



Family Handbook

Revised August 2026

Tall Oaks from Little Acorns Grow!

The Acorn (Preschool & Kindergarten Campus) | 3501 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78209
The Acorn School - Tall Oaks (Grade School Campus) | 419 E. Magnolia Ave, San Antonio, Texas 78212
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www.theacornschoo.net

Welcome to The Acorn! As the school year begins, there is a great deal of information we need to pass on to you. **We require you to read this entire booklet and save it to refer to throughout the year.** If you ever have any questions regarding The Acorn policies or your child's program, please feel free to call us. If policies change you will be notified via the Playground App.

Contact Information

The Acorn - Preschool & Kindergarten Campus

Call the main Acorn office (210-826-8804) if you need to reach your preschool or kindergarten child or your child's teacher.

The Acorn School - Tall Oaks: Grade School Campus

Until we have finalized the Tall Oaks campus phone number, please call the main Acorn office (210-826-8804) or message Leah or Ardyce on the Playground app to reach your child or your child's teacher.

If you are unable to reach someone in either office, please call or text: Wendy Starnes (210-854-1967).

For general inquiries and questions, please email frontdesk@theacornschoo.net or call The Acorn's main front office (210-826-8804).

Rich Lange | Founder Director

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Please save these numbers in your phone:

Emergency: **911**

Non-Emergency Police: **210-207-7273**

SA Park Police Department: **210-207-8589**

Animal Control, Graffiti, Litter, Illegal Dumping, etc.: **311**

Contact Information.....	2
About The Acorn.....	5
History.....	5
Educational Philosophy.....	5
Guiding Principles.....	5
Preschool Program.....	6
Kindergarten Program.....	6
Grade School Program (1st & 2nd Grades currently).....	6
Governance.....	6
Hours of Operation.....	7
Accreditations & Certifications.....	7
Licensing.....	7
Notice of Non-Discrimination.....	7
Photographs, Media and Confidentiality.....	8
Religious Holidays.....	8
Campus Visits & Observations Procedures.....	8
Family and School Partnership.....	9
Growing Young Learners.....	9
Family Volunteer Expectations.....	9
Fundraising.....	10
Birthday Gift Tradition.....	10
Communication.....	11
Open Communication.....	11
Playground App.....	11
Parent/Teacher Communication & Class Updates.....	11
Admissions & Tuition.....	13
Admissions Age Criteria.....	13
Process, Priority and Fees.....	13
Special Education Services & Accommodations.....	14
Tuition Payment.....	15
Refund Policy.....	15
Termination of Enrollment.....	15
Arrival & Dismissal.....	16
Teacher Pre- and Post- Sessions.....	16
Preschool and Kindergarten Procedures.....	16
Grade School Procedures at Tall Oaks Campus.....	18
Late Pick Up Fees.....	18
School Operations.....	20

Attendance, Absences and Tardiness.....	20
Required Student Records and Forms.....	20
Playground Usage Guidelines.....	21
Campus Rules.....	21
Guidance and Discipline Philosophy.....	21
Meals & Snack.....	23
Lost & Found.....	23
School & Classroom Life.....	24
Home Visits.....	24
Dress for Play.....	24
Birthday Celebrations.....	24
Water Activities.....	25
Field Trips.....	25
Special Events.....	25
Student Progress & Homework (Kindergarten & Grade School).....	25
Parent/Teacher Conferences.....	26
Personal Belongings.....	26
Health & Safety.....	27
Health Requirements & Immunization Records.....	27
Nutrition Policy.....	27
Food Allergies.....	28
Illness and Health Policies.....	28
Outdoor Play & Inclement Weather.....	29
Emergency and Safety Procedures.....	29
Child Abuse and Neglect.....	29
Toilet Training.....	30
Sunscreen & Bug Spray.....	30
Hygiene.....	30
Injuries.....	30
Appendix.....	31
Appendix A - Weather Chart.....	31
Appendix B - Special Events.....	32
Appendix C - Volunteer Opportunities.....	33
Appendix D - Allergen Guidance.....	35

About The Acorn

History

The Acorn – A School for Young Children was founded by Rich and Kitty Lange in 1980, with the goal of providing the highest quality preschool education for San Antonio's young children. The Acorn was originally designed by Atlee Ayres in 1918 for Fred Hummert who at the time was the largest purveyor of paint west of the Mississippi. It was quite an undertaking transforming the historical home into colorful, vibrant learning classrooms. The first year The Acorn offered four preschool classes serving seventy-five students, and continual expansion throughout the years has allowed the school to serve more young children in the community.

In 1993, a dedicated Kindergarten wing was added, providing dedicated space for this wonderful program. An additional 1,100 square feet classroom was completed in 2017, adding a bright, sunny classroom with large windows upstairs overlooking the trees and Brackenridge Park. One additional 3-day class, a favorite choice, as well as an additional 2-day class, provided opportunities to accommodate more young learners eventually growing to eight preschool classes and one Kindergarten class serving up to 156 children.

The Acorn took what could be considered its boldest step since opening, the expansion of its mission to include grade school aged children in 2025 with 10 first graders and purchasing a wonderful property located not far from The Acorn's Broadway location. Our The Acorn School - Tall Oaks campus is the realization of a long held dream. It is an exciting new chapter for The Acorn, and is rooted in the firm belief that children of all ages learn best when their passions are nurtured and their learning experiences connect classroom concepts to the real-world in dynamic ways.

Educational Philosophy

In all classes, beginning in preschool and growing through Second Grade, we strive to be a joyful, imaginative environment where children learn through the power of play. We follow the principles of Child Development, including the studies of Piaget, Erikson, and others. Children learn concretely, interacting with real materials in meaningful ways, and we prioritize hands-on learning tools to foster critical thinking. By experiencing their world through all their senses and making outside play and exploring nature an integral part of our total program, children develop a holistic understanding and appreciation of their environment.

Guiding Principles

As we expand into the elementary years, we remain committed to the values that have guided us from the beginning:

- **Developmentally appropriate education:** Our teaching framework is designed to promote young children's optimal learning and development by meeting them where they are and tailoring educational experiences to their specific age, individual abilities, and background.
- **Project-based, hands-on learning:** Our students actively explore real-world problems, open-ended challenges, and acquire knowledge through hands-on, meaningful projects with peers rather than memorizing textbook answers.
- **Nature as a daily classroom:** Nature serves as a powerful, sensory-rich classroom for young students, dramatically enhancing physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development. By finding ways to explore the outdoors in our lessons, we leverage a children's innate curiosity to build critical thinking, empathy, and academic skills through hands-on experiences.
- **Strong academic foundations:** Play-based education builds strong academic foundations by nurturing executive function, critical thinking, and a genuine love for learning. Experiential play allows children to internalize abstract concepts naturally, leading to better long-term academic outcomes than rigid, purely test-focused instruction.

- **Character and community development:** Play-based education builds empathy, resilience, and cooperation and fosters a strong sense of community.

- **Screen-free environment drives curiosity and sense of wonder:** Screen-free classrooms promote deeper academic focus, encourage sensory-rich imaginative play, and foster authentic social connections. Our school is an environment which limits screen and allows them the space to invent their own games and strengthens their long-term problem-solving abilities.

Preschool Program

Our preschool program offers children opportunities to develop their love of learning through ample outside time in nature and play-based curriculum. Each class features between two and four rooms divided up into different centers and interest areas. Preschool classes focus on large motor development, cooperative and creative play through block and dramatic play, and open up the children's minds to the idea that there are lots of different, creative ways to use any given medium. We offer Spanish and Music to all preschool classes except our 2-day classes.

Additionally, we offer a limited availability Bridge Program for students who meet the readiness requirements. This option allows students to attend both the morning and afternoon pre-school classes on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Kindergarten Program

Kindergarten provides a balance of teacher directed, small group, large group, and individual free choice activities. The Kindergarten Math Curriculum follows the Mathematics Their Way program, along with a variety of other activities which will take the children from the exploration level, through the concrete stages, and, as they are ready, approaching the abstract level of math. Language Activities will be woven throughout the entire program, incorporating Science of Reading methodology such as phonics, key words, sight words, journaling, phonetic spelling, dictations, book making, etc. "The Masters Made Easy", created by Sudie Holshouser, exposes the children to many artists as well as various styles of art. The program also includes every aspect that is offered in the preschool programs at The Acorn: dramatic play, creative art, manipulatives, large and fine motor skills, blocks, nature, cooking, and exploration and appreciation of nature.

Grade School Program (1st & 2nd Grades currently)

First and Second Grade provides a balance of teacher directed, small group, large group, and individual free choice activities. The First Grade Curriculum Subjects include, English, Language Arts following the "Science of Reading" methodology, Math following the Mathematics Their Way program, Social Studies, S.T.E.A.M - Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math and Project Based Learning - Incorporating all areas of curriculum into projects. Specials include Spanish, art and music twice a week, and a variety of other enrichment opportunities.

Music, Art and Spanish Enrichment

Spanish - Introductory vocabulary lessons in conversational Spanish with songs and puppetry are available to all classes except the 2-day preschool classes.

Music - Foundations of rhythm and tune with classic children's signs and instruments are available for all classes. Kindergarten and Grade School children are also exposed to famous composers and musicians through our music teacher's, Lucy Warner, *Super Heroes of Music* program.

Art - Art is integrated into the curriculum for all classes as a way for children to explore ideas, solve problems, and communicate their thinking. For our Kindergarten and Grade School children, they received dedicated instruction about artistic styles and masters between once and twice per week.

Governance

The Acorn is a non-profit, tax exempt, educational school offering programs to more than 150 children from the age of 2 years 8 months old through Second grade (age 8). We have one teacher for every four, five, or six children in our preschool and Kindergarten classes and one teacher for every eight/nine/ten children in our Grade School. This enables us to individualize with the children and ensures a great deal of daily, personal guidance and enrichment for each child. The Acorn Board of Directors serves to support and maintain our ideals and practices, and to ensure its financial security and continuance into the future.

Hours of Operation

Beginning on the first day of school for preschool and kindergarten, The Acorn's main office is open from 8:00AM to 4:00PM Monday through Friday.

The Tall Oaks Campus office is open from 8:00AM to 1:00PM from the first day of school, August 19, 2026 through September 4, 2026. Starting the first day after Labor Day, September 8, when school is in session full day, the office will be open from 8:00AM to 4:00PM for the rest of the year.

During holidays and summer break, office hours are limited and will be updated accordingly.

