



Early Childhood Center Handbook

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Welcome to our Early Childhood Program!

We are delighted to partner with you in nurturing your child's growth and development during these precious early years. Our program is built on a foundation of love, play, and discovery, where children are encouraged to explore, create, and learn in a Christ-centered environment.

We believe that families and educators working together create the strongest support for young learners. As you read through this handbook, you'll find important information about our policies, daily routines, and the joyful experiences we strive to provide.

Thank you for entrusting us with your child. We look forward to celebrating milestones, fostering friendships, and sharing in the wonder of learning together.

Philosophy and Purpose

The Early Childhood Center (ECC) at ISJ Academy is founded on the belief that the early years are a time of joy, security, exploration, and discovery. Our staff is committed to fostering creativity, curiosity, and a love of learning in each child.

Our purpose is to provide a Christ-centered environment that nurtures the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual growth of the whole child. We honor each child as a unique creation of God, guiding them toward a strong foundation for life and faith. In all we do, we live out the mission of ISJ Academy: developing Christ-centered

students and families for life and eternity. This mission shapes our daily practices, inspires our partnerships with families, and directs our vision for preparing children not only for school, but for a life rooted in Christ.

Our curriculum offers rich experiences—stories and songs, creative art and play, science and nature exploration, early exposure to shapes, colors, numbers, and letters, and celebrations of special days—all designed to foster growth, joy, and lasting connections within our faith-filled community.

Licensing

The ECC at ISJ Academy is licensed under the Michigan Child Care Licensing Bureau (CCLB) and complies with all rules and regulations established by the Bureau. Our current license is displayed near the south entrance of the school.

Notice of Licensing Notebook Availability

The licensing notebook contains inspection reports, special investigation reports, and any related corrective action plans for our program. While the center does not maintain a physical licensing notebook onsite, inspection and investigation reports from the past three years are available on the Michigan Child Care Licensing website: www.michigan.gov/michildcare. Internet access is available at the center for parents who wish to view these reports, ensuring families always have access to the most current information.

Hours of Operation

ISJ Academy's ECC is open Monday through Friday, from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Closures

The ECC is open most days except holidays, one week during the summer, the Friday after Thanksgiving, and the week between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day. See the yearly calendar for a full list of dates we are closed for care.

Program Options

ISJ Academy's ECC offers several program options designed to meet children's developmental needs at every stage. Each program provides a nurturing, Christ-centered environment where children can learn, grow, and thrive at a pace that is right for them.

Jr. Preschool

The Junior Preschool program at ISJ Academy's ECC serves two- and young three-year-olds in a small group setting, with a class size limited to twelve. This environment allows teachers to provide individualized attention, especially for children new to group care or still in diapers.

Children spend much of their day in free-choice play, selecting activities that interest them while teachers guide early learning in concepts such as counting, colors, and shapes. Social and emotional growth is fostered through play with peers, as well as short group times for Bible lessons, stories, songs, and circle activities.

Sr. Preschool

The Sr. Preschool program at ISJ Academy's ECC serves three- and young four-year-olds, helping them grow in their knowledge of Jesus while laying strong foundations for future schooling. Children in this program must be fully toilet trained. Learning is guided by children's interests through play, discovery centers, and hands-on activities that foster early literacy, math, creativity, and social development.

Pre-Kindergarten

The Pre-Kindergarten program at ISJ Academy's ECC serves older four and young five-year-olds, offering a Christ-centered environment that builds readiness for Kindergarten and beyond. Children engage in interest-driven projects, discovery centers, and group activities that strengthen early reading, writing, math, and problem-solving skills while nurturing social and emotional growth.

Before and After School Care

ISJ Academy offers Before School Care for K–6 students from **7:00–7:50 a.m.** and After School Care for K–6 students from **3:10–6:00 p.m.** through the ECC. Students are signed in and out by ECC staff, and parents may drop off or pick up using the ECC entrance. No pre-registration is required for regular school days; minimal paperwork is needed, and children arriving before 7:50 a.m. or not picked up by 3:25 p.m. will be checked into the Care Room.

Extended Day+

We are pleased to offer Extended Day+ for families who need childcare during scheduled school breaks. This program is available for students in Preschool through 6th grade and provides a safe, structured day of supervision and enrichment while school is not in session.

Extended Day+ runs from **7:00 AM to 6:00 PM** on designated no-school days. All students must be picked up by 6:00 PM. A late fee of \$1 per minute will apply after that time. Space is limited due to licensing requirements and enrollment is first-come, first-served. The cost is \$40 per student, per day, and will be billed through your regular school account for the days reserved. Students should bring a packed lunch, snacks, and appropriate outdoor clothing. Food will not be provided. A sign up link will be shared from the school office.

Snow-Day Care

To support families who need childcare during weather-related school closures, the school offers limited Snow Day Care for School-Age students when staffing is available. Capacity is limited for both the ECC and Dayschool, and enrollment is accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. A nonrefundable \$80 fee per student is required to reserve a space and will be applied to the first two snow day closures.

Snow Day Care operates only on days when school is closed due to weather and a staff member is available to supervise. **Care is offered from 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m., with drop-off beginning at 9:00 a.m. unless otherwise communicated.** All students must be picked up by 6:00 p.m., and late pickup fees apply after that time.

Snow Day Care is a supervision and enrichment day rather than an instructional school day. A \$40 daily fee per student is charged beginning with the third snow day attended and will be billed through the school's regular billing system.

