

HOPE CREEK ACADEMY PARENT HANDBOOK

School Day Operations

Before- and After-School Care

Before-School Care runs from 8:00 to 8:30 am. There is a \$5.00 charge if a child is dropped off during that time.. Before-School Care can be used as needed without advance notice.

After-School Care is available from 3:15 to 5:45 pm and will be supervised by our After-Care Director and an assistant. There will be scheduled activities; students should bring a healthy snack. From 3:15 to 4:00, there is a charge of \$7.00; until 5:00 is \$15; and until 5:45 is \$20. Advance notice of attendance is appreciated but not required. Any student not picked up by 3:15 on a given day will go to After-School and parents will be billed accordingly. Any student not picked up by 5:45 will be charged an additional \$5 for every additional 15 minutes.

Payment for either or both of these programs will be tracked by our Administrator, Ms. Kaplan, and be invoiced monthly, if money is owed. You may send in money in advance, or you can wait for Ms. Kaplan to bill you. You can mail a payment, hand it to Ms. Kaplan, or put it in her dropbox in her office—in an envelope (if paying in cash) marked with your child’s name and the program. Actual attendance will be recorded by the teachers and communicated to Ms. Kaplan.

Drop-off

Before-School Care runs from 8:00 to 8:30 am. Parents using Before-School Care should accompany their child to the middle doors. Students may arrive as early as 8:30 am each day with no extra charge. **We will go by cell-phone time, since that is standardized. PLEASE DO NOT COME TO THE DOORS BEFORE 8:00 AM.** Morning activity time is held between 8:30 and 8:55 and is an important beginning to the day. It serves as a time for students to be active and to socialize. Adults will supervise and participate.

These activities will be taking place to the rear of the building. Parents should park in the side lot, and either accompany or have their child walk to the double doors in the middle of the building. He or she will then take things to their cubby or locker and proceed out a back door to participate in activities. If it is 8:55 or later, your child will remain in the building. If you arrive prior to 8:30 and do not want to pay for Before-School Care, **please wait in your car with your child until 8:30.**

Staff attention must remain with children once the school day has begun. Only brief and important information (2 minutes or less) may be shared with staff before school. Lengthier discussions should be held outside school hours, either in person, by phone, or by email.

School begins promptly at 8:55 am with Morning Assembly in the auditorium. When students are on time, the day goes better for all of the community. If a student is late, their parent should sign them in to the notebook provided in the entrance foyer.

Pick-up

Our school day ends promptly at 3:00 pm. Please notify staff—either by email, text, or in person at drop-off—if (1) a child will be picked up early, or (2) someone besides you or the usual caregiver is picking up a child. A student will not be released for the day until their pick-up person has arrived at school.

Parents should park in the side lot, as at drop-off, and remain in their cars. You will be issued pick-up cards (however many you need) to display in the car window of each driver who will be picking your child up. We will ask that you please use these for the first few weeks. This is especially important if a child can be picked up in one of two or more cars. A teacher will be there and notify staff inside to send the child out. If you are parked across the parking lot, please come across and meet your child on the sidewalk to accompany them back across.

Please pay careful attention to both car and foot traffic as you are coming in and departing. And go slow!

If you know you are going to be late, a call or text is appreciated: 919-932-0360. If you have access at the time, an email to Ms. Kaplan is helpful as well, at justrightacademy2@gmail.com. **At 3:15 pm, a student who has not been picked up will join After-School Care and a \$7 minimum charge will be incurred.**

Parents at school

Parents are welcome to visit their child's classes occasionally, and of course we appreciate the volunteer help they may provide during a school day in terms of teaching a special craft or sharing certain experiences related to a topic in the curriculum. However, for a student to grow more independent, form healthy relationships with peers and teachers, and construct his or her own identity, it's important for the most part that parents not be present during the school day. If a student is arriving late or leaving early, parents should sign the student in or out in the notebook in the foyer entrance.

Optional After School Activities

Chess Club, convened by Mr. Miller, will meet most Tuesdays from 3:15 to 4:00.

The **HCA Drama Club**, convened by Ms. Dontas, will meet after school on Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:15-4:15. For more information contact see Ms. Dontas.