Accreditations & Certifications

Accreditation is a critical process through which educational institutions are evaluated against predetermined standards to ensure they provide a valuable and effective learning environment. This procedure is vital in the educational facilities as it certifies that accredited schools operate at a level that meets or exceeds the criteria set by accreditation bodies. For parents and students, this means that accredited institutions have undergone rigorous evaluation and continuous improvement to offer a credible and robust educational experience. In 2025, The Acorn received accreditation from Cognia Global Accreditation Commission, a global network of 40,000 institutions dedicated to continuous improvement and educational excellence. Our program earned the second-highest ranking with the designation of "With Merit," which means that we are in excellent standing, meets or exceeds most evaluation standards, and demonstrates high student performance results in at least one curricular area.

The Acorn is an approved Texas Education Freedom Account (TEFA) school for our preschool, kindergarten and elementary school classes. The Texas Education Freedom Accounts (TEFA) program enables participating private schools to receive state funding on behalf of eligible students, which allows our school to be accessible to more families who share our values but might not otherwise be able to afford tuition. More information regarding TEFA can be found on the [TEFA Homepage](#).

Licensing

The Acorn School adheres to the Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers and is licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS). A copy of the Minimum Standards is available for review in each campus's office or by contacting the local licensing office at (210) 337-3399, the Child Care Information Line at 1-800-862-5252 or at the TDFPS website: <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/>.

Families may also request to review The Acorn's most recent licensing inspection reports located at the respective office at each campus.

Notice of Non-Discrimination

The Acorn - A School for Young Children, Inc., a Texas non-profit corporation, 3501 Broadway, San Antonio, admits students and hires teachers of any race, color, sexual orientation, national and ethnic origin. All are afforded the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students and teachers at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions and hiring policies, and programs.

Photographs, Media and Confidentiality

Parents and guardians should have completed required paperwork and forms before Home Visits. One of the included forms is the Permission Slip/Operational Policy Receipt/Waiver and Release of Liability. This document gives (or denies) the school permission regarding sharing photos, directory information and acknowledgment of receipt. We respect each family's decisions with what and how much to share publicly as well as with other Acorn families. Please email the front desk if you wish to make any changes to this form.

Throughout the school year the teachers will be taking pictures for class scrapbooks or projects. As parents visit and observe their child at play with their friends, parents may take photos for their own personal memories. Please refrain from posting pictures to social media of your child where there is another child in the same picture. Families have different social media practices, and we ask families to respect the privacy of others and especially their children.

In addition, from time to time, we have had opportunities to have local media visit the school to photograph or video the children in action. Generally, these are quick candid shots in which the children remain anonymous. In the past the children have participated in answering questions about their special moms before Mother's Day, interacting with animals, "voting", playing with grandparents on Grandparents Day, enjoying the rides at Kiddie Park at our Fall Family Picnic, planning a class donation to the Red Cross or Food Bank, playing with the Spurs Coyote, or participating in the school anniversary celebrations. If we receive advance notice of any such event, we will, of course, inform you.

Our website is primarily used as information for prospective families or alumni contact. There is a private portion that we utilize to share password protected classroom photo gallery pages with current families and teachers. Selected photos and videos are chosen for the public portion of the website and our other social media sites on Facebook and Instagram.

Religious Holidays

All members of the The Acorn community should feel free to observe religious holidays with a minimum of disruption to their academic progress. All students and staff are entitled to reasonable excused absences to observe religious holidays. The Acorn will work to limit scheduling school-wide functions and activities simultaneously with our current list of major holidays. We consider the following holidays in the list of major holidays: Lunar New Year, Christmas, Diwali, Good Friday, Passover, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur.

Campus Visits & Observations Procedures

While our regular arrival and departure routines take place outdoors, we encourage you to be involved in your child's school experience and stay connected with what's happening inside the classroom. If you'd like to observe without your preschool child seeing you, we can make arrangements—just notify the teachers and front office in advance.

To ensure student safety and minimize classroom disruption, we require that all parents/guardians and regular visitors apply to become "Pre-approved Visitors" in our Guest Management System, Verkada. This one-time annual screening simplifies and expedites the sign-in process, and is beneficial when we have special events with many visitors. Visitors who aren't pre-approved will be required to present a government issued ID and a brief background check at every visit to complete the sign-in process. All visitors must still sign in for each visit, wear a badge for the entirety of their visit and follow all school policies and procedures.

For preschool and kindergarten classes, visitors may enter the building through the Acorn's main entrance by the office. Please ring the front door bell, and someone will open the door for you as soon as possible. You will then need to sign-in (either at the door by scanning the barcode or at the front desk terminal) and receive your visitor badge before proceeding into the classrooms.

For visitors to our Tall Oaks campus, you may enter through the Tall Oaks' main entrance. As we enhance our visitor management processes, we will update families accordingly.

We love welcoming parents and alumni into classrooms to read, share hobbies, or assist with activities—just be sure to schedule your visit in advance. If you're bringing siblings, we kindly ask that they remain under your supervision at all times. Teachers are focused on their students and are unable to monitor visiting children.

Family and School Partnership

As parents/guardians and teachers, we are joining together in an important partnership for the care and development of your children. You have trusted us with your child because you value our guiding principles for young learners. We are continually humbled by the time, energy, and support our family and alumni community provides. We equally love having parents share their occupations, hobbies, and special traditions which enrich our students' learning journey. No matter if your child attends preschool or kindergarten class at our founding campus located on Broadway customarily known as The Acorn, or your child attends grade school at our new Tall Oaks campus, one thing remains the same: you are a valuable member of The Acorn community.

Growing Young Learners

It is our experience that parents play a crucial role in students' success. Student success is greatly improved when parents value our philosophy, understand the nature of our curriculum and approach, and embrace the strengths of our program. Regular communication between parents and teachers is critical to the success of students.

Although it may seem intuitive, we find that children excel when the lessons and activities are supported by parents in the very nature of the home life that is created for them. Creating consistency at home, lots of free unstructured time (particularly in nature), healthy foods, regular and adequate sleep schedules and helpful acts around the house all contribute to a balanced, healthy child that can thrive at our school.

In contrast, excessive screen time, along with a diet heavy in processed foods, and an overscheduled week and not enough sleep can undermine the foundation for a child's success. We encourage families to evaluate their at-home routines and make modifications as best they can to support the growing minds of their child(ren).

Finally, we can't overstate the benefits of reading to and with your child on a daily basis regardless of their age and grade-level. [Research has found](#) that young children whose parents read to them daily have been exposed to at least 300,000 more words by the time they enter kindergarten than kids who aren't read to regularly. Reading with your children not only strengthens language and vocabulary development, but it aids in emotional and character development as well as grows the parent-child bond. In as little as 20 minutes a day, you can support your child's academic and emotional future.

Family Volunteer Expectations

Our school operates through the generous and constant participation of all our families. We are a community as well as a school. As with any community, we function best when there is a shared distribution of participation on the part of all our members.

In keeping with volunteer models at other schools, **we count on and expect family involvement and support in helping with fundraising efforts as well as other volunteer opportunities that support our vision and mission.** Our parent community supports the school through their contributions in both classroom-level activities as well as school-wide volunteer opportunities. As a guideline, **we expect a minimum of 20 - 50 hours per year of volunteer community service from each family depending on your child(ren)'s class.** If you have students in multiple classes, the expectation is that each family will default to the eldest child's class to understand volunteer requirements.

Class Offering	Volunteer Minimum Expectation
2-Day Preschool Classes	20 hours/year
3-Day Preschool Classes	30 hours/year
5-Day Preschool Classes & Bridge Class	40 hours/year

Kinder & Grade School Classes	50 hours/year
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While we will not track each family's participation to ensure fulfillment of expected participation, we believe that volunteering instills important lessons of community involvement and civic duty in our young learners. Families that volunteer together strengthen their bonds through shared goals and teach children empathy and responsibility as it models core values in action.

Please fill out a Volunteer Information Form so we can contact you about opportunities that best fit your skills and availability. All volunteers are required to complete a Release and Waiver Form. For a list of volunteer opportunities at the classroom-level as well as school wide, please see [Appendix C - Committee & Volunteer Opportunities](#).

Fundraising

As a result of our low student/teacher ratio and the extraordinary quality of the entire program, we operate at over a \$100,000 yearly deficit. The school has 501(c)(3) charitable status from the Internal Revenue Service, and we cover our deficit and raise funds through contributions from parents, family members, alumni, community partners, and through our annual school fundraisers as well as monetary donations. All generous donations - monetary and in-kind gifts - are greatly valued and appreciated.

Ways to support our fundraising goals:

- Contribute to and volunteer for the Spring Fundraiser and Rummage Sale campaigns. We strive for 100% participation from families!
- Share the school's needs with friends and family.
- Support class activities and fundraising goals.
- Volunteer in fundraising events such as Rummage Sale and the Silent Auction Wine Night Gala.
- Provide or procure a gift or a personal service for the auction.

Birthday Gift Tradition

We celebrate a special tradition where children are invited to give a meaningful gift to the school in honor of their birthday. This tradition has been a wonderful success and aligns beautifully with our goal of encouraging children to think about giving to others, rather than focusing solely on receiving. Children often feel proud and excited to contribute something special to their classroom community.

These gifts can be a favorite book, a classroom manipulative, a gift certificate to an educational store (such as Lakeshore), a poster, or another classroom item. Some families have also chosen to sponsor a special visitor, storyteller, or field trip for the class. Participation is completely voluntary and does not need to involve a costly item. If you'd like ideas, feel free to ask your child's teacher or check our website for other ways to help. These thoughtful birthday gifts are always appreciated as they help enrich our classrooms and grow our libraries.

Communication

Open Communication

In keeping with our sense of community, maintaining clear lines of communication is imperative for your child's success. As part of our Community Standards, all students and family members are expected to model healthy, respectful communication in their actions, manner, and speech in all matters.

We believe in building a close, "family oriented" relationship with everyone. The children are invited to call all the adults by their first names, and we invite you to do the same. Please know that your teacher wants to hear from you, and inform us of any events in your child's life that might affect his/her behavior, such as serious illness or a death in the family (including pets), separation of parents, parents traveling, etc. We may be able to help your child at such a time, and an awareness of what is going through his/her mind is important to us. In addition to your child's Head Teacher, you are free to call or email Wendy or Rich anytime.

Playground App

We use an application called Playground as our primary means of regular communication. This is a secure and private app that is only available to current parents/guardians. Each parent will have a personal login that you set up before starting school. **We require each family to download the Playground App on their phones and turn on Notifications.** We send regular and important information about school events, your child's class, and time-sensitive updates and announcements.