Summer Camp

ISJ Academy's ECC offers a Christ-centered Summer Camp for Jr. Preschool, Sr. Preschool, Pre-Kindergarten, and Kindergarten–3rd grade students. Our camp provides a safe, nurturing environment where children can continue to grow spiritually, socially, and academically while enjoying the fun and freedom of summer.

Each week features engaging themes—such as nature exploration, art and creativity, games and movement, science discovery, and Bible stories—woven into hands-on activities, outdoor play, and group experiences. Campers build friendships, strengthen skills, and celebrate the joy of learning in a relaxed, play-based setting.

Flexible enrollment options allow families to choose the weeks that best fit their schedules. Details on dates, registration, and fees are available through the school office.

Enrollment

Children who are 2 years old up to kindergarten age are eligible to enroll in the ECC at ISJ Academy. Enrollment at ISJ Academy is designed to ensure that every child begins their school journey with the proper foundation and documentation. Families are asked to complete the registration process in full, which includes a **non-refundable \$100 registration fee**. This fee secures your child's place in the program and helps cover administrative costs.

Enrollment Requirements

All children considered for enrollment must have the following documents on file in the school office before they can attend:

- **Annual Enrollment and Student Information Form** completed online through **Gradelink**, our student information system.

- **Child Information Record** Required by the state, this form must be completed and returned before your child's first day of school. This record authorizes emergency care, provides emergency phone numbers for parents or guardians, identifies who may pick up your child, and indicates your hospital preference. It is essential that this information remain current and updated as needed.
- **Written Information Documentation Form** required by the state to confirm that you have received a copy of this handbook. This form also verifies that the handbook contains specific information mandated by state regulations.
- **Health Appraisal Form** required by state regulations and school policy. This form must be completed and returned to the ISJ Office by your child's first session of class. It must include a current physical examination, up-to-date immunizations, your doctor's signature, and your signature.
 - If your child is not up to date with required immunizations, you must contact the **Kent County Health Department** to schedule a consultation.
 - If you choose not to vaccinate an approved waiver form must then be obtained and submitted to the ISJ Office.
- **Copy of Birth Certificate** issued by the state or county (hospital-issued certificates are not accepted).

If a class is full at the time of inquiry, the child's name will be placed on a waiting list and families will be notified as vacancies occur.

For the safety and well-being of your child, parents must notify the school office of any change of address, phone number, or other essential contact information needed during the school day.

Summer Camp Enrollment

Enrollment for Summer Camp opens in late January for students currently enrolled at ISJ Academy and the ECC. Enrollment for children who are not currently attending ISJ begins in mid February. When enrollment opens, families will receive a summer calendar with important camp dates along with any required registration forms. Students new to ISJ will need to complete the full enrollment paperwork outlined in the Enrollment section of this handbook.

Anti-Discrimination Statement

ISJ Academy admits students of any race, color, national, or ethnic origin. All students are entitled to the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available at the school. ISJ Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national, or ethnic origin in the administration of its policies, admissions, scholarship programs, athletics, or any other school-administered programs.

Any parent, guardian, student, or employee who believes that equal opportunity rights have been misused in relation to educational programs, activities, or employment may contact the Early Childhood Program Administrator or the Principal for resolution.

Probation Period and Dismissal

All newly enrolled families participate in a 120-day probation period. During this time, the ECC partners closely with families to ensure that our program is a good fit and that we are able to meet each child's needs. If challenges arise, families will be contacted so we can work together to create a plan for guidance and growth.

There may be situations in which, even with support in place, the ECC is not able to provide the level of care or assistance a child requires. If significant improvement is not seen within a reasonable period, the school may request withdrawal from the program. Grounds for withdrawal or dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Behavior that threatens the physical safety or emotional well-being of others
- Difficulty participating safely or successfully in group experiences
- Needs that exceed the program's ability to support a child's developmental, physical, emotional, or academic growth
- Failure of parents to comply with school policies and procedures
- Missing or incomplete required health or child information forms
- Late tuition payments or unpaid fees

The ECC Program reserves the right to dismiss a child after reasonable and documented efforts have been made to support the child's individual needs.

Withdrawal from the Program

Families are required to provide two weeks written notice for withdrawal from the ECC program. Notices should be submitted to the Principal or the ECC Program Administrator. Families remain responsible for any unpaid fees and account balances. All tuition and fees must be paid in full at the time of withdrawal unless prior written arrangements have been made with the school.

Transitioning to the Next Age Group

Jr. Preschool to Sr. Preschool

Children in the Jr. Preschool program do not move automatically into the Sr. Preschool class upon turning three. To ensure each child is ready for a successful transition, the following factors are considered:

1. Space availability in a Sr. Preschool classroom.
2. The child must be fully toilet trained, with no accidents for at least one month.
3. Teachers must agree that the child is socially and emotionally ready for the expectations and routines of the new classroom.
4. The timing within the school year will be considered to support a smooth and developmentally appropriate adjustment.

Sr. Preschool to Pre-Kindergarten

Most children transition from Sr. Preschool to the Pre-Kindergarten program at the start of a new school year. In some cases, students may transition at the beginning of the Summer program if teachers determine that the child is socially and emotionally ready for the expectations and routines of the next classroom and there is space available.

Tuition and Fees

ISJ Academy is committed to providing a high-quality, affordable Christian education. As a private school, ISJ Academy relies on tuition, church contributions, and donations to sustain educational and operational expenses. For this reason, faithful fulfillment of tuition and fee obligations by parents/guardians is essential to the school's continued vitality. Tuition and fees must be paid promptly to ensure ISJ can meet its financial commitments.