With each of these programs, students that aren't picked up by the scheduled ending time will be sent to After-School Care and will be invoiced for that additional time only.

Snow/Bad Weather Policy

Hope Creek Academy makes its decisions regarding school closings independent of other area schools. Announcements are made by 6:30 am, if possible. Alerts are sent via email to the school community as well as being posted on the HCA Facebook page. When it is necessary to close school after the day has begun, we will use email, Facebook, texts, and phone calls to reach parents. If weather is iffy, please make sure you have your phone handy.

Clothing

We ask only that students be dressed appropriately. No sagging pants, no cleavage showing, no too-short skirts, no spaghetti straps, no inappropriate slogans, etc. Teachers will speak to a child when they deem clothing to be inappropriate and, when applicable, will provide an alternative, or covering, article of clothing.

A spare change of clothes, labeled with the student's name and appropriate to the season, is strongly encouraged.

Whenever the weather is good, we will have students outside at some point during the day. Please make sure your child is dressed warmly for the winter months, and dressed in layers on those frequent autumn and spring days with fluctuating temperatures. We try to get outside every day.

Things from home

We ask that, if necessary, only one special toy or item accompany a child from home. Toys or personal items can be distracting, and become a source of stress if damaged or lost.

If your child has a cell phone or other small personal electronic device, like an iTouch or iPad, we ask that they **NOT** be brought into the building. Students will not be allowed to use such devices during the school day. We are willing to consider exceptions to this rule **only** if the student has a specific, unusual, director- and parent-approved need for access, but even then it **must be left in their locker or cubby** and may only be used during the school day with a teacher's permission.

Meals & Snacks

Food habits and nutrition are part of the curriculum at HCA. Good nutrition and a healthy diet are essential to a child's physical, intellectual and emotional development. Lunch conversations, cooking activities for science, social studies, and electives, and lessons about food culture offer opportunities for discovery. Food traditions are explored through personal, local, regional and global cultural customs. Bonus points are sometimes given for eating vegetables at lunch!

Families are asked to send both a snack and a lunch, in separate containers. Foods should be wholesome and nutritionally sound. **Food should be ready to eat with no additional preparation necessary.** We cannot refrigerate lunches, but all classrooms have a small microwave. Any item needing microwaving must be in an original or in just one microwavable container so that it can be heated in one simple step.

We are big fans of protein! As much as possible, please go easy on such treats as potato chips, cakes, and cookies; these are not sufficiently nutritious to support the children's work at school. We will **occasionally** provide some of these foods as rewards. If your child has a food intolerance, we will try to have something she or he can eat instead. It is also helpful if you can provide us with something we can keep on hand that is safe and approved for him or her to eat. **Do not send candy!**

Drinks should be water, milk (dairy, nut, soy, rice, etc.), or 100% juice. Rare exceptions may be made on an individual basis. **Do not send brightly colored drinks or soft drinks!**

If silverware or paper plates are needed for the lunch you send, please include them. We are moving away from disposable items (with the exception of potlucks), but we will reluctantly supply them to students who have not brought their own.

Students are **not allowed to share items from their lunch** with other students. Please make sure your child is aware of this. This protects those students who have food allergies or intolerances, and also supports parents in the assurance that their child is eating the food they provided them with and nothing which they might deem inappropriate.

One day per week, usually Wednesday, pizza will be available at \$2.00 per slice. Purchasing it is optional; you can still send a lunch if you prefer, and also send veggies and other accompaniments for the pizza. As with Before-/After-School money, you may send in money in advance, or you can wait for Ms. Kaplan to invoice you monthly. You can mail a payment, hand it to Ms. Kaplan, or put it in her dropbox in her office—in an envelope marked with your child’s name and the program if it is not a check.

Birthdays may be celebrated at school with a special snack or lunch in coordination with staff. Please allow at least one day’s advance notice. We ask that birthday snacks contain no FD&C food colors.