While everyday Playground App usage is best as a phone application rather than through your computer, the editable forms that we require for enrollment are best completed through your computer browser. **Through the Playground App, families will be able to complete as well as upload their required student forms, view the academic calendar, class roster, newsletters, parent resources and announcements. It is also the location of daily and weekly updates as well as class pictures, and it has a messaging/chat feature where we ask that all parent/teacher communication to occur.** Families can also use that feature to group and individually message other class parents to arrange playdates and send birthday invites. You are also able to mark any of your child's known upcoming absences directly in the Playground App.

Around the third week of school, we will publish a student directory in the resource section of the Playground App, including names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of all students at The Acorn in accordance to selections made on the Permission Slip/Operational Policy Receipt/Waiver and Release of Liability. We assure you that this list is for parents/guardians only; it would never be sold or used for advertising or other purposes, and we ask that you honor this as well. Parents may use the lists for planning playdates or birthday parties, but we trust that you respect other families' desire for privacy and confidentiality.

Parent/Teacher Communication & Class Updates

Please note that teachers do not have access to their cell phones during class time. Therefore, a text is not the most efficient way to communicate during the day. **Please call the office first; if unable to get through, please call or text Wendy cell phone (210-854-1967).**

The messaging feature in Playground should be utilized for communication with your child's teacher, the staff and parents of other children. Feel free to send a message via Playground to your Head Teacher after school or in the evening to arrange a time to discuss any concerns or questions you may have. Teachers will do their best to address your questions in a timely manner, often within 24 hours or if on a Friday evening, by Monday morning. You can check with your child's teacher regarding convenient times at which she is available. Please remember that while communication is important, pickup time does not allow time for a lengthy conversation. You are welcome to park and speak briefly to your child's teacher to schedule a convenient time to call or visit.

Weekly class updates will be available from Playground App to parents. Teachers may post brief daily updates along with photos prior to the weekly class update. Class newsletters are posted every month along with a calendar for the upcoming month. We also send a hard copy home each month.

Admissions & Tuition

Admissions Age Criteria

Enrollment for each academic year (September-May) starts in **January for fall enrollment**. We accept children **2 years old and 8 months through Second Grade**. Your child must be 2 years and 8 months before September to enroll in the following school year for preschool programs, while children enrolled in Kindergarten must be 5 years of age and children in First Grade must be 6 years of age by September 1.

Process, Priority and Fees

We encourage all prospective families to begin the application and enrollment process as soon as possible. While the application process can begin at any time, enrollment and acceptance begins in January for the upcoming school year on a rolling basis determined by priority and availability. Priority for enrollment is given as follows:

- 1) Children already enrolled
- 2) Siblings of children already enrolled
- 3) Children of alumni families
- 4) New applicant families

To attend, all new families will follow our Admissions Process :

- 1) Submit Application (including payment of Application Fee)
- 2) Attend Campus Tour(s) - 3 Saturday tours for adults only; private tours allow children
- 3) Submit required documentation including student records, teacher recommendations, previous schools transcripts/portfolio (Grades kindergarten and above)
- 4) Schedule Student Visit & Parent Interview (Grades kindergarten and above)
- 5) Complete Enrollment Process (including payment of Enrollment Fee)

After a new student application is received, we will contact the family to arrange next steps such as observing the child in the classroom and for a brief interview with parents. If the child is invited to attend, parents will be contacted to complete the enrollment process.

Application

Complete an application form online or in person, and submit your application fee in person or online for each child. Fees are \$75 for your first child's application, and \$60 for each additional sibling's application. Please click the link on the website to pay the application fee by credit/debit card, Apple Pay, or ACH, or drop by the school to pay in person with cash, check, or card. Please note that there is a 4% fee for any payments made electronically. After a new student application is received, we will contact new families to discuss formal campus tours, student visit(s), records and recommendations, if applicable.

If you are a TEFA recipient, you must complete and submit your application, pay application fees, attend a formal Campus Tour and complete the Enrollment Process based on the program you seek. It is important to remember that acceptance of TEFA funds does not guarantee admission into The Acorn. TEFA approval and The Acorn admissions processes are separate.

Tour

Attend a formal tour of the school. Formal tours are offered three times a year. On the tour, Rich Lange, the founder, and head director, along with director Wendy Starnes, will show parents the different interest areas of each program and explain the philosophy and programs in detail. Our next formal tour date and information can be found **on our website**. Please note that formal tours are for adults only. If you are hoping to enroll mid-year, please contact the office to let us know you are interested in enrolling your child now, so we can see if there is a spot available, fill out an application, and we can sign you up to attend a private tour as soon as possible.

Student Observation & Student Records

For prospective kindergarten and elementary aged students, we request a student visit to the campus and participate in class activities for no more than 2 hours depending on the class type. Should families take steps to enroll over the summer while school is out of session, arrangements will be made for a mini-assessment to occur.

We require at least one (1) formal teacher recommendation from a child's former preschool/learning environment,,any student records/assessments, as well as transcripts/work portfolio.

Invitation To Enroll

Invitation to enroll in all programs is based on space availability, priority and considered in the order that application fee is received. We give parents' preferences the highest consideration for preschool classes, but the Directors reserve the option to place children on the days that best suit the program according to class size, age, gender, and temperament as well as class availability.

We recognize how important it is to look at a student with "fresh eyes," and we retain the sole discretion to decide not only whether to enroll a student, but also whether to continue enrollment, as well as the conditions for continued enrollment. The school will consider such factors that it deems appropriate when making invitations to enroll.

Waitlist

Spaces are limited, but if a class is full, we can place you on the wait list. **We prefer enrollment fees to be paid by cash or check. This way, the enrollment fee will only be deposited if your child is offered a spot.** Once paid all fees and tuition are non-refundable. Application and enrollment fees are non-refundable. When an opening occurs within a classroom, families will be contacted in the order of the date they were added to the waiting list, considering eligibility criteria. If an enrollment offer is declined or a family fails to respond, the child's name will be removed from the waitlist. Once the child's name has been removed from the waitlist, families must reapply before the child can be considered for enrollment.

Special Education Services & Accommodations

We are a place where children come to discover and foster their love of learning and are committed to inclusivity. We know that varied learning styles can be successful. However, we do not have access to special education funding, formally trained special education staff, nor formal special education services, including those that may be available at public schools for students exhibiting extensive learning challenges or with severe emotional or behavioral differences. TEFA explicitly warns that private schools are not subject to special education laws in the same manner as public schools, and private schools may not be able to meet the learning needs of all children.

We abide by all requirements in Section 504 of IDEA. We strive to make all reasonable accommodations, at its sole discretion, in which the administration determines that doing so is within the reasonable ability of our schools and/or its staff and will not result in an unacceptable impairment to the rights of other students or employees or a fundamental change to the educational environment. When the school and/or the family of a currently enrolled child suspects that a child has a potential developmental delay or other individualized need, a series of steps are followed which is handled in a sensitive, supportive, and confidential manner. The school directors and teachers work together with the family to provide documentation and explanation for the concern, suggested next steps, and information about resources for evaluation. This could include further screening and assessment and contact with public and private special education programs or medical professionals. Any specialized services needed or required to qualify/maintain enrollment (including, but not limited to,) speech, occupational or physical therapy, remedial programs, tutoring and nursing care are always the financial responsibility of the family.

For more information regarding TEFA and Special Education Services, please refer to the [Texas Education Agency's overview of Senate Bill 2: Education Savings Accounts and Children with Disabilities](#). To understand the rights of students with disabilities under the IDEA, Section 504, and the ADA, please visit the overview found at [congress.gov](#).

Tuition Payment

Tuition and annual fees are required to be paid in full for the year, or by semester, if able. This policy aids the school's cash flow immensely. **We offer a 2% discount on tuition paid in full for the semester and a 3% discount on tuition paid in full for the academic year.**

If this is not possible, families may pay by the month and make arrangements with the office to sign a monthly payment plan. If you are a TEFA recipient, funds will be deposited directly into your family's account and you need to release funds to the school. TEFA payments will occur on a schedule based on the availability of funds as set by the program. If the amount awarded does not cover the full tuition, annual fees, and registration fee, you are responsible for paying the remaining balance in accordance with a TEFA Payment Plan stipulated by The Acorn.

Tuition not received by the 5th of the month will incur an additional \$25 late fee. We also reserve the right to terminate a child's enrollment for nonpayment of tuition. Should that be necessary, the family would still owe all tuition and late fees due and would be responsible for paying interest at 12% per annum until it is paid off. If a check is returned with insufficient funds, we will charge a \$50 fee. After the second returned check, all other payments must be cash, money order, or credit card.

Please mail your check or drop it off in the main office; please do not send it with your child or give it to a teacher. Credit or debit card payments may be made using a QuickBooks payment link or in person in the office and are subject to a 4% card transaction fee. Another method of payment would be to set up a recurring check payment with your own online bank.

Refund Policy

Tuition, annual fees, application and enrollment/registration fees are non-refundable and non-transferable. The program's budget is determined based on enrollment numbers at the start of the academic year and financial commitments are made to faculty, staff, and facilities investments accordingly. Therefore, requests for pro-rated tuition charges or refunds as a result of illness, unexpected departures, or extended holidays cannot be granted. There are no refunds for missed days, whether due to sickness, your own vacation time, or cancellation of school due to some natural disaster (like state or government required closings, illness, flooding, snow, or ice in San Antonio). If a child leaves, the family is responsible for paying tuition until another child takes his/her place.

Termination of Enrollment

Exclusionary measures are not considered until all other possible interventions have been exhausted, and there is agreement that exclusion is in the best interest of the child. That said, if a family continually rejects recommendations made for a student, and it is reflected in the child's classroom behavior such that it negatively affects the learning environment for the other children, we reserve the right to terminate that student's enrollment. Once all documentation and plans have been implemented and revised, and all strategies and techniques have been exhausted by the school staff, exclusionary measures may be taken.

Arrival & Dismissal

Teacher Pre- and Post- Sessions

All teaching teams meet before the children arrive for a pre-session and setup. During that time, we discuss interest areas, small groups, and activities to be offered that day and talk about the most effective ways to present them. After the children are picked up, the staff meets for post-session to discuss how the children responded to all activities, the gains they are making, and the areas in which we can plan to help each child.

We keep written anecdotal records for each child which the teachers update during post-session. And we give our staff feedback so they can constantly improve their teaching techniques. These pre- and post- sessions are extremely important to our program. We need time for hygienic cleaning routines immediately after the children leave; that is why it is important for you to pick up your child punctually.