Tuition rates for Early Childhood programs are based on the length of the school day (full-day or half-day) and whether care services are used. The School Board, in consultation with the Principal and Program Administrator, sets tuition and fees and oversees discounts, scholarships, and tuition assistance. Once a contract is signed, the tuition rate is locked in for the school year. A non-refundable annual registration fee is due at enrollment, with an additional fee for each sibling; these fees cover administrative and insurance costs and are not eligible for discounts. Families must pay tuition on the first of each month, with statements reflecting upcoming charges and any adjustments. Written notice of withdrawal is required 2 weeks in advance, and all prior tuition must be paid before re-enrollment. ISJ reserves the right to deny re-enrollment until financial commitments are met. Refunds are not issued for absences due to illness, vacations, or snow days.

For the most accurate and up-to-date tuition and fee information, please contact the school office or visit our website.

Outstanding Balances

Payments that are more than 30 days overdue are classified as outstanding balances and recorded as bad debt. The following steps will be taken:

1. Student/Parent accounts with a past due balance will result in denial of enrollment or registration in any subsequent School Year; Summer Care; Before or After School Care or any other program provided by ISJ Academy, until such time as the past due balance is paid in full OR a written payment plan is agreed to by the responsible parent(s), Principal, Treasurer and President of the BOE.
2. All past due balances at the end of the marking period will result in Report Cards being withheld from release until such time as the past due balance is paid in full OR a payment plan is agreed to in writing by the responsible parent(s) and the Principal.
3. Acceptable payment plans must result in the past due and all current year tuition, fees, etc. being paid in full ideally before enrollment date of the next year or no later than the end of the current school year. Under no circumstances will a family be allowed to carry over a past due balance from one enrollment period to the next. Enrollment periods include Day School, Summer Programs and/or any After Care programs. ISJ will pursue the ability to automatically

withdraw the agreed upon payment plan amounts from the Student/Parent financial institution account and will obtain all required written authorizations from the Student/Parent. When possible, if the balance due is \$2,000 and above, collateral is to be requested to take a legal security interest in, to guarantee payment of balances due.

4. Failure to obtain payment in full, or an agreed upon payment plan in compliance with these policies, will result in the immediate dismissal of the student(s) from ISJ Academy. ISJ Academy reserves the right to pursue all remedies to collect all outstanding balances owed.

Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF)

- Returned checks will incur a \$25 fee (plus any applicable late charges) and must be replaced with cash, money order, or cashier's check.
- After a second returned check, all future payments must be made by cash or money order.
- Three or more returned checks will result in review by the ISJ School Board to determine whether the student may continue attending.

Overtime Charges

- Children must be picked up on time. Overtime charges are assessed at \$1.00 per minute past the contracted dismissal time.
- The school closes at 6:00 p.m. If a child has not been picked up or the school contacted by 6:30 p.m., the Grand Rapids Police Department (GRPD) may be called to assume responsibility for the child.

Tuition Assistance and Discounts for ECC

ISJ is committed to supporting families by offering a variety of tuition assistance options. Families may inquire at the school office about scholarships, financial aid, and available discounts. Please note that assistance and discounts do not apply to registration fees. All discounts are applied after the multi-child discount.

Multi-Child Discount

Families with more than one child enrolled at ISJ receive a 5% tuition discount for each additional child.

Early-Bird Payments

Select tuition payment plans may qualify for early-payment discounts.

Sponsoring Congregation Membership Discount

Students with an immediate relative (parent/guardian, grandparent, aunt, or uncle) who is a member in good standing of a sponsoring congregation are eligible for a 15% discount on ECC tuition.

State Assistance

ISJ ECC accepts **Child Care Scholarships** for low-income working families through the Office of Child Development and Care. *Parents are responsible for any fees not covered by scholarship payments.* For more information on eligibility or how to apply, please speak with the ECC Program Administrator or visit:

<https://www.michigan.gov/mileap/early-childhood-education/early-learners-and-care/cdc>

ISJ ECC is also a **Michigan Tri-Share** Provider. Through MI Tri-Share, the cost of an employee's licensed child care is shared equally among the participating employer, the employee, and the State of Michigan. To learn more about the Tri-Share Program, please contact the ECC Program Administrator or visit: <https://mitrishare.org/>

ISJ Academy Affordable Tuition Fund

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the ISJ Academy Affordable Tuition Fund is to be able to assist current families who may be struggling financially and/or need annual assistance to make ISJ Academy more affordable and to be able to reach families and communities that could not otherwise afford a Christian education for their child(ren).

Scholarships and Assistance

The ISJ Academy Tuition Assistance program is for students who currently attend or would like to attend ISJ Academy and is available for all families. ISJ Academy does not discriminate based on ethnicity, race, religion, sex, or by any other means when distributing the funds. Funds are awarded at the ISJ Academy School Board's discretion based on a family's income or special circumstances as funds are available.

When funds are available, families are eligible to receive the following:

Application Process

1) Parents or guardians can apply by visiting the school website and filling out the application.

2) ISJ Academy cannot guarantee the approval for all applicants, but only as funds are available. Scholarships are based on demonstrated need. The total amount of each scholarship will be discussed and determined by the school board as funds are available.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedures

To maintain an orderly and safe drop-off and pick-up experience, ISJ Academy has established the following procedures.