Technology & Electronics

We feel that the most important experiences at school are hands-on experiences that allow children to make discoveries, create and extend their learning, while also being engaged with others in collaboration, negotiation and communication. Because of the value we place on these activities, we organize much of our learning around centers of interest, rich in materials for building, creating, interacting, and exploring. We do use audio and film technology, both for screening educational materials and an occasional reward, as well as for documenting children’s work and projects.

As children age up, we use more computer technology; we have iPads, laptops, and desktop computers for students to use as a research tool and as a tool to “extend” ideas, projects, etc. that they themselves develop and plan. Computers are used to teach keyboarding, for research, word-processing, graphic design, problem-solving, communication with others and, when appropriate, for additional practice with mathematics facts. We select programs that support the school’s values of modeling peace and of being meaningful ways in which to spend time. Some of our math is accessed by computer and iPad.

Homework

Homework is not given to lower and middle school students, with the exception of Reflex Math and science fair projects. We do encourage each child to read some each evening. High school students may want to do some work at home in order to finish work needed to get credit hours. If a parent wants their child to have homework, we recommend *Spectrum* workbooks.

Health Policies

Records

All students must have a completed Health Form, revised every year, which includes Emergency Contacts, on file at Hope Creek Academy. An up-to-date immunizations record (or statement of exemption) must also be on file. The records of 7th graders and children who are 12 (whichever comes first) must show they’ve received both a Tdap booster and a Meningococcal Conjugate Vaccine (MCV). Kindergartners must have a 5-year-old well-child physical on file as well.

Illness

HCA is not staffed or equipped for full-day care of sick children. If a child becomes ill while at school, she or he will be asked to rest in a comfortable spot until a caregiver arrives. A child that cannot stay awake or feels miserable, even if fever-free, should not be at school. No sick child should be left at school. Please make sure your family has a back-up plan for such times.

Please keep your child at home if he or she:

- Is running a fever
- Has diarrhea
- Is vomiting
- Has a red eye or eyes with a discharge that is not clear
- Has pinworm, ringworm, head or body lice, etc.
- Has been diagnosed by a physician as contagious and needing to be kept separate from other children

Children must remain at home and be fever-free without the use of medication for a full **24 hours** after all of the conditions listed above have subsided.

Children being treated with antibiotics for strep throat or other bacterial illnesses may return after 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment **if no fever is present**. This protects the rest of the group and assures that the child is fully recovered prior to returning to school.

Medications

Parents who want medication (prescription or over-the-counter) administered to their child during the day must hand it directly to Ms. Kaplan or put it in the dropbox in her office, along with any instructions. By law, the medication must be in its original container (it does not have to be the most recently issued one but does need an Rx label with correct medication name, dosage amount, and administration time). When the container is empty, either it will be placed in the student's lunchbox (if possible) so it can be re-filled and returned for the next school day, or Ms. Kaplan will remind you via email to bring more the next day.

If you need to know how many doses of your child's medication are remaining at school, Ms. Kaplan will count them for you and let you know so that you can give her the exact number needed the next day. You may send re-fills in a small container or envelope providing Ms. Kaplan still has an original container to put them in.

If your child has need of an Epipen or inhaler, please provide one for the school to keep on hand, in Ms. Kaplan's office.

At the pre-K/kindergarten level, the NC Environmental Health Department considers sunscreen, lip balm, and lotions to be "medicines," so they must be labeled with the child's name and **HANDED DIRECTLY TO A TEACHER**, who will give it to Ms. Kaplan to keep in our locking medications cabinet. Please do not send these items to school unless truly needed. Sunscreen should be applied before arriving at school.

Emergencies

In the event that emergency first aid is necessary, a staff member will stay with the child, administering care until professional help is obtained. We will call 911 and notify the child's parents immediately. Please be sure that your child's Health Form is updated as pertinent information changes. Ms. Kaplan maintains the Health Forms file and the Emergency Contacts list. Please be sure we have someone to contact other than a parent, in case you are not available.

Field Trips

Field trips to extend and enhance study units, to provide social thinking practice, or to provide well-deserved unwinding time, are integral to the HCA curriculum. Parents will be asked to participate in field trips when they can to help maintain safe adult/child ratios and provide transportation to and from destinations. On trips off campus, we strive for at least a 1:3 adult-to-students ratio.

