



Parent Handbook Table of Contents

▪ Letter from Our Pastor and ELC Director	2
▪ ELC Mission Statement	3
▪ Objectives & Statement of Faith	3
▪ Hours of Operation & Calendar	3
▪ Registration	4
▪ DHR Exemption	4
▪ Admission Policy	5
▪ Tuition and Fees	5
▪ Withdrawal	5
▪ Age Requirements	6
▪ Teacher/Child Ratio	6
▪ Security	6
▪ Arrival and Departure Procedures	6
▪ Spot Sharing	7
▪ Health and Medical Policy	7
▪ Inclement Weather	9
▪ Fire Procedure	9
▪ Curriculum	9
▪ Extracurricular Activities	10
▪ Guidance and Discipline	10
▪ Biting	10
▪ Parent Involvement	10
▪ Potty Training	11
▪ Lunch and Snacks	11
▪ Rest/Break Time	11
▪ Developmental Checklists	11
▪ Clothing and Personal Belongings	11
▪ Special Events	12
▪ Visiting the Center	12

Letter from Our Pastor and ELC Director

Dear Parents:

Welcome to the North Valley Early Learning Center 2011/2012 school year! We are very excited to have your family as a part of this ministry of North Valley Church. We will strive to provide the loving care and guidance that your child needs as he/she grows and develops throughout the year.

The ELC is an essential part of the mission at North Valley Church to connect people to God, and it is an integral part of NVC's ministry to the Margaret community. We see the Early Learning Center as a key element of our family ministry as well. One of our goals is to help you succeed in fostering spiritual and moral values in the life of your child. That is accomplished with the greatest effectiveness when the parents and children are active together in a local church. We would like to invite you to attend a worship service at North Valley on Sunday morning and to have your child experience our "Wee Rock" Preschool Ministry.

As parents, you play a vital role in the ELC's ministry to your child. This handbook is designed to help you understand our program, its mission, and the guidelines under which we operate. You are always welcome to visit, ask questions, and make suggestions. Our church values children and believes in families. We sponsor this weekday early learning educational program as a ministry of the church to provide a learning environment that will help children take their first steps toward a life-long relationship with God.

Thank you for allowing us the privilege of serving your family. We look forward to working together to make this the best possible experience for your child.

May God bless you and your family this year!

Marisa Taylor
ELC Director

Chris Crain
Pastor

ELC Mission Statement

The Early Learning Center exists to provide exceptional early childhood education in a nurturing Christian environment.

Objectives and Statement of Faith

Our goal is to help each child:

- Take his/her first steps toward a life-long connection with God
- Learn basic principles and stories from the Bible
- Develop social skills through interaction and communication with teachers and peers
- Learn how to express his/her feelings appropriately
- Grow to think independently
- Learn through developmentally-appropriate activities
- Be well equipped for beginning kindergarten
- Provide activities for the development of gross and fine motor skills
- Express freely through creative activities
- Learn about God's love in a nurturing environment

We believe:

- There is only one God, our heavenly Father and creator of the world
- In Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord
- In the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to serve faithfully
- The Holy Bible to be the inspired Word of God
- Faith in Jesus Christ, and belief in His death and resurrection as the only way to heaven
- In forgiveness of sins through the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ
- God loves every individual and wants all to be saved
- Every human being should hear the Good News of Jesus Christ
- Life is a gift from God

Hours of Operation and Calendar

6:30am - 7:00am Early Care (\$10 per week per child added to tuition). Please do not bring your child before 7:00am if you are not enrolled in early care.

7:00am - 6:00pm Monday through Friday for full time Early Learning Center care
(6 weeks - 4 year-old kindergarten)

Late Policy: We ask all of our parents to respect the hours of operation of the NVC ELC and the time of our teachers and staff by being punctual when picking up your child. There will be a late charge of \$10 for the first ten minutes and \$1 for each additional minute past 6:00pm. Your account will be charged through Tuition Express and the late fee will be drafted from your account the following Monday.