ECC Entrance

Families dropping off ECC students or school age children using Before School Care should use the ECC entrance on the south side of the building near the driveway. Please ring the doorbell to the right of the door by tapping the black box and sliding the bell icon upward; a staff member will buzz you in. ECC Students arriving after 8:30 should go to the front doors on Oakwood Ave and ring the bell for entrance.

Parking Lot Safety

For everyone's safety, please refrain from using your cell phone during drop-off and pick-up. Never leave children unattended. Do not leave your engine running or your vehicle unlocked with valuables inside, even for a short time. **Drive slowly** in the parking lot and use extreme caution when backing out.

Car Seat Safety

Michigan law requires every preschool-aged child to ride in an appropriate car seat. Please ensure that anyone picking up your child has a car seat available. As a convenience, car seats may be dropped off and kept at the center for later use.

Doors and Gates

Only adults may open or close doors and gates. Please help us reinforce this policy by ensuring older siblings do not operate gates or classroom doors. This helps keep all children within designated areas and prevents them from wandering independently.

Classroom Procedures

Parents and guardians should drop off children at their classroom door. The ECC uses a sign-in/sign-out system for attendance, and students must be signed in and out by a staff member. Upon arrival, all children are required to wash their hands following the health department's recommended procedures. Posters demonstrating proper handwashing are posted near all classroom and bathroom sinks.

In the ECC, we encourage children to be as independent as possible. From the very first day, we begin teaching and practicing skills such as putting coats on and taking them off, zipping, packing and unpacking bags, opening food containers, cleaning up, and taking responsibility for personal belongings. Parents are encouraged to support this independence at home and at school by allowing children to do the tasks they are capable of managing on their own.

Release and Authorization for Pick-Up

Children will only be released to **adults 18 years or older** who are listed on the child's approved release list. Staff may request identification at any time to verify that an individual is authorized to pick up a child. If changes need to be made to your child's approved release list, please contact the office or your child's teacher.

If someone other than the child's custodial parent or guardian will be picking up the child, **written authorization is required in advance**. Only the custodial parent or guardian may authorize the release of their child to another individual. Families should list **at least two additional adults** who have permission to pick up their child in case of an emergency. This information is included on the Emergency Contact Form and must be updated in writing whenever changes occur.

Pick-Up Locations & Times

Parents of **half-day students** or families needing to pick up **before 3:10 p.m.** may park in front of the school on Oakwood and ring the doorbell at the front entrance.

Full-day students may be picked up during the 3:10 p.m. car line, entering the church parking lot from Graceland.

Families with children in the extended day program or After School Care should use the ECC entrance on the south side of the building for pick-up, or proceed to the playground if students are playing outside.

Safety and Release Policy

While your children are in our care, their safety is our responsibility. **Staff will not release a child to anyone who appears intoxicated.** In such situations, staff will attempt to arrange an alternative pick-up plan. If a safe solution cannot be secured, local law enforcement will be contacted.

Custody Notifications

Please inform the school office and your child's teachers of any custody arrangements or changes to previous arrangements that affect pick-up rights or access to your child. The office must have a copy of any **court-ordered custody agreement** that limits a parent's access.

Daily Schedule

Families will have their own scheduled arrival and pickup times. The following is an approximate schedule of our day during the school year. Activities may vary depending on the weather, special events, and the children's needs and interests.

- **7:00–8:25** Arrival, table activities, and free-choice play
- **8:30–11:30** Teacher-led activities (large/small groups, snack, recess, Bible Time, etc.) Individual classroom schedules will be shared with parents and posted outside each room.
- **11:30** Handwashing, lunch
- **12:00–1:30** Bathroom routines, story time, and rest time
- **1:00–2:30** Afternoon enrichment activities
- **2:30** Recess and large-motor play

- **3:10** Full-day student pickup
- **3:15** Afternoon snack
- **3:30–5:30** Teacher-led or self-directed play indoors or outdoors, weather permitting
- **5:00** Clean-up and table activities/free play for remaining children
- **6:00** Center closes

Walking Trips & Neighborhood Visits

ISJ ECC classes walk to St. James Lutheran Church each week for scheduled chapel services and to visit the library. Some school events may also take place in the church or church basement. A permission slip for walking trips to St. James is included in the enrollment information.

Occasionally, ECC teachers may plan additional walking trips within the neighborhood to nearby locations such as Briggs Park, Frosty Boy Ice Cream Shop, or other close community sites. Families will be notified in advance and provided with a permission slip whenever a walking trip will take place off the school campus, including the date and time.

Snack and Lunches

All students must bring their own lunch and snacks from home. We ask that families provide nutritious, well-balanced meals and snacks that are appropriately portioned for their child. Lunches should include items such as vegetables, fruits, bread or bread alternatives, and meat or another protein source. Please ensure that lunch containers include utensils and adequate cold packs when needed to keep food at a safe temperature.

Some classrooms may have food allergies that require certain items to be avoided. If your child's class has any allergy-related restrictions, families will receive guidance so lunches and snacks can be packed safely.

For safety reasons, **children under 3 will not be served foods that pose a high choking risk**, including but not limited to popcorn, seeds, nuts, hard candy, and uncut round foods such as whole grapes or hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds). Food for toddlers must be cut into **small pieces no larger than ½-inch cubes**.

Students may bring **spill-proof water bottles** to have available throughout the day as needed. Per state licensing rules **all water bottles and lunch boxes/bags must be labeled with the child's first and last name and dated daily** to ensure items can be returned to the correct student.