- When a student is enrolled at HCA, parents sign a one-time blanket authorization form for all field trips. Prior to all trips parents will be provided with specific information about the trip, including itinerary, dates, times, costs, etc. If for any reason you do **not** want your child to participate in the event, please let us know in advance by phone or by email.
- On driving trips off-campus, children will be properly belted and/or secured in an approved child safety seat according to NC Department of Transportation regulations. Only those children who are old enough and big enough will be allowed to sit in a front seat with an active safety air bag. Doors shall be kept locked at all times that a vehicle is moving.
- One teacher will be the designated leader of the group and is in charge of all decisions regarding safety procedures, regulations and protocols for the trip. This teacher will have emergency information for each student in his/her care at all times.
- Each child will be assigned to the care of a specific adult for the duration of the trip.
- Each driving adult will be provided with directions to the destination and with any pertinent information relating to the trip, such as a schedule of events. They will also be given cell phone numbers of the other adults on the trip.
- School policies remain in effect during field trips just as they are on campus.
- Both students and participating adults will be offered an overview of the trip before-hand, with an emphasis on safety and cooperation.
- If a child needs a car seat, you must provide that the day of the trip. We have no spare car seats here.

Parent/Teacher Communication & Conferences

Much of our communication is done by email and we ask you to check this daily and read them! You will miss a great deal of important information if you do not. A Sunday night email will give upcoming events for the week. A school night email will provide you with reminders, information about the day, and pictures. At the end of the week, a red folder will go home with that week's point sheets and work. Please empty the folder and send it back on Monday.

Information and notes from teachers are either communicated in person, sent via email or included in the red folder that goes home on Fridays. Parents are invited to spend time at the school whenever they can, but please pre-arrange these visits. We welcome your help in many ways—whether it's playing a board game with or reading to a student, or by cleaning! Extra help is often needed on special days.

Parent-Teacher conferences are integral to our educational process and are scheduled twice a year—in early November and March. In addition to providing feedback on a daily basis via email, if a student has a specific issue on any given day, the parents will be notified. Additional conferences may be scheduled at any time by parents and teachers. End-of-year reports will be emailed.

Monthly lunches will be held each first Wednesday from 11:45-1:00 with the Director. This is an additional chance to ask questions and/or learn about what is going on at school.

Parent Support Group

We started the parent support group a few years ago with the idea of providing an extra resource to fill a very important void. Too often, there is a lot of disconnect when parents and teachers have no meaningful communication. Over the past year, our support group became a valuable part of our school's treatment plan. Simply put, kids of parents who are active in the group do better. When we get to know you, we know your kids better. When we know you and your child better, the results can be amazing.

The parent group is a place to provide support to each other, share our joy and our pain, and learn new parenting skills to help us both to work on the same page. We will cover many of the basic Active Parenting skills, many of which have been adapted to the special needs population. Also, occasionally, we will have guest speakers covering various areas of our special interests.

This group meets every other Wednesday, from 6:30-8:00 pm. The location will be announced.

Fundraising Opportunities

We have several ongoing fundraisers in which we hope you will choose to participate. Please refer to our separate Fundraising flyer for specific information about: **Harris Teeter**, **Amazon Smile**, and **BoxTops & Labels for Education**. It can be found on our website under "HCA Handbook – Fundraising." Our Harris Teeter VIC number is 1252; you will need to re-link your card each August.

Payment of Tuition

Tuition is normally due by the 1st of the month, starting in July and running through April. (When a child is enrolled late, in the summer or once the school year has begun, the payment schedule will be different.) You will be invoiced monthly unless you have paid some or all in advance. Please ensure that your tuition ARRIVES AT THE SCHOOL by the 5th of the month. The quickest way to get it to us once school is in session is to deliver it at drop-off or pick-up. You may hand it to Ms. McDonough or Ms. Kaplan, or put it in Ms. Kaplan's dropbox in her office. If you are mailing it, we'll receive it more quickly if you send it to our street address, **4723 Erwin Road, Durham NC 27705**. If you are concerned about security, then send it to our P.O. Box 3523, Chapel Hill NC 27515. If you have checks issued automatically every month by your bank, please set it up so the checks will be issued and sent to us in time to **arrive by the 5th**.