2011 - 2012 School Year Calendar:

August 8 - First Day of School

September 5 - Labor Day

November 24 & 25 - Thanksgiving Holiday

December 26 - December 30 - Christmas Break. Return to school on January 2

April 6 - Good Friday

May 28 - Memorial Day

July 4 - Independence Day

August 3 - Staff Development Day

**Full tuition is due for all weeks in which your child is enrolled, including weeks with holidays or inclement weather, and no credit is given for absences due to sickness or vacation.*

Registration

Children are placed on the class roster on a first come, first served basis. Classes are based on the child's age on September 1st. When a class meets its student/teacher ratio, a waiting list will be started. In order to be enrolled in the ELC and guarantee your child's spot, we must have the following at registration:

- Registration application
- Emergency medical release
- Signed DHR Affidavit
- Full registration fee
- Authorization for automated drafts

The following information is also required and must be submitted by the first day of school. Please make any necessary copies for us to keep on file:

- Original Blue Immunization Card from your pediatrician (must be up to date)
- Copy of official birth certificate
- Copy of current insurance card

DHR Exemption

The North Valley ELC provides an early education program for ages six weeks through four-year-old kindergarten. The North Valley Early Learning Center operates under a Church Exempt status with the State of Alabama Department of Human Resources. Upon registration, each parent is asked to sign an affidavit, expressing awareness that the ELC is exempt from DHR regulations. Any questions about this exemption may be discussed with the ELC director. Although we are exempt from DHR guidelines, it is the goal of the ELC to meet or exceed all DHR recommendations.

Admission Policy

As a part of our Christian convictions, the NVC ELC will not discriminate in the admission of children on the basis of race, gender, or disability. Admission requests of children with possible or identified handicapping conditions will be evaluated to see if our program can meet your child's needs.

Tuitions and Fees

(Subject to change)

*Registration fee:	\$75 annually
**Supply fee:	\$100 annually
Early Care fee:	\$ 10 per week
Late pick-up fee:	\$10 for first 10 minutes; \$1 for each additional minute

*Registration fees are non-refundable

**Upon early withdrawal, supply fees will be refunded on a pro-rated basis
(Fees subject to change)

Full Time Tuition:

Infants and Creepers	\$129 per week
Toddlers and 2 Year-Olds	\$125 per week
3K & 4K	\$119 per week

Spot-Share Tuition:

Tuition for children sharing a full-time spot is calculated by taking the regular weekly tuition, then dividing by 5 days and multiplying by the number of days the child will be attending. For example, a 3 year old coming 2 days a week would pay \$47.60 a week (\$119 divided by 5 multiplied by 2).

Tuition Schedule

Tuition payments must be made by automatic bank draft through Tuition Express. Parents may choose to be drafted weekly or monthly. Weekly tuition will be drafted every Monday for the upcoming week and monthly tuition will be drafted the first Monday of the month for the entire month. An authorization for automated drafts is included in the registration materials. Be sure to attach a voided check for the account to be drafted.

Full tuition is due for all weeks in which your child is enrolled including weeks with holidays or inclement weather, and no credit is given for absences due to sickness or vacation.

Withdrawal

A written notice must be submitted to the director two weeks prior to your child's early withdrawal from the program for any reason. You will be responsible for paying tuition for the two-week period and your child may continue to attend during this time period. If written notice is not given, your account will be charged two weeks' tuition. Program fees will not be refunded. If a child is absent from the program for more than two weeks without notice or payment, we will assume the child is withdrawn and will register another

child to fill the class vacancy. The NVC ELC reserves the right to suspend or permanently expel a child from enrollment at any time for non-payment of tuition and fees or for extended absences without appropriate notice.

Age Requirements

Listed below are the age requirements for each ELC classroom:

Infants	6 weeks - 6 months (as of September 1)
Creepers	6 months - 12 months (as of September 1)
Younger Toddlers	12 months - 18 months (as of September 1)
Older Toddlers	18 months - 24 months (as of September 1)
2 Year-Olds	Must be 2 on or before September 1
2K/3K	Must turn 3 between June and November
3 Year-Old Kindergarten	Must be 3 on or before September 1
4 Year-Old Kindergarten	Must be 4 on or before September 1

Teacher/Child Ratios

*subject to change if necessary

Infants	1:4
Creepers	1:4
Toddlers	1:6
2's	1:8
3K	1:8
4K	1:12

Security

At the NVC ELC, we strive to create a safe, secure environment for your child. Accordingly, it is our policy that all doors that access the ELC will be locked at all times, and only staff, teachers, and parents will be allowed access into the ELC area. Any visitors who do not have access to the doors will be asked to show a picture ID in order to gain access. For the security of the ELC and all of the children, please NEVER give your access information to anyone else, and please do not hold the ELC door open for anyone. Please make sure anyone coming to pick up your child is on your authorized pick up list and has his/her driver's license for identification.