Per state licensing rules, all **lunches must be dated daily**. ISJ staff will place a tag on lunch boxes or bags so the date can be added upon arrival each morning. Lunches will be stored in large insulated bags with cold packs to help keep food cool prior to mealtime.

Food Allergies & Safety

We are committed to keeping every child safe, included, and cared for—especially when it comes to food allergies. Because allergic reactions can happen quickly and unexpectedly, we follow clear, consistent procedures all year long.

Allergy Care Plans

If your child has a diagnosed food allergy, families are asked to provide an Allergy Care Plan. This plan helps our team understand:

- Your child's specific food allergies
- What symptoms to watch for
- What medication your child may need and how it should be given
- Steps to follow if a reaction occurs

These plans are kept in the classroom and travel with us on all field trips so staff always have immediate access to essential information.

Exposure Prevention

To reduce the risk of accidental contact with allergens, we follow these safety measures every day:

- Family Notification: Parents and guardians are informed of any known allergens in their child's group so they can avoid sending unsafe foods.
- Posting Allergy Information: With parent permission, allergy information may be posted in the classroom or food-prep areas to help staff stay alert.
- Staff Training: All staff and unsupervised volunteers receive training on recognizing allergic reactions, including signs of anaphylaxis.

- No Food Sharing: Children are encouraged to enjoy their own snacks and lunches—food sharing is not allowed.
- Allergen Restrictions: When necessary, certain allergens may be restricted or banned from a classroom or program space to protect children with severe allergies. Families will be notified promptly if a restriction applies to their child's group.

Keeping allergy information consistent across all enrollment documents (Child Information Card, Health Appraisal, and Care Plan) helps us maintain the safest environment possible.

If an Allergic Reaction Occurs

If a child shows signs of an allergic reaction, our staff will:

1. Follow the child's Allergy Care Plan immediately, including administering any prescribed medication.
2. Call 911 if the reaction is serious, if epinephrine is used, or if a new reaction is suspected.
3. Notify parents or guardians right away, even if the reaction is mild or prevented.
4. Clear plans help us respond quickly and confidently, ensuring your child receives the care they need without delay.

Rest/Nap Time

All children enrolled in Jr. Preschool, Sr. Preschool, and Pre-Kindergarten participate in a daily rest period. Rest time supports young children's growing bodies and minds, giving them a chance to recharge so they can fully engage in the rest of their day. Children who are beginning to outgrow naps are encouraged to rest quietly for a short time and may then engage in a quiet table activity. A story and soft music are often used to help children relax.

To help rest time run smoothly and keep our spaces organized, we ask families to follow these guidelines for rest accessories.

- Limit your child to one sleeping buddy of typical stuffed-animal size. Sleeping buddies should be soft and comforting, not toys intended for play.
- Provide one cot/crib sheet and one child-sized blanket (smaller than a twin and not a comforter), or a small nap roll, or a beach towel for covering up.

- If your child uses a pillow, please send a small travel size pillow that fits completely inside their rest-time bag.

All bedding must fit inside the rest time bag provided for your child. Please ensure that all items fit comfortably inside the bag and that your child can easily zip it closed when it is full.

Rest items will be sent home once a week for washing or more often if your child has been ill or items are soiled. Families are welcome to take bedding home more frequently if desired. Please return all items in the rest-time bag after they have been washed.

Clothing

Children learn best when they are comfortable and able to move freely, so we ask families to keep the following clothing guidelines in mind. We recommend that all children wear comfortable, washable play clothes. Clothing that is easy for children to manage on their own encourages independence and supports self-help skills. Activities such as painting, clay, and sand play are available daily, and some materials may not wash out completely. Many toileting accidents can be prevented when children are able to unbutton or unbuckle pants and belts without difficulty.

All children are required to keep **a complete change of clothing** (appropriate for the current season) at school in case of an accident. Each item should be **labeled with your child's name** and placed in a sealable bag, also labeled with your child's name. If these clothes are used, please replace them the following day. Staff will periodically check to ensure that children have appropriate clothing available and that items have not been outgrown.

Families should also ensure children come with appropriate seasonal gear, such as boots, snow pants, hats, mittens, or sun hats, so they can participate comfortably in outdoor play throughout the year.

All shoes should be in good condition to help prevent injury. We strongly recommend sandals with a back strap for support. **Crocs (or Croc-style shoes) and flip-flop sandals are not permitted**, as they are unsafe for playground use. Socks must be worn with all shoes and sandals.

All jackets, sweaters, backpacks, lunch containers, and other personal belongings must be **clearly labeled with your child's name**. Many children have identical items, and labeling helps ensure belongings are returned to the correct child.

Toilet Training

The Jr. Preschool program is designed to support children as they grow in independence and prepare for the Sr. Preschool class. Because of this, toilet training is a regular and intentional part of the daily routine. Children who are currently toilet training should have **at least three full changes of clothing** at school, including extra underwear, socks, and a spare pair of shoes.

Every child's toilet-training journey is unique, so close communication between parents and teachers is essential. Children experience the most success when expectations and routines are consistent between home and school. Parents are responsible for providing all diapering and training supplies—such as diapers, pull-ups, wipes, and plastic pants—as determined in partnership with the teaching team.

Families who choose to use cloth training pants or cloth diapers must follow the guidelines outlined in the Michigan licensing rules for child care centers [R400.8137 (9)].