Preschool and Kindergarten Procedures

Due to the large number of children arriving and then later departing at the same time, we use a drop-off and pick-up line system. The school driveway is one way, so please enter from Avenue B and exit onto Broadway. Pull forward as far as possible just past the gate or to the car in front of you. This will help keep vehicles off Avenue B and minimize waiting times for all involved. Please do not use your cell phone, or iPad type devices during this transition time. This is for safety reasons, allows you to greet and bid farewell to your child and have brief communication with the teacher.

Arrival & Dismissal Schedule

	Class Duration	Arrival Window	Dismissal Window	Late Fee Start***
Morning Preschool	8:40AM - 11:30AM	8:40AM - 9:00AM	11:25AM - 11:40AM	11:40AM
Afternoon Preschool	12:40PM - 3:30PM	12:40PM - 1:00PM	3:25PM - 3:40PM	3:40PM
Kindergarten (Fall)*	8:40AM - 12:00PM (M,Th,F) 8:40AM - 2:00PM (Tu,W)	8:40AM - 9:00am**	11:50AM - 12:00PM (M,Th,F) 1:50AM - 2:00PM (Tu,W)	12:00PM (M,Th,F) 2:00PM (Tu,W)
Kindergarten (Spring)	8:40AM - 12:00PM (M,F) 8:40AM - 2:00PM (Tu,W,Th)	8:40AM - 9:00am**	11:50AM - 12:00PM (M,F) 1:50AM- 2:00PM (Tu,W,Th)	12:00PM (M,F) 2:00PM (Tu,W,Th)

*The first week of school dismissal will be at 11:50AM - 12:00PM every day.

**Children will be marked as tardy/absent if they arrive at school after 9:00AM.

***See [Late Pick Up Fees](#)

Arrival Procedures

Preschool Arrival

Parents will need to exit their vehicle to unbuckle their child. While in the drop-off line, please remain with your vehicle and resist the temptation to walk your child to the gate. Teachers will approach your vehicle and will walk your child safely from you to the gate. If you need to speak at length to your child's teacher, please arrange a time to discuss topics with your child's teacher to ensure the pick-up/drop-off lines keep moving without delay.

There should be no lap sitting or standing in the vehicle while moving (this includes hanging out of the window). As a further safety note, the driveway is always a handholding zone and the playground gate is to be monitored upon entry and exit to not allow a child to dart out unexpectedly.

The playground is unlocked by 8:20 AM every morning for parents who wish to park (in a parking space and not the driveway lane) and walk their child to the playground gate. Afternoon parents may park and enter the playground starting at 12:20 PM but must be sure not to block in teachers' cars. Please refer to [The Acorn Campus Parking Guidance](#) section for more information about courteous parking rules. **Please note that YOU MUST STAY ON THE PLAYGROUND WITH YOUR CHILD UNTIL YOU HAVE COMMUNICATED WITH THEIR CLASSROOM TEACHER!**

Kindergarten Arrival

Kindergarten teachers will greet their class from on the south side of the building each morning. Teachers will greet children at the curb, and the children will then walk themselves to the Kindergarten playground gate. Pickup is on the big playground through the main driveway. Rainy days drop off and pick up will be at the Main Porch.

Dismissal Procedures

Dismissal times for the morning preschool and Kindergarten classes are staggered to help with traffic flow in the pick up line, so we kindly ask that you honor the designated dismissal times. At pick-up time, we ask you to clearly display your child's name tag in the front window and roll down your window so teachers can see you clearly to radio ahead for your child to be ready.

A teacher will walk your child to you from the gate, and we ask you to remain with your vehicle until your child is brought to you. You will need to exit your vehicle to receive your child and buckle them into their car seats OR park and walk to the gate to check them out.

If you have a carpool group of 2 or more children, please plan to park so your time to buckle doesn't back up the driveway line. If your family or carpool is picking up children in both morning preschool and Kindergarten, please be prepared to pick up your preschool child at 11:30 AM then park and wait for the Kindergarten student to be dismissed from class at 11:50AM. Please see [The Acorn Campus Parking Guidance](#) section.

A child will be released only to his/her parents, family, or those whose names are on the emergency form, unless other prior notification has been made. ID's will be checked. A parent should write an email or call us personally if in a pinch. We will not accept calls from secretaries, employees, or any person other than the parent or guardian. We appreciate your cooperation and patience as we try to make pickup time go as smoothly as possible. If you arrive late for pick-up, your child will be brought to the office where you may pick him/her up (See [Late Pick Up Fees](#)).

You are welcome to supervise your own child or carpool briefly on the playground at pick-up but know that the teachers will be going back inside to complete their inside duties and are not expected to watch your children on the playground while you are present. Additionally, when parents remain on the playground and occupy parking spaces, it creates a challenge—many spots are already used by our morning staff, and we need to ensure there is enough parking available for our afternoon teachers. We have designated a few spaces behind the playground along Avenue B as afternoon teacher parking from 11:00AM - 4:00PM. Please avoid using these spots during these times. We recommend that you take advantage of the Witte parking garage and enjoy the nice walk as it helps get some of the wiggles out.

Carpools

Experience has taught us that it is best to avoid carpooling the first weeks or so of school, or perhaps longer, to ease the transition of starting school. If you are interested in forming a carpool, we have a map in the meeting room on which residences are marked. You can find those who may live in your area who you could contact to see if arrangements might be made. Car seats are required. Because of our teacher's duties for forty-five minutes before, and for an hour after school, it is our policy that teachers cannot bring any other students to school or keep them after school prior to going home (see [Teacher Pre and Post Sessions](#)). Exceptions can be made in the case of an emergency. Thank you very much for your understanding.

The Acorn Campus Parking Guidance

The Acorn has limited campus parking, so we ask our parents to be mindful and courteous when visiting The Acorn by parking at one of the three available locations:

- Paved, double spot parking lot off Avenue B
- Slanted parking off the driveway in front of the school
- The Witte Museum parking garage

Leave your child's class name card visible in the windshield when parked at The Acorn in case we need to contact you. When parking behind the playground off Avenue B, please avoid keeping your vehicle at the rear space, while blocking an empty space in front of you.

Also, if you are arriving for an afternoon session, please refrain from parking behind the teacher's cars. They have staggered schedules, with some leaving midday, and you may be blocking them in. Please avoid parking behind other vehicles if you plan to leave the school grounds for an extended period, such as for a field trip, picnic, or any other reason. Doing so may block someone in and prevent them from leaving for hours.

Grade School Procedures at Tall Oaks Campus

Schedule

	Class Duration	Arrival Window	Dismissal Window	Late Fee Start***
1st & 2nd	8:15AM - 3:15PM	8:15AM - 8:45AM*	3:00PM - 3:15PM**	3:15PM

*Children will be marked as tardy/absent if they arrive at school after 8:45AM.

**The first month of school in August, dismissal will be between 11:45AM and 12:00PM every day. Beginning after Labor Day, the regular schedule will begin with pickup between 3:00PM and 3:15PM.

***See [Late Pick Up Fees](#)

Arrival & Dismissal Procedure

For morning drop-offs, parents are asked to park at the Tall Oaks campus parking lot and walk their students to the gate/door where teachers will greet them between 8:15AM to 8:45AM. While teachers and staff arrive at school before 8:15AM, teachers use this time for planning and preparation. It is important to remember that teachers cannot be expected to accommodate early drop off requests before 8:15AM.

For afternoon pick-ups, parents are asked to park at the Tall Oaks campus parking lot and greet their students at the gate/door where teachers will hand over their child no later than 3:15PM.

A child will be released only to his/her parents, family, or those whose names are on the emergency form, unless other prior notification has been made. ID's will be checked. A parent should write an email or call us personally if in a pinch. We will not accept calls from secretaries, employees, or any person other than the parent or guardian. We appreciate your cooperation and patience as we try to make pickup time go as smoothly as possible. If you arrive late for pick-up, your child will be brought to the office where you may pick him/her up (See [Late Pick Up Fees](#)).

Late Pick Up Fees

There is a late fee for lack of punctuality, similar to those charged by other schools. In general, a late fee of \$15.00 will be charged for the first 10 minutes that a family is late picking up their child. A fee of \$1.00 per minute will be assessed thereafter. You will receive an immediate invoice for this fee.

If you are late, you can pick up your child from the office. The late fees accrued will be added to your account in accordance with the following chart:

Class Offering	Late Pick-Up Start Time
Morning Preschool	11:40 AM
Afternoon Preschool	3:40 PM
Kindergarten*	12:00 PM and 2:00 PM
1st and 2nd Grade	3:15 PM (12:00PM during early release days)

* See [Arrivals & Dismissal](#) for daily schedule

We have been lenient in the past, but cannot afford to miss post sessions. We hope that everyone will be punctual and that we won't have to use this arrangement. Thanks for your cooperation and understanding.

School Operations

Attendance, Absences and Tardiness

While absences due to illness are necessary, consistent attendance is encouraged especially in Kindergarten and Grade school where absences and tardiness are recorded. Good attendance makes for good learning, and we want children to understand the importance of regular attendance.

If you know in advance your child will be absent on a given day for an appointment or a family vacation, please call or email the office and message the head teacher via the Playground App as far in advance as you can. Especially in Kindergarten and Grade School, please be aware if you have a planned absence, there may be times where teachers can provide supplemental materials to be completed while away. Please give the teacher at least a week's notice when requesting a packet for a planned absence. However, packets are not always possible before a planned absence, and make-up work may be given upon return.

We record absences and tardiness for students enrolled in Kindergarten, First and Second Grade. Students should have no more than sixteen (16) absences for the year. Failure to abide by these policies will result in a child being disenrolled from the program, but does not exempt you from the financial obligation agreed to.

We categorize absences into three categories:

- **Excused:** an absence due to illness, doctor's appointment, or serious illness or death of a family member.
- **Explained:** an explained absence (not an absence due to illness, doctor's appointment, serious illness, or death of a family member) is when a parent/guardian takes the student out of school with the director's prior knowledge and approval. Kindergarten and First Grade assignments may be given that will be due upon return. Failure to follow this policy will result in the absence being recorded as an unexcused absence.
- **Unexcused:** An absence that is not communicated to the school.

Students who arrive after the documented "Arrival Window" for Kindergarten and Grade School will be marked as tardy. Arriving late can be disorienting for a child and disrupts the flow of class. Consistent tardiness will result in a conversation between the teacher, Director, and family to investigate ways to support a student's prompt attendance.