We accept cash, checks, or money orders. **We do not accept credit cards**. If you are making a payment for Lunch, for Before-/After-School, and/or tuition at the same time, you may write just one check for the entire amount, but please **specify in the memo line how the payments are broken down**.

Along about February, you will be given a Letter of Intention to let us know whether you are planning to send your student back to HCA the following school year. This is so we can begin to get an idea of how many openings we will have; it is not binding.

If you will be applying, or re-applying, for financial aid (which we call Tuition Adjustment, TA for short), early in the new year is the best time to do so. This is done by going to the Admissions page on our website and clicking on the green button that says TADS. This is the agency which will process your financial and tax information for us and make recommendations to us about degree of need. (While we take these recommendations into consideration when making TA decisions, we are in no way obligated to go with their findings.)

If you are (or wish to be) a recipient of the NC Opportunity Scholarship (for low-income families), the Children With Disabilities Grant, or the ESA (Educational Savings Account), please visit www.ncseaa.org for application and renewal information. The application period opens every February. All of these programs do need to be renewed every year, and are never guaranteed.

Your official opportunity to re-enroll your child at HCA will happen in April, when you are given a Tuition Schedule & Contract for the next year. Your child's place is secured with a non-refundable \$1,000 deposit (sometimes less for recipients of financial aid) that is due by June 1st **at the latest** and is applicable to your July tuition payment.

The contract you sign and return will be non-binding in that you will not be liable for the full year's tuition if your child withdraws from HCA **for any reason, i.e. through your choice or at the decision of the school**. However, tuition that has already been collected to the point of withdrawal is **not** refundable – unless you are ahead in your scheduled payments as listed on your contract. It is because we do not make families sign binding contracts that we begin collecting tuition in July. This way, if for any reason you have to withdraw your child, you will not owe any more (unless you are in arrears) but the school will have a little bit of cushion while we enroll another student to take your child's spot.

Playdates & Other Outside of School Get-Togethers

Unless the invitation includes the entire class, plans for playdates, birthday parties and other events should be made discreetly, away from school, by email, mail, or phone. Parents are provided with a Social Directory with each student's contact information. This list should **not** be used for any other purpose except school business or to arrange informal get-togethers. In other words, it may not be used for political or religious proselytizing or for any sort of solicitation, including sales parties not associated with HCA.

Policies for Resolving Conflicts and Managing Behavior with Children

Hope Creek Academy sees conflict both as a natural part of living and working with others and as an opportunity for learning and growth. A positive approach to resolving conflict and to managing behavior encourages children to express their feelings, promotes self-control, tolerance, positive communication and cooperation, builds self-esteem and furthers independence.

We work to support children in developing the language and skills needed to manage conflict in a respectful way. Parent participation is, of course, critical for success.

- Point sheets are used at HCA to give students clear and immediate feedback in behavioral expectations: being kind, following directions, and participating in a positive way. Students with a predetermined number of checkmarks will earn Harbor Time, a 15-minute reward period at

the end of the day. Students who don't earn this will sit with a teacher and can do quiet work by themselves. Bonus points are given for doing an especially good job or exceeding expectations. We keep a running total of bonus points. Students have the incentive of earning specific outings or field trips with these points. Students are responsible for keeping up with their point sheets.

