will be used only for behavior that is repeatedly aggressive and unsafe and will be a set amount of time determined by the teacher. Persistent problems will immediately be brought to the attention of the parent, so that together as partners, we can work to problem-solve and support positive changes. Open two-way communication between parents and teachers is a very valuable part of the trust and partnership we share.

Our staff understands that young children are just learning the skills of getting along with each other. Accepting limits and taking responsibility for their actions is a work in progress, so they will be treated with patience and understanding. Discipline is defined as training or teaching. This is distinctly different from punishment. All punishment that is humiliating or frightening to a child is strictly prohibited. There will be no corporal punishment under any circumstances, even under the request of a parent. Under no circumstances will food, rest, toileting, or physical punishment be used to manipulate a child.

### **Toilet-Training Policy**

All children are expected to be toilet-trained upon enrolling in our VPK program. Children shall not be scolded or punished for lapses in toilet training. The early childhood staff will work with the parent on a plan of action if accidents become a frequent issue.

### **Biting Policy**

Biting is a common behavior in children from birth to age three. Past the age of three, biting is much less common, but may still occur. If a child bites, he or she will immediately be separated from the other children. First aid and comfort will be given to the child who was bitten. The child who bit will be given time to calm down and then the teacher will instruct them in an appropriate alternative to biting. Both sets of parents will be notified immediately and asked to fill out an incident report upon pick up. If the biting is repeated, the child's parents will be asked to pick him up within one hour of the incident. The teacher will meet with the parents to make every effort to understand the cause of the biting and take preventative measures to correct the behavior. If preventative measures are not effective, the child will be asked to leave the program for two weeks to try to break the biting cycle. If the biting continues upon their return, they will be asked to leave the program.

### **Dress Code**

The Dress Code at Northdale Christian Academy contributes to the health and safety of the student, fosters a positive educational environment, promotes positive academy spirit, and serves as an outreach tool. School uniform purchases are made through the Ideal School Apparel online store: <http://www.idealschoolapparel.com>.

#### **Uniforms for School Days and Out-of-School Events**

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What is the uniform for Northdale Christian Academy?

- All students will wear the uniform polo shirts available through the online store.
- If students choose to wear long sleeves inside the building, it must be the uniform sweatshirt available for purchase through the online store. Girls are allowed to wear plain navy blue cardigans.
- On Fridays, students have the option to wear a NCA activity shirt. The activity shirt is a t-shirt with the academy name and logo available through the online store. The activity shirts may also be worn on field trips or other events in place of the uniform polo shirt. Students are required to wear uniform bottoms on Fridays.
- Pants, shorts, skirts, or skorts will be khaki or navy blue in color.
- Girls are permitted to wear uniform polo dresses available through the online store.
- Closed toed shoes will be worn and securely fastened to the feet.

How should the uniform be worn?

- Shirts will be tucked in.
- All pants, shorts, skirts, and skorts will be secured at the waist. Shorts must be worn underneath skirts and dresses. Girls may wear plain navy blue leggings under shorts, skirts, or skorts.
- Hair will be clean and neatly groomed. Any hair dye used should reflect naturally occurring hair color. The general appearance of a student should reflect neatness and good personal hygiene.
- All articles of clothing should be marked with the student's or family's name.

What is not allowed in the NCA dress code?

- Cargo style shorts or pants are not permitted.
- Sweatpants and yoga-style materials are not acceptable for bottoms.



- Mini-skirts and short shorts are not permitted. Hemlines will be no shorter than mid-thigh.
- Excessively tight fitting clothing is not acceptable.
- Clothing that is torn, frayed, or stained will not be allowed.
- Crocs, flip-flops, shower shoes, skate shoes, or similar type shoes are considered unsafe and therefore unacceptable.
- Hats and other head coverings will not be worn in the building.
- Excessive jewelry is not permitted. Boys are not allowed to wear earrings.

#### Uniform-Free Days

Occasionally the students will be allowed a Uniform-Free Day during which students will be allowed to wear something of their choosing in accordance with what is appropriate for a young Christian person.