- Each cloth diaper must be covered with an outer waterproof covering. Outer coverings must be removed as a singular unit with wet or soiled diapers and with wet or soiled training pants, if used.
- Diapers, training pants, and outer coverings must not be reused until washed and sanitized.
- Rinsing the contents must not occur at the center.
- Soiled diapers must be placed in a plastic-lined, covered container, wet bag, or other waterproof container (to be supplied by the parent) and used only for that child's soiled diapers.
- Soiled diapers or training pants must be stored and handled in a manner that will not contaminate any other items and must not be accessible to children.
- Soiled diapers or training pants must be removed from the center every day by the child's parent or guardian.
- A child's supply of clean diapers or training pants may only be used for that child.

Personal Items From Home

We understand that children often have special treasures—such as stuffed animals, small toys, or recent gifts—that bring them comfort. These items are welcome in the classroom but may only be used during designated times. To help children manage their belongings and keep backpacks organized, we ask that items from home be limited to no more than two small items that fit easily inside your child's backpack or book bag.

Toys, games, or other items that promote fighting or violence are **not permitted**.

Electronic devices are not allowed at school.

Jewelry is not recommended for school. Necklaces can pose a choking hazard on the playground and during rest time. Jewelry—especially bracelets and necklaces—often becomes a distraction during learning and frequently breaks when handled or played with throughout the day.

Please ensure that all personal items are **clearly labeled with your child's name**. If your child is missing an item, notify staff as soon as possible. ISJ ECC is not responsible for lost items, and any unclaimed belongings will be donated after a reasonable period of time.

Special Celebrations

Holidays

ISJ respects each family's right to celebrate holidays according to their own traditions. Within our Early Childhood programs, we focus on the Christian aspects of holidays rather than the commercial elements. As holidays approach, teachers will share details about how each classroom will celebrate. Parents may be invited to volunteer or contribute special treats or supplies.

Birthdays

Your child's birthday is a special day, and we are delighted to celebrate with them if that is your preference. Parents are welcome to provide a simple snack for the class; please coordinate with your child's teacher at least one week in advance. We ask that

refreshments remain modest, as elaborate parties should be reserved for home celebrations.

Parties and Invitations

To avoid hurt feelings and classroom disruptions, private party invitations or gifts should not be sent to school for distribution, unless every child in the class is invited. Invitations for smaller gatherings should be mailed directly to families' homes.

Parent and Teacher Communication

We value open communication and strive to be available to address parents' questions and concerns. Families are welcome to visit the school at any time; however, we ask that visits be respectful of classroom routines and not disrupt instruction or distract children from their activities.

To help minimize classroom interruptions, the best way to contact teachers during the school day is through the designated classroom app or by email. If an urgent matter arises or an immediate response is needed, please call the school office. Teachers will make every effort to respond to messages in a timely manner

To keep families well-informed about classroom learning and center-wide events, we use several important communication tools:

Newsletters

A classroom newsletter will be sent home electronically via email or through the classroom app. A paper copy can be requested if desired. Newsletters may include learning goals, current projects, classroom activities, concepts being taught, and information about upcoming church or school events. They may also contain reminders about special activities, requests for supplies, or opportunities to volunteer. We strongly encourage you to read each newsletter, as the information supports both you and your child.

The Early Childhood Express is the ECC-wide newsletter that highlights happenings across all Early Childhood programs. It is generally sent out every other month.

The Falcon Flyer is a weekly newsletter sent from the school office via email. It contains important updates about the day school and all ISJ events.

Information Board

A parent information bulletin board is located outside each classroom. Weekly reminders, schedules, calendars, and other important notices will be posted here. Please check this board regularly.

Communication App

Information may also be shared through an approved communication platform. Parents can use the app to view updates, announcements, and classroom activities, as well as message teachers directly.

Developmental Screening

Developmental and Social Emotional Screening

To help us understand each child's strengths and developmental progress, ISJ Academy ECC uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 (ASQ-3) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional-2 (ASQ:SE-2). These tools offer a simple way for families and teachers to learn more about how children are growing in key developmental and social-emotional areas.

After the questionnaires are completed, they are scored and the results are shared with families during conferences. In most cases, results reflect typical development. Occasionally, a child may show a delay or an area of concern. If this occurs, we will request a meeting to discuss how we can partner with you to support your child's growth in that specific area.

Assessment and Conference Schedule

Jr. Preschool

- Teachers meet with parents at least twice a year during fall and spring conferences to discuss developmental progress.
- Additional conferences may be scheduled at the request of parents or teachers.
- ASQ screenings occur every three months, with results shared afterward.

Sr. Preschool

- Teachers meet with parents at least twice a year during fall and spring conferences to review skills assessments and progress reports.

- Additional conferences may be scheduled as needed.
- ASQ screenings occur every three months, with results shared afterward.

Pre-Kindergarten

- Teachers meet with parents at least twice a year during fall and spring conferences to discuss skills assessments and progress reports.
- Additional conferences may be scheduled at the request of parents or teachers.
- ASQ screenings are conducted twice a year for children under age 5 and once for children who are age 5, with results shared with families afterward.

Ongoing Communication

If at any time you have a concern regarding your child's experience at school, please contact the main office to schedule an appointment. Teachers will respond to concerns that arise during the school day and will notify parents by phone, in person, or through a written note requesting a consultation. Our staff is always available to provide support, answer questions, and discuss your child's needs.