- Positive and clear language is used to communicate teacher expectations. A child is told what to do rather than what not to do.
- Consistent and frequent use of praise reinforces positive behaviors. Desired behaviors are modeled by adults in the environment.
- Children are encouraged to use appropriate words to describe their feelings and solve problems.
- Choices are offered to redirect behavior. Diversion to another activity is used when a child is unable to follow limits.
- When a child is having a difficult time with self-regulation, repeated attempts to elicit cooperation have failed, or when a situation is potentially dangerous, he or she will be removed from the group and may go to the Calm & Return Room, where the student has the opportunity to calm down. An adult will remain with them, either in the hall or in the room. Once they feel calm, they will be asked to follow some simple directions (pick up the blocks, stand on one foot, etc.). If they are able to do this, they will be invited to return to class. All staff is trained in North Carolina Interventions Part A; many have Part B certification, which is training in therapeutic holds and walks.
- Afterward, teacher and child discuss the incident, exploring alternative ways to have handled the problem. A behavior map may be filled out with an adult when we suspect the student does not understand why their behavior is inappropriate or when they may be at a loss for acceptable alternatives for the undesired behaviors. All staff has Life Space Crisis Intervention training to help children process in a positive way.
- Physical punishment is NEVER used and is not tolerated at Hope Creek Academy. Staff persons, volunteers, and parents may not use any rough handling, including shaking, pushing, shoving, pinching, slapping, biting, kicking or spanking anywhere on school grounds. All of our staff is NCI-trained.
- Belittling, ridicule, or threats are not acceptable anywhere at HCA.
- Discipline shall never be delegated to another child.
- Discipline shall in no way be related to food, rest, or toileting. (Food shall not be withheld or given as a means of discipline, although snack time may be delayed while work is completed. Toileting accidents will be handled matter-of-factly and as discreetly as possible.)

Fighting Policy

Non-violence and peaceful resolution of differences between individuals are key values at HCA. HCA is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, respectful environment in which students can learn and grow.

Teachers clearly communicate expectations and work to support and develop each child's ability to exercise self-control, to communicate needs and feelings and to manage conflict productively and safely. In keeping with our values and philosophy, the school takes a strong stance around fighting or the physical resolution of conflict. We work hard to keep problems small and to intervene before fighting happens. Fighting at school results in immediate referral to the Director for intervention. Students may complete a behavior map or timeline with a teacher to help him or her understand that their behavior is inappropriate and what else they could have done. Parents are notified.

Repeated fighting incidents result in a student being sent home for the day. A parent/teacher/director conference is required prior to the child's return to school. Chronic behavior problems that do not respond to a variety of interventions may be beyond our abilities and can result in dismissal of a student from the school. There is no appeals process for dismissals.

Teasing/Bullying Policy

Positive communication, inclusion and the development of friendship skills are all goals and values of our school's philosophy and curriculum. We are committed to making HCA a safe and caring place for all students. We expect students, teachers, staff and parents to treat each other with respect. We see bullying as the lack of appropriate social thinking skills and respond quickly so as to keep kids safe and help the perpetrator find better ways of communicating.

Teachers and staff at HCA do the following things to ensure a positive climate and to help children feel safe at school: close supervision of students in all areas of the school and playground, watching for signs of bullying and/or teasing and intervening when it occurs, responding quickly and sensitively and assigning appropriate consequences in keeping with the developmental level of the individual(s) involved as well as with the school's conflict resolution policies, behavior maps, and social thinking groups.

Providing a One-on-One

Sometimes the situation calls for a student to have a "shadow" or one-on-one aide to provide the child with educational and/or physical support or to help the child learn to manage him or herself in a group. In many cases, this is a short-term support intended to help the student learn how to become more self-directed. Teachers, parents and therapists make this decision together, but the ultimate decision about who to hire and how long to keep the aide on lies with the school. This is because the culture and "flow" of the classroom depends very much on the guiding adults who are there.

The cost of the shadow is borne by the parent, but the school retains the right to pay this individual and then bill the parents.

Transitions and Transcripts

HCA does all it can to facilitate smooth transitions for students leaving HCA to enter a new school.

Transcript requests require a one-week turn around and should be submitted directly to the Ms. Kaplan. Parents should make their request for the total number of transcripts needed; all copies will be processed at the same time and kept on file. Records will then be sent directly to the receiving school(s).

Recommendation requests should be submitted to Ms. McDonough. Two weeks are required for completion of letters of recommendation.

Visiting Alumni Policy

HCA welcomes alumni back on campus to visit with teachers and old friends, and to share their new experiences with us. Visits need to be arranged in advance and alumni must be accompanied by a parent who remains on campus.

Older alumni, as well as other high school or college students, may enjoy completing a service learning project at HCA as a tutor or assistant in the classroom. Student volunteers conducting academic work are always welcome. Visits may be scheduled with Ms. McDonough.