- Tank tops, spaghetti strap tops, sleeveless tops, and exposed midriffs are not permitted.
- Spandex, stretch, yoga, or any excessively tight bottoms may not be worn as outer clothing.
- Mini-skirts, mini-dresses, and short shorts are not permitted. Hemlines will be no shorter than mid-thigh. Pants must be ankle length and not drag on the floor.
- Bottoms may not have printing on the backside.
- All pants, shorts, skirts, and skorts will be secured at the waist.
- Clothing that is torn, frayed, or stained will not be allowed.
- Excessively tight fitting clothing, such as leggings, are not acceptable without shorts or skirts worn over the top.
- Closed toed shoes will be worn and securely fastened to the feet. Crocs, flip-flops, shower shoes, skate shoes, or similar type shoes are considered unsafe and therefore unacceptable.
- Hair will be clean and neatly groomed. Any hair dye used should reflect naturally occurring hair color. The general appearance of a student should reflect neatness and good personal hygiene.
- Hats and other head coverings will not be worn in the building.
- No excessive jewelry. Boys are not allowed to wear earrings.

NCA staff reserves the right to use discretion in judging the appropriateness of student dress code compliance.

#### Spirit Dress

Certain times throughout the year may be designated as school spirit days along with the annual school spirit week. During these times students may be allowed to dress out of the normal uniform dress code following the daily theme and the uniform-free guidelines.

#### Dress Code Violation Consequences

In all cases, students whose personal appearance is not in accordance with these guidelines will not be allowed to participate in school day activities until appropriate attire has been obtained. The student may receive a half or full-day absence due to dress code violation depending on the amount of classroom time missed. A dress code violation form will be used to document offences.

- 1) First offense:
  - a. Notify parent/guardian
  - b. Change of inappropriate attire
- 2) Second offense:
  - a. Notify parent/guardian
  - b. Change of inappropriate attire
  - c. Disciplinary action
- 3) Third offense
  - a. Conference with parent/guardian

- b. Change of inappropriate attire
- c. In-school detention

#### **What to Bring**

There will be a suggested supply list provided to you. VPK students are not required to bring any supplies, but these suggested items would be appreciated. Please also send two full sets of clothing for your child. Accidents do happen and being prepared with clean clothes will help the child handle the situation more easily. If your child is staying for extended care, parents are responsible for bringing a cold lunch as well as a blanket for rest time. Small pillows and stuffed animals are optional.

#### **Lunch and Snacks**

Lunch and snacks are provided by the parents. There is a refrigerator available for cold lunches. Birthday treats are optional. Please speak with your child's teacher prior to bringing a special snack so they can plan for the day. If your child has a food allergy, you must inform the staff on your enrollment form.

#### **Rest Time**

All children who stay for the afternoon will be encouraged to rest quietly. A cot is provided for each child. Parents are welcome to send a blanket, small pillow and small stuffed animal (The stuffed animal must have no lights, sounds or movement. This is not to be a toy; it is a comfort item.) After resting quietly for 30 minutes, if a child is still awake, they will be offered a quiet activity such as books or puzzles until rest time is over. Rest blankets will be sent home weekly to be washed.

#### **Parent-Teacher Communication**

Students will bring home Monday folders with any important information from the staff as well as their work from the previous week. There will also be a weekly school newsletter to inform parents of what's happening at our school as a whole as well as specific information about our VPK class. Email reminders about important events will also be sent home as needed. If you have any questions or concerns, I am happy to meet with you. If it is more than a quick check-in, please schedule a time to meet with me so I can give you my full attention and time to understand how I can help. Mandatory parent-teacher conferences will be held in Fall and Spring to discuss each child's progress. If there is an issue, please bring it to the attention of your child's teacher and then the director if necessary. If the issue cannot be resolved by the director, it will be brought to the attention of the principal and then school board if necessary.

#### **Emergency Closings**

You will be notified of any emergency closing through our parent information system. You can choose to receive these notifications by text or email.