Arrival and Departure Procedures

Parents will be responsible for checking their child in and out every day. Please park your vehicle in a parking spot and NOT under the overhang by the front door. Upon arriving, children must be accompanied into the center. The child must be signed in and out each day on the forms provided in your child's classroom. The ELC will not be responsible for the child's safety if this policy is not adhered to. Please notify the child's teacher when you come for him/her that the child is in your care.

The ELC will open at 6:30 for Early Care. This is only provided for the families that have chosen to pay the extra fee. Regular operating hours for the ELC are 7:00am to 6:00pm. Please do not bring your child any earlier than 7:00am, as we will not provide supervision. Please be on time for pick up to avoid any late charges.

It is only normal for some children to feel anxiety in a new situation or when being left in someone else's care. We have found that with a child, the sooner a teacher can get them involved in classroom activities, the more quickly the child adapts to the new environment. We strongly urge parents to say their "good-byes" quickly at the door and do not enter the classroom. You are encouraged to wait out of sight until your child has settled down, or feel free to call the ELC office at any time during the day to check on your child.

Your child will be released only to properly identified persons who have been listed on your registration form. Identification will be required for any person the teacher does not readily recognize. The names of the persons who may be called for the child and other information must be kept current by the parents.

Spot Sharing

Many parents who have been able to either stay at home with their children or work part time are interested in having their child come to preschool 2 or 3 days a week to get ready for kindergarten and enjoy social interaction with other children. The ELC offers spot sharing for these families. A spot share is created by two children sharing one full time spot in a classroom. Tuition for children sharing a full-time spot is calculated by taking the regular weekly tuition, then dividing by 5 days and multiplying by the number of days the child will be attending. For example, a 3 year old coming 2 days a week would pay \$47.60 a week (\$119 divided by 5 multiplied by 2). Children previously enrolled in our part time kindergarten program can easily be integrated into our full time classrooms through the spot share program.

Health and Medical Policy

A certificate of immunization (blue card) is required upon admission to the ELC. You must bring an up-dated blue card to the ELC every time your child goes to his/her physician and receives shots. Please ask your pediatrician or nurse for this card prior to leaving the office.

The ELC will follow the policy of *The American Academy of Pediatrics*, which recommends that children be excluded from childcare for the following reasons:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities
- The illness results in greater care than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children.
- The child has any of the following conditions:
 - Lethargy
 - Irritability
 - Persistent crying

- Difficulty breathing
- Other signs of severe illness
- Children who have a fever of **100.5 degrees or above** will not be allowed to attend class. Your child must be symptom-free and fever-free without the use of fever reducing medication for 24 hours before returning to class from an illness.
- Any child who is put on antibiotics must be on the medication for at least 24 hours before returning to class.
- If a child is not well enough to participate in outdoor play, he/she should be kept at home. Teachers have responsibilities on the playground, and there is no supervision in the room during outdoor playtime.
- If you take your child to the doctor for any illness, bring a note from your child's doctor, documenting the fact that your child is no longer contagious when he/she returns.
- Strep throat - program exclusion is a minimum of 24 hours after the child is given a shot or starts oral medication. A note from the physician is required.
- Chicken pox - program exclusion is at least 6 days after onset of the rash. All wounds must be scabbed over completely. No note is required from physician.
- A fresh cold
- Discharging eyes or pink eye (must be treated before the child returns - exclusion is to be determined by the physician)
- Untreated ringworm or impetigo (must be treated and have a written doctors note before the child returns)
- An unexplained rash (non-allergic) - program exclusion is 24 hours after being fever-free.
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours. The ELC acknowledges that this is a difficult standard to apply, but adheres to the definition of diarrhea as two loose movements within an hour. The child should not return as long as symptoms persist.
- Fever within the last 24 hours
- Head lice (must be treated before the child returns)
- Thrush (must be treated and have written doctors note before the child returns)
- Impetigo until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated
- Flu (type A or B) - program exclusion is 5 days from onset of symptoms unless authorized by a doctor's note

When a communicable disease has been introduced to our program, parents will be notified. Parents shall report any communicable diseases immediately to the teachers or director for the protection of other children. Please notify their child's teacher or the ELC director when their child is known to have been exposed to a communicable disease outside of the program.