Required Student Records and Forms

This Family Handbook has important information for parents and guardians. Families will receive an email requiring you to download the Playground App and complete several forms along with uploading your child's health form and immunization records to the app or emailing to the school. These forms need to be completed before Home Visits can be scheduled. Any outstanding information required for a child's file will be discussed at the Home Visit by the teacher.

Online student records forms and other downloads include the following information and can be uploaded via Playground App:

Student Form	Signature Required?	Description
Emergency Form	YES	The Texas Licensing Board requires an alternate person (not parent/guardian) be listed as a contact in case of emergency. You must complete the section "Persons Other Than Parents to Be Notified In Case of Emergency When Parents Cannot Be Reached." We must have an address to include zip code for this person.
Health & Immunization Form	YES - Physician	To be completed by a physician, including an attached immunization record, with DTP, polio, MMR, Hib, Hep A, Hep B, and varicella. Please note that children four years of age and older need an annual vision and hearing screening. All new students will need a Health Form completed before

		school starts. Those students who attended The Acorn last school year should have a current health form in their records; an updated "Health Form" will need to be completed and turned in during the child's birthday month.
Parent Questionnaire	No	
Volunteer Release & Waiver of Liability	YES	
Parent Volunteer Availability	YES	Our Acorn community thrives on the support and involvement of our families. Volunteering for the school is a great way to feel more connected with your child's education.
Acknowledgement and Release of Liability	YES	
Permission Slip, Handbook Policy Receipt, Directory Permission, Waiver and Release	YES	
Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan (If Applicable)	YES - Parent/Guardian & Physician	Please make sure to bring any food allergies, such as to milk products, peanuts, wheat, etc., or any other chronic or contagious conditions to the attention of your child's teacher.
Authorization for Dispensing Medication (If Applicable)	YES	Completed by the parent/guardian for each prescribed prescription. All medication must have original label attached
Visitor Pre-Authorization	YES	Verkada pre-authorization to visit

Playground Usage Guidelines

Playground and playground equipment safety is a top priority. If you're waiting with a sibling during arrival or dismissal, please be aware that students have priority for equipment use. Parents are responsible for monitoring siblings while on the playground. When classes are not using the space, playgrounds are considered closed. The big playground at The Acorn will be locked by 4:00PM while the playground at Tall Oaks will be locked by 3:45PM. Our playgrounds are a cell-phone free zone for everyone's safety. Please return any toys when finished and note that certain playground equipment such as the zipline and tire swing at The Acorn preschool and kindergarten campus are not intended for use by older children.

Campus Rules

1. Dogs are not allowed on campuses unless they are "on-duty" service dogs.
2. No smoking/vaping or drugs are allowed on campuses, including in vehicles and on school sponsored field trips.
3. No weapons of any type may be brought on campuses, even in a closed and locked car. The only exception is for law enforcement officers who may carry weapons in the normal course of their official duties while on campuses.
4. Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1,000 feet of a child-care center is a gang free zone.

Guidance and Discipline Philosophy

Community Standards

Our developmentally appropriate expectations of children grow as children do. We believe that all members of our community including students as well as parents will respect themselves, their peers, as well as teachers and the school.

We recognize that this may be the first communal space for some children, especially preschoolers, and they are learning how to demonstrate mutual respect. Our teachers and staff work to build a well-rounded and educational experience for children of all ages by modeling mutual respect and trust for our students. Everyone in our community should feel safe to learn, work, and share in an environment that stands against hurtful and harmful behaviors.

Developmentally Appropriate & Positive Guidance

We handle all our guidance and discipline in a positive manner, and, in fact, we are careful to phrase everything to reflect our focus on learning opportunities. Consistent guidance in the classroom and on playgrounds support a student's growth into a self-disciplined person. While classroom rules are set by the Head Teacher, all rules and guidelines are in accordance with the educational philosophy and expectations that underpin our guiding principles. Our shared objective is to foster each child's growth in self-regulation, responsible decision-making, and the ability to make thoughtful, positive choices.

Self-regulation means learning how to manage emotions, behaviors, and impulses in appropriate ways. For young children—especially in preschool and kindergarten—this might look like:

- Taking a deep breath when feeling frustrated instead of yelling
- Waiting their turn to talk during group time
- Using words to ask for help instead of crying or grabbing
- Calming themselves down after being upset

If a child needs redirection, we suggest alternate appropriate behaviors; we also set reasonable limits and are consistent in enforcing those limits. Guidance is individualized and appropriate to the child's level of understanding. Teachers and parents are encouraged to communicate regularly to promote consistency in addressing behaviors and guiding student development. Consistent approaches between home and school help children feel secure and supported.

Peer to Peer Conflicts

Conflict can happen as part of being in a community and learning to navigate conflict is an important social skill. In the course of normal child development, there will be peer-to-peer disagreements and even conflict over different topics, especially as children grow through Kindergarten and beyond. Teachers will help guide students through resolving the conflicts with respect, gentleness and patience.

For elementary aged children, this might look like teachers guiding students in conflict resolution by helping them to learn to express their feelings and needs in safe, respectful ways. By working together, we can create a cohesive environment that supports the development of these important life skills both at school and at home.

Aggressive, Disruptive Behaviors

We consider aggressive, disruptive behavior to be unacceptable, such as a child "putting down" or teasing another child, or pulling a chair out from under a child when the child is sitting down. Teachers will gather information from families on how they manage these behaviors at home and consult with the administration and directors as needed. Teachers, the family and the school will create an individualized plan to support children with persistent behaviors like non-violent aggression, tantrums, or noncompliance. Positive strategies, such as modifying the environment and redirection will be used, and behavior progress will be documented. If disruptive behavior continues, a teacher may separate a child from the group to speak privately or to help him/her gain composure. The goal is to meet the needs of the child in a developmentally appropriate manner and to minimize exclusionary measures.

Significant, Hostile Behaviors

When hostile behavior occurs, we take that seriously. The teacher or staff will document the incident where a child causes or could potentially cause significant, inexcusable harm to another child, teacher or school property. Parents of children involved will receive a copy of the incident report, and it will be added to the child's file. Repeated occasions of significant and intentionally harmful behavior may result in dismissal of the child from school.

Acts of verbal, nonverbal, or physical aggression, intimidation, or hostility that are based on sex, gender identity or gender expression, regardless of whether they are sexual in nature, are not acceptable and prohibited by state and federal law.

Meals & Snack

Please plan your mornings to include ample time for a relaxed and nutritious breakfast. Afternoon student should arrive having eaten a healthy lunch. Protein is especially important in the first meal of the day and foods with sugar should be avoided. For classes that require water bottles to accompany a child to school, beverages need to be water only.

Snacks

Students will receive one snack during their class if enrolled in pre-school programs. For Kindergarten, students will receive one or two snacks depending on the length of the day. For elementary age students, they will receive two snacks per day. For all children with dietary restrictions or specific feeding needs, we will handle the child's needs individually as the family and program develop an appropriate plan. If a child has a food allergy, parents are to indicate this in their enrollment paperwork and provide a food allergy plan that is signed by the child's physician. Additionally, if a student has a food allergy or restriction, parents can provide a stash of safe snacks that fit our nutrition policy. This information will also be a part of their file.

Meals

The school does not provide meals for students. For children who are required to bring lunch such as those in kindergarten and elementary grades, Bridge class, or Wednesday & Thursday Lunch Bunches, lunch is eaten together with teachers. Please send your child's food in reusable containers with a napkin and reusable utensils in an insulated lunch bag in order to reduce unnecessary waste. See our [Nutrition Policy](#) for guidance on allowed food as well as suggestions. Make sure to include an ice pack if your child's lunch needs to be refrigerated. We do not have refrigerator space for lunches, or a microwave available for warming food. Staff will not microwave any food or drinks for children.

Wednesday Extended Day & Early Thursday/Kindergarten Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch groups will begin meeting the second week of school and will complete the week before last week school. For morning children enrolled in the Wednesday extended session Lunch Bunch, you may pick them up from 1:50PM - 2:00PM from the playground. For children new to this program, these extended hours can be long. Please be sensitive to your child's needs and pick him/her up earlier if needed, especially during the first few weeks of school.

For afternoon preschoolers enrolled in the early Thursday Lunch Bunch, drop off is 11:10AM on the south side of The Acorn building by the kindergarten playground. If you are running late and arrive after 11:45AM for early Thursday lunch Bunch, please plan to feed your child lunch before their arrival, since the Lunch Bunch children will have finished eating and will be involved in activities at this time.

Bridge Program

If you have a child enrolled in the "Bridge" class, there is a lunch and rest period during this transition from morning to afternoon. Lunch and rest period will be from 11:30AM - 1:00PM. Please pack a nutritious lunch for your child on these days (please refer to our [Nutrition Policy](#)).

Lost & Found

The Acorn does not assume any responsibility for clothing, books, or other property lost by students. A lost and found area is located in the administrative offices at each campus. We welcome parents to browse the lost and found area frequently, but we strongly encourage all children's items to be clearly labeled. At the end of each semester, we will donate unclaimed and unmarked articles in the lost and found to local non-profits or contribute them to our Annual Rummage Sale.

School & Classroom Life

Home Visits

Each child will receive a home visit from his/her Head Teacher to help make the transition to school a successful one. The home visit gives the opportunity for your child to get to know his/her teacher in the comfort and security of their own home. Your child's teacher will reach out in late July/early August to schedule this visit.

During your child's home visit, please turn in a Ziplock bag of spare clothes to your child's teacher. The bag must have your child's name and class written on the front, and inside contain a pair of underwear, shorts/pants, long sleeve/short sleeve t-shirt, and socks. Should your child have a need for them during class, you will receive the soiled clothing at pick up time. We ask that you return another set of clean clothing the next day in a Ziplock bag with his/her name on it.

Dress for Play

For day-to-day wear, please dress your child in play clothes so he/she can move around comfortably and participate in all motor and outdoor activities without worry. Part of our curriculum is experiencing nature, and our students go outdoors and play in all kinds of weather. Please be sure that your child is dressed each day in layers appropriate to the weather of the season. Every child will get dirty on the playground or in the art room from time to time, so please expect it and dress your child so it won't matter to you.

Encouraged Dress (YES):

- Weather appropriate attire
- Shorts worn under dresses and skirts to promote gross motor climbing and jumping
- Choose clothing that encourages their self-help skills as much as possible, such as Velcro shoes, pullover shirts, and elastic waist pants.
- We also recommend that if your child wears earrings or other jewelry, please refrain from hoops or dangling items that could interfere with their play or pose safety issues while moving about.
- Tennis shoes and socks are usually the most comfortable and safest choice of footwear.