Discipline Policy

At ISJ Academy, our primary discipline objective is to **show the love of Jesus** in all we do. Our goal is to ensure the safety and well-being of every child while nurturing a healthy self-concept, encouraging self-control, and guiding children toward Christ-like behavior. We are committed to providing a safe, caring environment where children are protected from harming themselves, others, or property.

We do not believe that corporal punishment, in any form, is appropriate in our center. Instead, we use positive, developmentally appropriate methods that teach children how to make good choices.

Behavior Categories

To support a safe and orderly environment, behavior concerns are grouped into three general categories. These examples are not exhaustive; teachers and the ECC program administrator will determine when a behavior requires intervention.

- **Disruptive Behavior** Behaviors that interrupt learning or classroom routines, such as disrespect toward people or property, lying, interrupting speakers, excessive noise, or refusing to listen.
- **Abusive Behavior** Behaviors that cause harm or distress, such as hitting, kicking, punching, biting, stealing, destroying property, or using unkind, threatening, or obscene language.
- **Dangerous Behavior** Behaviors that jeopardize safety, such as running away from the group, ignoring safety rules (e.g., “no running in the hallways”), or actions that require a teacher to focus solely on one child for an extended period of time. Dangerous or harmful objects will be confiscated immediately.

Abusive and dangerous behaviors cannot be tolerated and may require immediate action to protect the safety of all children.

Disciplinary Plan of Action

Our approach to discipline is rooted in teaching, guiding, and restoring. The following steps are commonly used when a child needs support in making appropriate choices:

1. **Redirection** The child is asked to stop the behavior and is guided toward a more appropriate activity.
2. **Reminder and Warning** - The child is reminded of expectations and may be informed that a consequence will follow if the behavior continues. This may include a brief break from the group.
3. **Time to Regroup** If the behavior persists, the child may take a short “time-out” break. This is not a punishment but an opportunity to calm down, reflect, and return when ready to participate appropriately.
4. **Removal From the Classroom** If the situation does not improve after discussion and time to regroup, the child may be temporarily removed from the classroom to ensure safety and restore order.
5. **Parent Contact** If the behavior continues or poses safety concerns, parents may be asked to pick up the child for the remainder of the day.

Our program is designed with engaging, developmentally appropriate activities that naturally encourage positive behavior. Because of this, incidents of challenging behavior are typically minimal. Staff consistently use positive reinforcement to encourage self-control, cooperation, kind words, and responsible actions. Praise a child, and watch them grow.

Biting

Young children are still learning how to express their needs and emotions, and at times they may use physical actions—such as crying, hitting, or biting—when they feel frustrated or overwhelmed. While biting is a common behavior in early childhood, it is taken seriously and addressed promptly and calmly.

When a biting incident occurs, the following steps will be taken:

- **The children will be separated** to ensure safety.
- **The child who was bitten will be comforted**, and the affected area will be cleaned to prevent infection.
- **The child who bit will be redirected** to an appropriate activity and supported in calming down.
- **An incident report will be completed** for both children and shared with their families.
- To protect confidentiality, **the identity of the child who bit will not be disclosed** to the other family.

Staff will observe the child who is biting to identify any patterns, triggers, or emotional needs that may be contributing to the behavior. We will work intentionally to teach more appropriate ways to express frustration and ensure the child receives close supervision during this learning process.

We believe that parents and caregivers play an important role in helping children move past biting behaviors. Consistency between home and school is essential. If biting is allowed or goes unaddressed at home, it becomes much more difficult to resolve in the classroom.

Most children stop biting once supportive strategies are in place. However, if a child continues to bite despite intervention, it may become necessary to temporarily or permanently remove the child from the center to ensure the safety of all children.

Health, Wellness, and Safety

Hand-Washing

Proper hand-washing is one of the most effective ways to keep children healthy and prevent the spread of illness. At ISJ Academy ECC, all children and staff wash their

hands upon arrival, after using the toilet, before and after eating, and after any contact with bodily fluids such as sneezing, coughing, nose-wiping, or blowing noses. Hands should also be washed whenever they look or feel dirty.

Hand sanitizers, water basins, and pre-moistened wipes are not approved substitutes for soap and running water. Staff closely supervise hand-washing to ensure children create a full lather and rub their hands together for at least 15 seconds. Hand-washing reminder posters are placed at every sink to support children in developing healthy lifelong habits.

Communicable Illness

ISJ Academy ECC is committed to maintaining a healthy classroom environment for all children. Children who are ill should remain at home. If your child shows symptoms of, or is diagnosed with, a contagious disease, please notify the school office or your child's teacher as soon as possible. ISJ is required by law to report contagious illnesses to the Kent County Health Department. When necessary, the ECC Program Administrator will inform families so they may monitor their child for symptoms or choose to keep them home. All communication is handled with respect for family confidentiality.

For the protection of all children, students may not attend preschool if they show signs of illness or discomfort that indicate they are not well enough to participate safely. A child may be excluded from care or a parent may be called to pick up their child for any of the following reasons:

- **Fever:** A temperature of 100°F or higher accompanied by behavioral changes or other symptoms. Children must be **fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication** before returning. If a physician has treated the child, a note may be required stating they are no longer contagious and may participate fully in classroom activities.
- **Diarrhea:** Two loose or watery stools, even without other symptoms. Children must have no loose stools for 24 hours before returning. (Exception: diarrhea related to antibiotics or new foods may be discussed with the parent.)
- **Vomiting:** Two or more episodes of vomiting. Children may return once they have been free of vomiting for 24 hours. (Exception: a healthcare provider's confirmation that the cause is not infectious.)