If a child develops symptoms of illness while at the ELC, he/she will be separated from classmates and cared for in the ELC office. The parent will be called to pick up the sick child. **The child must be picked up within one hour after you have been contacted.** If the child is sent home from the ELC ill, a physician's note authorized the child's return to group care may be requested, depending on a specific situation. This measure is necessary in order to curtail the spread of infection. If the pediatrician feels the condition is not contagious and the child may return immediately, a physician's note will be needed to allow the child to return before the usual 24 hour symptom free period. **The overall health and well being of all ELC teachers and children is of utmost importance, therefore, the ELC reserves the right to refuse care due to illness.**

Medication

Prescription and emergency medication will only be administered if we have the following:

- A medication form completed and in your child's file (these are available outside the ELC office)
- For prescription medications: an authorization form must be filled out, dated, and signed by a parent or guardian for each week the child is on the prescription medication. You may pick up a form in the ELC office.

Any prescription drug or over-the-counter drug sent to the school must be in its original container and must be clearly labeled with your child's name, the name of the drug, and directions for administering. These medications must be given directly to your child's teacher. Do not send medication in your child's bag.

**Sunscreen and topical ointment permission forms will be available in the ELC office and must be filled out before the teacher can apply sunscreen or topical ointment on your child. (Sunscreen is provided by each parent)

Inclement Weather Plan

As a general rule, the NVC ELC will follow St. Clair County School System when it comes to school closings, delayed openings, and early dismissals for any kind of inclement weather (snow, ice, tornado, etc). If St. Clair County cancels after school activities, the ELC will close at 3pm. If there is a 2 hour delay, the ELC will open at 10am.

The NVC ELC will continue usual indoor activities during "watch" and "severe thunderstorm warning" conditions.

Should a "tornado warning" go into effect, each class will go to its assigned safe place. Parents are advised to remain at work until the warning is lifted. If parents arrive at the Center during a warning, they must stay in the safe areas. No child will be allowed to leave the ELC until the warning is lifted.

Fire Procedure

In case of fire, the children will be evacuated from the ELC by the teachers as quickly as possible. Each restroom, classroom, and play area will be checked to ensure that every child has been evacuated.

Fire extinguishers are strategically located in the hallways outside the classroom doors. The building is equipped with smoke detectors and a fire alarm system. A sprinkler system is installed throughout the ELC building. Fire drills are conducted monthly.

Curriculum

Our curriculum is designed to provide varied learning experiences for the young child including time for creative play, art, music, literature, drama, language, science learning activities, centers, group time, rest, outdoor play, and chapel. Bible stories and learning activities are an important part of our curriculum. We will use the A Beka curriculum as

our base, and supplement additional learning activities. We have monthly themes that are center-wide and will be used as the base for creative ideas and lesson planning for the month.

Extracurricular Activities

At the beginning of each school year, a list of offered extracurricular activities will be given to parents. You may sign up your child for any of the offered activities at an extra expense. Weekly chapel time is provided as part of the ELC curriculum and therefore is covered by tuition.

Guidance and Discipline

Children at the ELC are expected to follow the classroom rules set in place by the teachers. Discipline of children will be handled according to school policy. We believe that discipline should be used as a learning experience for children. Preschoolers are still learning how to communicate using words instead of hitting or biting, and are learning how to be social with their classmates and teachers. If a child is injured, an incident report will be filled out and signed by the director and teacher and sent home to the family.

The ELC advocates using discipline that is age appropriate, loving, and in the best interests of the children. Corporal punishment in any form is not a part of our behavior intervention plan. Appropriate methods of discipline may include: redirection, telling children to “use their words” or “hands are not for hitting”, having the child tell the teacher what he/she did wrong, and time out (one minute per age of the child). Any recurring problems in behavior will be addressed by the teachers to the parents, and a parent/teacher conference may be scheduled.

North Valley Early Learning Center reserves the right to terminate services due to disruptive, dangerous, or uncontrollable behavior. This is left to the discretion of the director. Tuition already paid will not be reimbursed when services are terminated.