#### **Field Trips**

All field trips will require parent permission before a child can attend. Some experiences require additional fees to be paid by the parent. In situations where students are unable to attend for any reason, teachers will provide replacement experiences or assignments that meet similar curricular objectives. Parents/volunteers will serve as drivers for such trips when necessary. Drivers are asked to secure each rider with a safety belt and booster seat if necessary, and take every precaution to ensure the safety of the children. Drivers are not to place any students under the age of twelve in the front seat of the car if it is equipped with a passenger-side air bag. All drivers are required to provide evidence of his/her driver's license and proof of insurance. All drivers and chaperones are

required to complete the Protect My Ministry course and sign the Volunteer Covenant Code before participating in any field trip or school activity.

### **Health and Safety**

**Health Records:** 2 health forms are required for enrollment: the Florida Certificate of Immunization and Student Health Examination. Please see your healthcare provider for any questions.

**Illness:** It is in the best interest of the child, the other children and the staff to keep a sick child at home when they have symptoms of an illness. A child may return when they are free of symptoms for 24 hours and/or 24 hours after prescribed medication has begun, with the exception of lice. A child who has head lice may return after treatment has completely removed all lice, lice eggs, and egg cases. Reasons for a child to remain at home or be sent home include but are not limited to the following: Fever of 100 degrees or higher, Vomiting, Skin rash/Open sores, Inflamed, swollen or red eyes, Diarrhea, Irregular urine or stool, Cough or sore throat, Stiff neck or headache, or Head lice.

Should a teacher feel that a child is unable to function properly due to illness, the parent or parent-designated person will be notified immediately and requested to make arrangements for pick-up within one hour. The ill child will be isolated and supervised until they are picked up.

In the event that a child has a contagious disease, they may not attend preschool. The Preschool must be informed of the disease so notice of possible exposure can be given to all families enrolled and to the county health department. The child's name will be kept confidential. A child with a communicable disease may be readmitted with a signed statement from their physician. Communicable diseases include, but are not limited to: chicken pox, German measles, hepatitis, measles, mumps, scarlet fever, or meningitis.

**Medication:** Doctor-prescribed medication will be administered by the staff with written consent of the parent. Teachers will not administer over-the-counter medication unless prescribed by a physician. The medication must be in its original container with the child's name, date, name of medication, name of physician, dosage, and directions for administration. The parent must fill out a Medication Administration Record.

**Sunscreen:** Parent-provided sunscreen will be applied to children at the parent's request only.

**Accidents/Incidents:** If the injury is serious and requires professional medical treatment, a parent will be contacted immediately. If the injury is minor, parents will be informed at pick-up. The teacher and parent will sign an accident/incident report to be kept for our records. All staff are trained in First Aid and CPR and will follow First Aid procedures for every injury.

### **Exclusions**

Reasons for possible exclusion:

- The child appears ill, over-tired, or unable to participate in the daily program.
- The child is not developmentally ready for the preschool curriculum or routine.
- The child is overly aggressive towards others, including, but not limited to: repeated biting, punching, or kicking
- The Preschool cannot meet the needs of the child with reasonable accommodations.
- Parents do not observe the policies outlined in the Parent Handbook.
- Non-payment, late payment or late pick up of children. (See tuition agreement.)
- Child is not dressed in compliance with the dress code.

Procedure for temporary exclusion:

- Parents will be asked to take an ill child from the center immediately if present, or within an hour of notification if not present.
- The director will inform the parents verbally or in writing concerning the reason for exclusion, the date exclusion will begin, and the conditions necessary for the child to return to the Preschool.
- There will be no adjustment in tuition for temporary exclusion.

Procedure for permanent exclusion:

- The director will inform the parents verbally or in writing concerning the reason for exclusion and the date exclusion will begin.
- The director will inform the principal and school board as soon as possible.
- Parents may contact the principal and board in writing within one week if they wish to appeal the decision.
- Parents will be notified of the board's decision within two weeks.
- There will be a refund of any unused tuition if the child is permanently excluded.

### **Withdrawal**

At least two weeks' written notice is required upon withdrawal from the Center. Refunds for credit balances will be considered when made in writing to the Director at least two weeks prior to withdrawal.

Reviewed July 2023