Discouraged Dress (NO):

- Boots can make climbing difficult and unsafe
- Open toe, flimsy shoes such as flip-flops
- Exposed backs, bellies, bottoms, and/or extensive bare skin
- Lewd, violent, offensive imagery

Birthday Celebrations

Our staff enjoys being a part of the birthday celebrations of their students. Please talk with your child's teacher as the special day approaches so that they can plan accordingly. We encourage all families to choose a favorite snack in accordance with our Nutrition Policy. For example, small muffins and fruit with yogurt can be snacks. Please see "[Nutrition Policy](#)" for more details about alternatives to sugary desserts.

Please consult your child's teacher in advance, to verify the date, time, and your idea for your child's birthday snack. This also allows time for substitutes or replacements to be made for children with allergies or other special needs. Your teacher may be able to help you with ideas or let you know if we've had four days straight of pizza or muffins. Variety is always appreciated! All snacks will be prepared and served individually.

We kindly ask that families refrain from sending goody bags for each classmate to school; those can be saved for out-of-school celebrations. Alternatively, we encourage families to participate in our [Birthday Gift Tradition](#) by contributing a meaningful gift to the school in honor of their birthday, which aligns beautifully with our goal of encouraging children to think about giving to others, rather than focusing solely on receiving

Water Activities

Annually we host outside “Water Days,” turning hoses on slides, splashing in sprinklers, and creating rivers and estuaries in the sandbox. On other days, water is available for the children to use in the mud kitchen and in sensory play tables, both inside the classrooms and outside. Please remember to dress children for all manner of outdoor activities and in clothing that you don’t mind getting dirty on occasion. Please see the [“Outdoor Play/Inclement Weather”](#) section for more.

Field Trips

Field trips allow us to take our learning off campus and are a special part of our program. They are thoughtfully planned by the teachers and are intended to be a classroom extension. Parents are notified in advance with details including departure and return times, destination and expected activities as well as special circumstances. Chaperones may be needed but the number will be determined by the activity and teachers. If you are asked to accompany the class as a chaperone, please make accommodations for siblings. Your role is one of supervision and safety and we ask that you defer to the head teacher’s leadership.

There are opportunities in our surroundings for walking field trips or even a drop-off and pick-up off site, but some of our field trips may require parents to drive. A notice will be sent before each outing to inform you of your child’s activity. There will be opportunities to drive and/or chaperone and we want to give everyone in the class an opportunity to participate. If you have ideas for meaningful visits, please don’t hesitate to share!

Special Events

Throughout the year, we host a variety of special events and traditions that we strongly encourage families to attend and participate in. These moments are deeply meaningful to the children, and not having a special guest present can have an emotional impact. We kindly ask that you communicate in advance who will be attending each event.

Some highlights include:

- Dads’ Day in October
- Grandparents’ Day in February
- Fiestas in April
- Moms’ Day in May

If a designated guest is unable to attend, we warmly welcome an alternate—such as another parent or guardian, a special friend, or a neighbor—to join in their place. In November, each class prepares a special Thanksgiving Feast, and families—including siblings—are invited to attend. The scheduled dates for each class are posted at the front of this handbook so you can plan accordingly.

We also host other events and themed activities throughout the year found in [Appendix B](#). While attendance at these is more flexible, we may ask parents/guardians to contribute by signing up to bring items. For example, instead of a traditional Halloween party, we celebrate Pajama Day and might request ingredients for a pancake breakfast.

Your participation helps make these occasions truly special for the children—we thank you in advance for being part of the fun and community!

Student Progress & Homework (Kindergarten & Grade School)

In keeping with the understanding that children experience learning in various modes, student progress is monitored through a combination of observation, informal assessments, and demonstrations of skills and knowledge. Students may demonstrate understanding by using various materials, teaching classmates, giving informal presentations, and participating in classroom activities and discussions.

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child to enhance their in-class learning is reading to and with your child. Beyond any homework activities that are given, we believe strongly in the power of reading. Families are encouraged to read with or to their child each evening (between 15 and 20 minutes).

Formal homework activities are an extension of learning in the classroom and are not used punitively or as busywork. When homework is assigned, it is intentional and meant to expand on the lessons in the classroom. Homework activities allow for parent and child engagement into the lessons of the classroom. Generally, students in Kindergarten and Grade School can expect the following:

Kindergarten: Kindergarten homework activity is usually given for the week or weekend, and should take no more than 15 minutes.

Grades 1-2: Grade level homework activities are given periodically - usually for the week, and should take no more than 20 minutes.

Beyond reading and formal homework activities, we encourage children to pursue activities, hobbies or passion projects at home to nurture curiosity and independent learning. Activities such as learning a musical instrument, participating in a sport/class, exploring their individual passions like chess, cooking, gardening or other pursuits are excellent ways to bring education outside the classroom. These experiences help develop life skills and complement classroom learning. Children should also be incorporated into family housekeeping chores and routines, reinforcing responsibility and real-world learning.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year with each family. Fall/Winter conferences will be scheduled starting mid-November through early January. Final conferences will be in May. Additional individual conferences may be scheduled anytime, as needed. At times during conferences, recommendations are made to parents that will help further the development of the child and be beneficial for his/her successful school and family experiences.

We appreciate open, honest communication with the parents, as we know everyone has the best interest of the child in mind. Follow-through with such recommendations can offer the child a chance to succeed in areas in which there may be difficulties. If a family continually rejects recommendations made and it is reflected in the child's classroom behavior such that their behavior negatively affects the learning environment for the other children, then we reserve the right to terminate that child's enrollment.

Personal Belongings

Each child will have a bag of extra clothing at school in case of accidents. During Home Visits (or Orientation, if necessary), you will turn in the extra bag of clothing to your child's teacher (see [Home Visits](#)). The preschool class children do not need to bring a lunch box/bag or backpack back and forth to school unless they are part of the Bridge class or Lunch Bunch.

We request that children leave candy, gum, and favorite toys at home. Certainly, aggressive toys, guns, or action figures have no place at school. However, we love to have children bring things to show their friends like shells, leaves, bugs, etc. These we can usually keep on display at school. Some classes have show and tell times, and your child's teacher will let you know what types of things may be brought.

Health & Safety

Health Requirements & Immunization Records

Texas Child Care and Health Standards legally require that each child have this information on file at school before admission in order for that child to participate in the program. To ensure that we will not have to exclude your child from school, please make sure required school records ARE COMPLETE by the first day of school. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

Acorn policy requires that a parent and/or guardian submit a Health Form before the first day of attendance, and then annually during the month of the child's birthday. You can find the Health Form on the Playground app or request a copy from the front office. This form must be completed and signed by your child's physician, while parents must select one of the following options on the Health Form and submit the relevant document:

- I have attached my child's vaccination schedule, reflecting the dosages required by the Texas State Department of Health.
- I have attached my child's vaccination schedule, on a deferred schedule over a longer period of time, rather than the recommended schedule.
- I am excluding my child from the immunization requirements for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief. I have attached an official notarized affidavit form developed and issued by the Department of State Health Services. I understand this affidavit is valid for 2 years.

You can find the most current and up to date copy of the Texas Immunization Letter and Vaccine Requirements on the Playground app or request a copy at the front office. Immunization requirements for children, including tuberculosis screening and testing if required by your regional Texas Department of State Health Services or local health authority. Texas Minimum State Vaccine Requirements chart summarizes the vaccine requirements incorporated in the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 25 Health Services, §§97.61-97.72. This chart is not intended as a substitute for consulting the TAC, which has other provisions and details. The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is granted authority to set immunization requirements for childcare facilities by the Human Resources Code, Chapter 42. A child shall show acceptable evidence of vaccination prior to entry, attendance, or transfer to a childcare facility in Texas.

Upon enrollment, parents are required to notify the school of their child's current allergies and medical needs. **A Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan form (FARE)**, must be completed and signed by the parent/guardian and physician. If medication is to be administered by school staff, the **Authorization for Dispensing Medication release form** must also be completed for each prescribed medication, and signed by a parent or guardian. If a child's medical diagnosis changes during the course of the year, parents should update this information in a timely manner. **Up-to-date medication must be clearly labeled with the original pharmacy prescription label provided by the parent/guardian and replaced when expired. A child will not be allowed to attend without lifesaving medications. We suggest Parents/Guardians set an alarm/calendar reminder to replace expired medication.**

Texas law also requires that all children 4 years of age or older have proof of an annual vision & hearing screening. This information must be updated on the students' updated Health Form.

Nutrition Policy

Food, whether provided by the school or brought from home, will be nutritious and wholesome. Parents count on us to keep this policy a consistent one, and we appreciate your cooperation by offering nutritious foods when food is brought to school. A helpful resource is the [Harvard Healthy Eating Plate](#). The habits children develop now will last a lifetime.

An ideal healthy lunch sent from home would contain fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains/carbs, protein, carbs, and healthy fats. Please send a reusable bottle containing only water to drink. Children often enjoy:

- fresh fruits and vegetables
- dips such as hummus, guacamole, or dressing
- sandwiches with lunch meat, seed butter and fruit, cheese, etc.

- sliced cheese
- pickles and olives
- soup or leftovers in a thermos to keep them warm

Snacks and Lunches sent to school should NOT contain the following:

- chewing gum
- overly sugary or highly processed foods (chocolate, candy, cookies etc)
- foods that require preparation by the teacher (example: heating a meal in a microwave/oven/stove)
- tree nuts/peanuts due to multiple allergies
- foods that contain non natural food coloring
- juice or juice boxes or milk
- Foods where added sugar is one of the first three ingredients

We appreciate your cooperation in resisting the urge to send a sugary snack, foods that can be considered a dessert, or foods that don't meet our Nutrition Policy guidelines. Should one of these foods find their way into your child's lunch, we will remove it and offer a healthy alternative that complies with our policy. The removed food will be sent home with your child at the end of the day. **Please note we are a nut-free environment.**

For those students bringing in a birthday celebration snack, we ask that you refrain from sending cookies, ice cream or frozen yogurt, cakes, cupcakes, chocolates, sugared or flavored drinks, or any other sweets as we will not serve them. Instead, we like the children to bring their favorite food or snack, other than items considered to be a dessert or treat. This is a wonderful opportunity to instill the idea that many foods are special, not just chocolates and other sweets. Some ideas include fruits, cheeses, vegetables, sandwiches, pasta, casseroles, chicken, tortillas and beans, pizza, or any other food your child especially enjoys and would like to share with friends at school. The children get to try many new foods over the year that they might not otherwise. This is a school-wide policy, so please avoid putting your child's teacher in an awkward position by asking about or sending inappropriate food.