Biting

Unfortunately, biting is a typical, age appropriate phenomenon in the toddler years. Biting is a highly charged issue because a child is being hurt and the parents of both the biter and the child bitten are concerned and sometimes do not know what to do. Teachers will use both intervention and prevention to address biting.

Parent Involvement

Guiding the development of children is a cooperative effort between parents and teachers. We welcome all parent questions and messages. There are many ways in which a parent will be included in his/her child’s classroom experience, including:

- Open House - held the week before the first day of school
- Daily Reports
- Classroom Monthly Newsletters/Calendars
- Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Parties and Special Events

Potty Training

Sometime around two year old, a child will show readiness and willingness in learning to use the potty. Parents and staff will work **together** in planning a successful approach to the potty learning process. Children will not be punished at the ELC for lapses in potty training nor will they be coerced into potty training if they are not showing developmental signs of being ready. Please discuss potty training activities with your specific teachers.

Lunch and Snacks

Each child should bring a nutritious lunch from home, including a drink. Mark all parts of the lunchbox, thermos, etc. clearly with first and last names. If your child's lunch requires a fork or spoon, please send one. Please do not send carbonated beverages, glass containers for drinks, or candy as a part of their lunch. Absolutely no hard candy, gum, or peanuts. Make sure the food is manageable for your child. The ELC will provide snacks for each child. Please make sure to properly fill out your registration form regarding any food allergies.

Rest/Break Time

All full time ELC classes have a rest time each day. You will be required to supply a cot mat for your child. You may also send a blanket and/or a small stuffed animal that will be comforting to your child.

Developmental Checklists

All ELC students will be evaluated by their teacher half-way through the school year and again at the end of the year. These evaluations include phonics, numbers, social, and physical development. Teachers will use developmental checklists that are suitable for the age of your child. These are done for your benefit to see how your child is progressing throughout the year. You will receive a copy of your child's developmental checklist. A parent-teacher conference may be scheduled if you would like.

Clothing and Personal Belongings

Children's clothing should be comfortable and easy for them to manage, especially during the critical stages of potty learning. Children need to be able to engage in messy and active indoor and outdoor play. Therefore, play clothes which can withstand hard use and can be easily laundered are important. Parents are asked to understand that reasonable efforts will be made to protect clothing but that occasional stains from paints or foods may occur. Children should wear sturdy shoes with non-slip soles to help prevent falling from climbing equipment. Open toe shoes, hard heeled boots, and loose jewelry are strongly discouraged. **Parents are asked to provide a change of clothes that can be used in case of emergencies and to check carefully at the end of the day for items to be laundered and returned.** These should be updated regularly for weather and growth. **All articles of clothing should be clearly marked with the child's name to prevent**

loss. Teachers cannot be held responsible for keeping up with multiple items which are not labeled.

Children should be adequately dressed for the season and weather for outdoor play on each day of attendance. They generally go outside, even on cold days, if it is not raining. A warm jacket with a hood, or hat and mittens are needed on cold days.

A list of other personal belongings such as diapers, wipes, toothbrushes, etc., from each classroom suggested by the teacher will be given at the beginning of the school year. Please make sure **everything** is labeled with your child's name.

Special Events

During the course of the school year, the ELC will have many special events for your child to participate in. Some of these include:

- Birthday celebrations - parties are encouraged to let you child celebrate his/her birthday with classmates. Parties are planned at the discretion of the teacher. Please discuss any party plans with your child's teacher. No latex balloons, please, as they are a serious choking hazard to young children. If you would like to bring cupcakes or cookies to celebrate your child's birthday, please bring store-bought items and check with the classroom teachers regarding any allergies in the class.
- Movies - at the ELC, the children may watch movies on special occasions, and all movies will be G rated.
- Share time - the teachers may assign specific share times throughout the year.
- Special parties - classes may have special parties for holidays and special events. Parents are encouraged to be involved.
- Christmas Program - 2 through 4 year old classes will participate in an annual Christmas program. Parents are invited.
- Graduation - the 4 year-old kindergarten classes will have a special graduation program in May.

Visiting the Center

The ELC has an open door policy. Feel free to visit during the day. Please take care not to interrupt classroom instruction and learning activities.