- **Rash:** A rash accompanied by fever or changes in behavior. Children may return once a healthcare provider confirms the rash is not communicable.
- **Unusual Behavior:** Lethargy, excessive irritability, persistent crying, or behavior that is not typical for the child. Children should return only when they are acting normally.
- **Other Symptoms of Illness:** Eye or ear discharge, heavy nasal discharge, persistent cough, strep throat, flu, conjunctivitis (pink eye), chicken pox, head lice, COVID-19, or any other communicable condition.
- **Chronic Conditions:** If your child has a chronic cough or runny nose due to allergies, please provide a physician's statement for their file.

If any of these symptoms appear while your child is at school, you will be contacted and asked to pick them up. All symptoms are assessed at the discretion of the program administrator, and **families must have arrangements in place to ensure their child can be picked up within one hour if illness occurs.**

Medication, Allergies, and Asthma

To ensure the safety and well-being of all children, ISJ Academy ECC follows careful procedures for storing and administering medication. All prescription and over-the-counter medications must be kept in the school office or in a secured cabinet within the early childhood center. Parents must complete a Medication Form before school personnel can administer any medication. Parents are responsible for picking up unused medication at the end of the school year; any unclaimed medication will be safely discarded.

All allergies—whether to medications, foods, or other substances—must be listed on the annual Enrollment and Student Information Form. A signed note from your child's physician confirming these allergies, along with recommended alternate food options when applicable, must also be on file.

If your child has **asthma or a life-threatening allergy** (such as bee stings or nuts), **an emergency action plan must be completed.** Medications such as inhalers, EpiPens, or nebulizers are stored in a location known to all staff for quick and easy access. Physician instructions and a completed medication form are kept with the medication.

All medications will be administered only with written permission from the parent or guardian and must be provided in the original container.

- **Prescription medications** must include the original pharmacy label with the child's name, current date, dosage, time to be given, number of days to administer, the prescribing physician's name, and the pharmacy name.
- **Over-the-counter medications** must also be in their original container and labeled with the child's name, current date, dosage, time to be given, and the number of days the medication is to be administered.
- **Over-the-counter medications used to reduce fever will not be permitted or administered at ISJ Academy ECC.**

A designated staff member will administer medication according to the completed form. Parents may choose to come to school to administer medication themselves or may give written permission for an emergency contact listed on the child's emergency form to do so. Whoever administers the medication must sign the medication form, documenting the date, time, dosage, and the name of the person who administered it.

Accidents and Injuries

The safety and well-being of every child is our highest priority. If your child is injured while at school, trained staff will administer appropriate first aid. All staff members are trained in CPR and first aid, and the program administrator and/or teacher will make decisions regarding the care your child needs.

If medical treatment beyond first aid is required, we will make every effort to contact you and the physician listed on your child's emergency information. In the event of a serious injury or emergency, immediate action will be taken to ensure your child receives necessary care, including emergency transportation if needed. Your signed emergency authorization form and Child Information Card permit the school to authorize medical treatment when you cannot be reached.

Accurate and current emergency contact information is essential. Please notify the school office immediately if your home, work, or emergency phone numbers change.

A written accident report is completed for every incident. The original report will be provided to the parent, and a copy will be placed in the child's file. In the case of a

dental emergency, the same procedures outlined on the emergency card will be followed.

Emergency Preparedness and Safety Procedures

ISJ Academy conducts regular drills for fires, severe storms, floods, tornados, and lockdowns in accordance with State of Michigan guidelines. Plans for responding to natural and man-made emergencies are in place, and routines are practiced throughout the year. Detailed evacuation routes are posted in every classroom near the door. All teachers receive training in First Aid and CPR, and every student and staff member must have current emergency contact information on file in the school office.

Parent Contact and Family Reunification

In the event of a natural disaster, emergency, or crisis, students will only be released to individuals listed on their emergency form. If you are unable to reach the school during an emergency, ISJ staff will care for your child on-site or at a designated relocation area until you arrive. To keep phone lines available for emergency personnel, families are encouraged to monitor local radio or television stations for updates. When possible, the school will communicate through classroom apps such as Seesaw, Facebook, and email to provide information about our status and instructions for reuniting with your child.

Natural or Man-Made Disasters

If a natural or man-made disaster occurs, staff will guide students to a designated safe zone away from the building and follow established emergency procedures. Administration and staff will continually assess the situation to determine whether the center can remain open or if it is in the best interest of students and families to temporarily close. Communication with families will follow the methods outlined above.

Special Needs Considerations

If a child has special needs, chronic medical conditions, or requires assistance during evacuations, relocations, or emergencies, parents will work with the teacher to create an individualized emergency plan. This plan will be posted alongside the classroom's emergency and evacuation procedures to ensure all staff are aware of the child's needs.

Employee and Volunteer Screening

ISJ requires comprehensive background checks for all employees and for any volunteers who may have unsupervised contact with students. All employees and volunteers must also complete a PSOR (Public Sex Offender Registry) check before working with children; individuals whose names appear on the PSOR are not permitted to have contact with students.

Volunteers working within the school building must remain under the direct supervision of the classroom teacher or designated staff member at all times. Volunteers who may supervise students independently—such as athletic coaches or activity leaders—must have a completed background check on file before assuming those responsibilities

Thank You

We are grateful for your partnership and look forward to a joyful, faith-filled year of learning and growth together. Please reach out at any time if you have questions or need support.