Food Allergies

We are devoted to the safety of our students and staff and has adopted a food allergy policy to reduce the risk of children and staff having allergy-related events. We have adopted the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found in [Appendix D - Allergen Guidance](#) with Acorn-specific procedures are listed in italics. While we cannot guarantee that food allergens will never find their way into the school and classrooms, we can—with everyone's help and attention—greatly minimize the risk of exposure to a food allergen.

There are times in a class or lunch group when a child is enrolled who has a particular food allergy, sensitivity, or other accommodation. As you are made aware of these, we appreciate your cooperation and understanding as you consider which foods to send for special events and lunches. Reasonable accommodations will be made as necessary and healthy hygiene practices will be followed. We are a nut-free environment in our classes, and please refer to our [Nutrition Policy](#) for guidance on foods we encourage.

Illness and Health Policies

We kindly ask all families to be mindful of keeping children home if they are clearly unwell or not yet fully recovered from an illness. To help protect the health of all students and staff, please follow these important guidelines:

- **Fever & Symptoms:** Children should be fever-free and free of symptoms (without the aid of medication) for at least 24 hours before returning to school.
- A forehead (temporal) temperature over 100°F, along with signs such as fatigue, vomiting, diarrhea, or other noticeable behavioral changes, indicates your child should stay home and continue recovering.
- Even if your child says they feel well enough to attend, please consider the potential risk to others, especially if symptoms are still present.

If your child is staying home due to illness, please call the school to inform us or message the Head Teacher via Playground. This helps us better plan for the day and monitor any potential patterns of illness.

In the case of a highly contagious illness (e.g., chickenpox or pink eye), keep in mind that children are often most contagious 48 hours before symptoms appear. It is essential to notify the school as soon as possible and inform the families of any friends your child recently played with outside of school.

If your child becomes sick at school, they will be sent/taken to the office to rest and to wait for parent pick-up. Our Office Coordinator will first call all parent phone numbers and then emergency phone numbers until someone is reached. To reduce the spread of infection and for the comfort of your sick child, please pick up your child as soon as possible of being called.

Please note our health policies may be updated throughout the year based on recommendations from local health authorities. We appreciate your cooperation in helping us maintain a healthy school environment for everyone.

No medication should be sent to school with your child unless pre-arranged for emergency situations only, such as epi-pens and inhalers (see [Health Requirements & Immunization Records Section](#)); forms and legal requirements for documentation are available in the main office. Prescription medication must have the original label attached.

Outdoor Play & Inclement Weather

Our outdoor play time is very important and an integral part of our total program. It is a wonderful opportunity for large motor development and social interaction. We plan to play outside every day in all kinds of weather. The only exceptions would be hard rain, lightning storms, extreme heat, or extreme cold (see [Appendix A - Weather Chart](#)). If the class starts inside due to inclement weather, indoor motor/physical activities are available. Whether it is hot, raining, or cold, make plans to dress your child appropriately for all kinds of weather. **It is essential that you clearly mark all outer clothing, including sweaters, jackets, etc. with your child's name.** Every year our lost and found is bulging with good clothing that was never labeled, which, if unclaimed, we donate to a local charity or add to our annual rummage sale.

Emergency and Safety Procedures

We take our emergency policies and practices seriously to ensure the safety of all children in our care. As required by Texas Licensing, we comply with all Texas Minimum Standards for emergency and safety.

If evacuation is necessary, The Acorn preschool and kindergarten campus will relocate to the lot directly south of the school while the Tall Oaks campus will evacuate to the parking lot to the west of the building located along Carlton St. and Magnolia Ave. In cases of severe weather, we will move to safe areas within the building, such as The Acorn's downstairs hallways away from windows, restrooms, or the basement or the inner most windowless rooms for the Tall Oaks campus. We have established security procedures for all staff, and we conduct regular fire, weather, and security drills as required by licensing guidelines. In the event of an actual emergency, we will communicate with family members about the event and provide updates as they become available through the Playground App.

There may be times when we cancel, delay, or have an early dismissal due to conditions near or at our campuses. In the event of a weather-related closure or delay, we will work to get information to parents as quickly as possible using our Playground App.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Texas law mandates that all teachers report any suspected cases of child abuse, neglect, or molestation. Parents are also required to be informed of this law. All staff undergo background checks and receive annual training related to child protection and safety. A current list of teachers and staff is posted in the offices of both campuses.

The safety and well-being of your child is our highest priority. You are welcome to review our Licensing Report and the Texas Minimum Standards at any time in the office.

For more information or to report concerns, you may contact:

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services: 210-337-3399

Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400

To learn more about Texas child-care regulations, visit:

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/providers/child-care-regulation/minimum-standards>

Toilet Training

Our school has no diaper changing station, and we expect preschool children to be toilet-trained by the time they start classes. That being said, our philosophy is solidly based in child development, a main principle of which is “readiness.” At this stage, they should be learning more and more self-help skills in many areas, including toileting, and should have the muscle control to regulate themselves by the time they are old enough to attend classes.

Accidents do happen, which we handle in a matter-of-fact and encouraging manner. If you find your child’s start date is swiftly approaching, and he/she is still having frequent accidents, we recommend having them wear a pull-up over underwear when out-and-about and at school to help minimize messy accidents. We know that with gentle encouragement and a variety of methods, your child will be able to reach this important milestone.

If a child needs support that is additional or different to the practices outlined, an individual continence care plan is needed in consultation with your child’s doctor. Please speak to the Director for further information and support with this process.

Sunscreen & Bug Spray

We encourage parents and/or guardians to apply mosquito repellants or topical lotions depending on the weather and any planned outdoor activity. Staff can apply mosquito repellants or topical lotions, but only if you selected this option on the “Permission slip/operational policy receipt/ waiver and release of liability” when you complete the required Student Forms Packet.

Hygiene

To help prevent the spread of colds, flu and communicable diseases, all teachers, assistants, aftercare staff shall request that students wash their hands with soap and water before snack or meal time and after using the restroom. Children should be taught to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue away and wash their hands as well as wash their hands after blowing their nose. Alternatively, they should cover their mouth and nose with their sleeve, not their hand. If soap and water are not available, hand sanitizer may be offered as an alternative.

Injuries

Active play is intrinsic to childhood and a guiding principle. Our staff are trained in CPR and first aid, and they are prepared to handle minor injuries. On occasion, minor bumps or scrapes might happen. Parents will be notified as soon as possible and no later than the end of the day of injuries, minor cuts and scratches requiring first aid by staff. Should a child sustain injuries in areas generally concealed by clothing, such as the torso, shoulders, or hips, a teacher will address the injury with respect after assessing next steps with the Director and notifying parents.

In the event of a serious health emergency, we will immediately call 911, notify the child’s parents or guardians, and transport the child to the nearest emergency facility.

Appendix

Appendix A - Weather Chart

Understand the Weather

Wind-Chill



- 30° is *chilly* and generally uncomfortable
- 15° to 30° is *cold*
- 0° to 15° is *very cold*
- 32° to 0° is *bitter cold* with significant risk of *frostbite*
- -20° to -60° is *extreme cold* and *frostbite* is likely
- -60° is *frigid* and exposed skin will freeze in 1 minute

Heat Index



- 80° or below is considered *comfortable*
- 90° beginning to feel *uncomfortable*
- 100° *uncomfortable* and may be *hazardous*
- 110° considered *dangerous*

All temperatures are in degrees Fahrenheit

Child Care Weather Watch

Wind-Chill Factor Chart (in Fahrenheit)										
Air Temperature	Wind Speed in mph									
	Calm	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	
40	40	36	34	32	30	29	28	28	27	
30	30	25	21	19	17	16	15	14	13	
20	20	13	9	6	4	3	1	0	-1	
10	10	-1	-4	-7	-9	-11	-12	-14	-15	
0	0	-11	-16	-19	-22	-24	-26	-27	-29	
-10	-10	-22	-28	-32	-35	-37	-39	-41	-43	
-20	-20	-34	-41	-45	-48	-51	-53	-55	-57	
-30	-30	-46	-53	-58	-61	-64	-67	-69	-71	



Comfortable for outdoor play



Caution



Danger

Heat Index Chart (in Fahrenheit %)												
Temperature (F)	Relative Humidity (Percent)											
	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95
80	80	80	81	81	82	82	83	84	84	85	86	87
84	83	84	85	86	88	89	90	92	94	96	98	100
90	91	93	95	97	100	103	106	109	113	117	122	127
94	97	100	102	106	110	114	119	124	129	135		
100	109	114	118	124	129	136						
104	119	124	131	137								
110	136											

Child Care Weather Watch

Watching the weather is part of a child care provider's job. Planning for playtime, field trips, or weather safety is part of the daily routine. The changes in weather require the child care provider to monitor the health and safety of children. What clothing, beverages, and protections are appropriate? **Clothing** children to maintain a comfortable body temperature (warmer months - lightweight cotton, colder months - wear layers of clothing). **Beverages** help the body maintain a comfortable temperature. Water or fruit juices are best. Avoid high-sugar content beverages and soda pop. **Sunscreen** may be used year around. Use a sunscreen labeled as SPF-15 or higher. Read and follow all label instructions for the sunscreen product. Look for sunscreen with UVB and UVA ray protection. **Shaded** play areas protect children from the sun.

Condition GREEN - Children may play outdoors and be comfortable. Watch for signs of children becoming uncomfortable while playing. Use precautions regarding clothing, sunscreen, and beverages for all child age groups.

INFANTS AND TODDLERS are unable to tell the child care provider if they are too hot or cold. Children become fussy when uncomfortable. Infants/toddlers will tolerate shorter periods of outdoor play. Dress infants/toddlers in lightweight cotton or cotton-like fabrics during the warmer months. In cooler or cold months dress infants in layers to keep them warm. Protect infants from the sun by limiting the amount of time outdoors and playing in shaded areas. Give beverages when playing outdoors.

YOUNG CHILDREN remind children to stop playing, drink a beverage, and apply more sunscreen. OLDER CHILDREN need a firm approach to wearing proper clothing for the weather (they may want to play without coats, hats or mittens). They may resist applying sunscreen and drinking beverages while outdoors.

Condition YELLOW - use caution and closely observe the children for signs of being too hot or cold while outdoors. Clothing, sunscreen, and beverages are important. Shorten the length of outdoor time.

INFANTS AND TODDLERS use precautions outlined in Condition Green. Clothing, sunscreen, and beverages are important. Shorten the length of time for outdoor play.

YOUNG CHILDREN may insist they are not too hot or cold because they are enjoying playtime. Child care providers need to structure the length of time for outdoor play for the young child. OLDER CHILDREN need a firm approach to wearing proper clothing for the weather (they may want to play without coats, hats or mittens), applying sunscreen and drinking liquids while playing outdoors.

Condition RED - most children should not play outdoors due to the health risk. INFANTS/TODDLERS should play indoors and have ample space for large motor play. YOUNG CHILDREN may ask to play outside and do not understand the potential danger of weather conditions. OLDER CHILDREN may play outdoors for very short periods of time if they are properly dressed, have plenty of fluids. Child care providers must be vigilant about maximum protection of children.

Understand the Weather

09

The weather forecast may be confusing unless you know the meaning of the words.

Blizzard Warning: There will be snow and strong winds that produce a blinding snow, deep drifts, and life threatening wind chills. Seek shelter immediately.

Heat Index Warning: How hot it feels to the body when the air temperature (in Fahrenheit) and relative humidity are combined.

Relative Humidity: The percent of moisture in the air.

Temperature: The temperature of the air in degrees Fahrenheit.

Wind: The speed of the wind in miles per hour.

Wind Chill Warning: There will be sub-zero temperatures with moderate to strong winds expected which may cause hypothermia and great danger to people, pets and livestock.

Winter Weather Advisory: Weather conditions may cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous. If caution is exercised, these situations should not become life threatening.

Winter Storm Warning: Severe winter conditions have begun in your area.

Winter Storm Watch: Severe winter conditions, like heavy snow and ice are possible within the next day or two.

Appendix B - Special Events

Special & School Events

Water/Mud Days

Timing: Fall (Spring as well for Grade School)

An Acorn tradition, each class will come to school ready to get wet, muddy and bubbly! Children will make rivers in the sand, run through bubbles, and make confections in the mud kitchen. Truly a wonderful memory for our students!

Campouts (Kinder, 1st, 2nd Only)

Timing: Fall

One of the most memorable traditions at The Acorn is our annual camping trips to various Texas State Parks for children in Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd Grades. Occurring in late October, the Kindergarten class spends the weekend at Lost Maples State Natural Area while the Grade School children rotate parks annually. The Kindergarten students will participate on a guided hike to one of Mr. Rich's favorite locations. Starting in 1st Grade, children will participate in the Jr. Ranger Program and be sworn in as Jr. Rangers.

Pajama Days

Timing: October

In our effort to make the season "delightful, not frightful," students come to school in their most festive or favorite pajamas for our Halloween tradition. Each class will create their own menu of delicious, festive breakfast and families will volunteer to bring and cook up tasty treats at school!

Dads' Days

Timing: October

We celebrate fathers/father-figures in each class with a special celebration. Students show their guests around their classrooms and then showcase special songs/performances.

Fall Picnic

Timing: Early November

Our annual tradition brings former Acorn families together with current families to celebrate the spirit of The Acorn.

Thanksgiving Feasts

Timing: Week before Thanksgiving break

We celebrate Thanksgiving by exploring the spirit of gratitude, family and friendship, and the joy of giving during our feasts the week before Thanksgiving break. Each class will create their own menu and parents will volunteer to cook and bring items for the communal potluck.

Holiday Performances (Kinder & Grade School Only)

Timing: Week before Winter Break

Kindergarten hosts its Nativity Play while Grade School showcases the music education by performing works from famous composers.

Grandparents' Days

Timing: February

Grandparents/mentor-like figures offer children unique perspectives of life, and we love to bring in grandparents to celebrate the vital role that elder figures can play in a child's education. Not only is this a great memory for children but for grandparents/grand-friends as well.

Valentines Day Exchange*Timing: February*

We celebrate Valentine's Day by focusing on friendship and community. Each class determines the guidelines for their exchange to focus on exchanging small notes of appreciation for peers and teachers.

Valentines Day Exchange*Timing: February*

We celebrate Valentine's Day by focusing on friendship and community. Each class determines the guidelines for their exchange to focus on exchanging small notes of appreciation for peers and teachers.

Class Fiestas*Timing: April*

We bring the annual San Antonio tradition to each class and watch as the Kindergarten class gives us our own version of the Battle of Flowers parade. Each class develops their own menus and families volunteer to contribute items to celebrate Acorn Fiesta! Viva Fiesta!

Cafeteria Lunch (Kindergarten only)*Timing: Monthly*

One favorite tradition in Kindergarten is Cafeteria lunch as a way to prepare students who will leave and attend schools that provide lunch options. Each month a family brings in a lunch for children to try and give them the opportunity to experience going through a lunch line.

Amtrak Train Trip (Kindergarten Only)*Timing: April***Spanish Recital (Grade School Only)***Timing: Spring***Moms' Days***Timing: May*

Celebrate all the mom's and mom-figures with a special mother's day celebration. Students will show their guests and perform a heartfelt show.

Music Recital (Grade School Only)*Timing: End of Year*

Appendix C - Volunteer Opportunities

We will have a variety of opportunities for volunteering that meet the needs and availability for each family. We understand there are many demands on everyone's resources including time, and we appreciate the efforts of each of our families to dedicate themselves to the betterment of our community. Parents can volunteer to be a substitute teacher when the need arises, be a room parent, or help with special classroom or school events and fundraisers. Handy helpers, fundraiser committee members, and gardening enthusiasts are always appreciated.

Have a green thumb? Help your campus beautification days or cleaning up outdoor space. Love connecting with others? Volunteer as a Class Ambassador. Enjoy the outdoors? Some classes go on camping trips and welcome parent support in planning and organizing. We have something for everyone!

Volunteer Opportunities

School-wide Options

Annual Rummage Sale Committee

Timing: Fall

One of The Acorn's two biggest fundraisers is the annual Rummage Sale. We depend on the volunteer efforts of Acorn families to help with setting up, organizing, pricing as well as working the day of the Rummage Sale and clean-up. Donations from families, alum, friends and community partners are what we sell at the Rummage Sale.

Wine Night Silent Auction Committee

Timing: Spring

The biggest fundraiser for The Acorn is the Spring Festival Fundraiser and Wine Night Silent Auction. We need members to participate in planning, setting up and cleaning up the events, which take place over two weekends. Additionally, we depend on parent participation to solicit donations from community partners that we auction.

Campus Beautification Days

Timing: Fall & Spring

We have several days where families, faculty, alumni, and local community members gather to plant shrubbery, spread mulch and sand, and clean up campus grounds. Roll up your sleeves and bring your gloves to help our campus grounds shine!

Campus Beautification

Available Committee Head(s): 2

Available Committee Member Families: 6

They help to coordinate the "All-School Beautification Days" which takes place four times each year. The Heads work with Administration to plan and order supplies.

At-Home and Behind-the-Scenes Helper

Timing: Ongoing

Especially during fundraising events, we need help preparing documentation, copying, stapling, laminating, cutting, sorting, addressing, labeling materials, etc.

Fix-it/Repair People

Timing: Ongoing

We often have toys or equipment that requires repair due to heavy usage on the playground. On occasion, we need new equipment put together.

Classroom-level Options

Parent Ambassador

Available Committee Head(s): 2

Available Committee Member Families: 12

Any parent who has a child at the school is invited to become an active member as a Parent Ambassador. The Parent Ambassador serves as a facilitator to enhance parents' communication within each of the classes, in the school community and with the Teachers and Staff.

Volunteer Substitute

Timing: Ongoing

For those who have the opportunity, volunteering to step in as a classroom aide when needed is a great way to see the mission and values of The Acorn in practice.

Classroom Special Event Help

Timing: Ongoing

The Acorn has a proud tradition of celebrating special events and commemorating traditions throughout the year. Some traditions include food and others include activities, while many include both. Parents sign up to bring a food item, prepare the space, or help teachers during the special event.

Field Trip Chaparones/Carpool drivers

Timing: Ongoing

When field trips occur, Head Teachers will send out requests for chaperones or carpool drivers.

Appendix D - Allergen Guidance

Acorn-specific procedures are listed in italics.

Classroom

- Avoid the use of identified allergens in class projects, parties, holidays and celebrations, arts, crafts, science experiments, cooking, snacks, or rewards. Modify class materials as needed.
- ***Teachers and staff will make reasonable efforts to reach out to parents about the appropriateness of snacks and any food-related activity such as cooking or an art material containing food products. Reasonable accommodations will be made so that a child may observe an activity that may be unsafe for them to touch when a substitute activity is not available.***
- ***Before the beginning of each year any parent whose child has a food allergy will be asked to submit in writing a list of known allergens and their severity, and a list of choices for acceptable snacks. A class list of foods will be compiled, if applicable. Parents in those classes affected will be made aware of these lists of food allergens and acceptable snacks.***
- Use non-food incentives for prizes, gifts, and awards.
- Avoid ordering food from restaurants because food allergens may be present, but unrecognized.
- ***Depending on the allergy needs in any particular class.***
- Encourage children to wash their hands before and after handling or consuming food.
- Have rapid access to epinephrine auto-injectors in cases of food allergy emergency and train staff to use them.
- ***The Acorn will allow EpiPens, which will be stored in the front office student files unless requested in writing to be always kept safely near the child, securely out of the reach of students.***
- ***Staff will be provided with training in recognizing the symptoms of an allergic reaction and how to respond appropriately. Staff will be provided with training in first aid and the use of an EpiPen should a child with a known food allergy go into anaphylaxis.***
- Help students with food allergies read labels of foods provided by others so they can avoid ingesting hidden food allergens.
- ***Teachers will read food labels and supervise snack time.***
- Consider methods (such as assigned cubicles) to prevent cross-contact of food allergens from lunches and snacks stored in the classroom.
- ***Tables and equipment will be cleaned and sanitized after coming into contact with foods. If applicable, separate seating may be made available.***
- Consider designated allergy-friendly seating arrangements.
- ***When known allergens are present, a safe space may be provided.***
- Support parents of children with food allergies who wish to provide safe snack items for their child in the event of unexpected circumstances.
- ***The Acorn requests that parents provide a supply of sugar-free, safe snacks that can be offered in place of an unsafe snack.***
- Include information about children with special needs, including those with known food allergies, in instructions to substitute teachers.
- ***Members of staff will be made aware of students with specific food allergies and information sheets with photos of children with allergies and special needs will be kept in the student's classroom snack cupboards.***

** Reducing the Risk of Exposure to Food Allergens*

Recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

On October 30, 2013, the CDC published national guidelines for food allergy management in schools. The recommended practices can be found on p.41-43 of the CDC Guidelines.