



VISTA RIDGE
ACADEMY

Early Childhood Handbook
2022-2023



Dear Parents,

We are pleased that you have chosen our preschool at Vista Ridge Academy. Our center provides quality early childhood services for the community of Erie. We are excited to be serving your family and look forward to building many happy memories with you and your children.

Parents are a vital part of our program. We encourage all parents to play an active role in their child's daily activities. We also need your cooperation to help assure a healthy, safe and educational environment for all the children in our care. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to read and comply with the guidelines in this handbook.

Sandy Hepp, Director
Early Childhood Education

Vista Ridge Academy is a preschool through eighth grade private school located in Erie, Colorado. Through our Christ-centered community and personally attentive teaching philosophy, we nurture the unique talents of each student as learners and leaders—aiming to grow confident minds, strong bodies, and loving spirits.

Vista Ridge Academy is part of the Adventist education system, one of the largest Christian educational systems in the world, which emphasizes a wholistic approach to educating students academically, physically, and spiritually—according to our core values.

Our Mission

Growing confident minds, strong bodies, and loving spirits through a Christ-centered environment that nurtures students' unique talents as learners and leaders.

Our Vision

To be the Christian school of choice for families seeking personally attentive education and a kind, nurturing community.

Core Values

- *Christ-Centered Living* ~ Reflecting God's character in attitudes and action. “You come to him as living stones, a spiritual house that is being built into a holy priesthood. So offer spiritual sacrifices that God accepts through Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2:
- *Honor* ~ Showing value, dignity, and high regard for people and property. “Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God.” 1 Peter 2:17
- *Exploration* ~ Discovering new information to gain a deeper understanding of God and His creation. “For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature.” Romans 1:20
- *Responsibility* ~ Following directions, completing tasks, and taking ownership of choices, words, and actions. “In all the work you are given, do the best you can. Work as though you are working for the Lord, not any earthly master.” Colossians 3:23
- *Integrity* ~ Being truthful, fair, and deserving of the trust of others. “Even young people are known by their actions whether their conduct is pure and upright.” Proverbs 20:11
- *Service* ~ Working for the benefit of others. - “Use your freedom to serve one another in love.” Galatians 5:13
- *Heroism* ~ Making decisions that align with convictions and beliefs even if it means standing alone. “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

Purpose and Philosophy

Playing is learning! Allowing freedom with clear limits, boys and girls ages 3-5 years old are given the opportunity to grow and develop in his/her individual potential that supports a strong sense of self. We believe that children are a gift from God. Helping them to learn is a divine privilege.

We desire to respond to the natural curiosity of young children, to affirm each child's individualism and build skills in the use of language, problem solving, and cooperation. Each teacher will promote positive attitudes toward learning while guiding the development of pre-reading, pre-math, and pre-writing skills.

Adjustment Time

The academic journey in the Vista Ridge Academy Early Childhood program is an exciting experience for a young child. Our staff are dedicated to helping children adjust to the school setting and are committed to working together with the parents to make the transition from home to school or classroom to classroom. Because young children develop and acclimate differently, there is an adjustment period for all children in our Early Childhood program. We realize that in some situations Vista Ridge Academy may not be the perfect fit for each child.

Admissions

No religious affiliation is required of any student entering the school. Parents seeking admission of their children pledge to support the principles and Christian ideals for which the school stands.

Admission is available to students of any race, religion, color, nationality, or ethnic origin. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, nationality, or ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admission procedures, or extracurricular programs.

Readiness is a basic factor in accepting a child into the formal school program. Readiness varies with children and needs to be given individual attention by parents/legal guardians and by the school administrator. Adventist schools accept children in accordance with compulsory state requirements.

Colorado state law requires every child to have a physical examination form signed by an approved health official along with current immunization documentation before they may start school. The examination may not have taken place more than 6 months prior to the child's first day of attendance. Subsequent physicals will be required every year for children under the age of seven.

Birthday Parties

Parents are welcome to bring a special treat to the classroom to celebrate their child's birthday. Potential food allergies will be communicated with all families. You can call in advance and we will let you know how many children are scheduled for the classroom on that day you would like to celebrate. Due to fire safety issues, we cannot burn candles on birthday cakes at the center.

In the event a birthday party is scheduled outside of school time, please give invitations directly to parents of invited children.

Child Abuse

Staff members who have reasonable cause to view or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect will immediately report such fact to the Department of Social Services Division of Childcare. Investigators from the Department of Social Services shall be given the right to interview staff and children and to obtain names, addresses, and telephone numbers of parents of children enrolled in the

preschool program. Department of Social Services: 1575 Sherman Street, Denver, CO 80203, 303.866.5958 or 1.800.799.5876.

Closings

In the event we would have to cancel school due to bad weather, notification will be made via email as well as posted on 9News, 9News.com, Facebook, and our school website (www.vistaridge.org). Our general practice is to follow the St. Vrain Valley School District; however, for the most part we will not call a delay. With a small staff and no “before school care” other than our regular 7:45-8:10 a.m. supervision, it is best to start at our regular time.

When the school remains open, but you believe that weather conditions in your area are a problem and cause you to keep your student at home or delay their arrival, they will be able to make up any missed schoolwork.

Code of Conduct:

1. **Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to submit their own work. Students involved in cheating, plagiarizing, fabrication, multiple submissions, abuse of academic materials, deception, misrepresentation, electronic dishonesty, and other types of academic dishonesty, including production of materials for other students, are subject to a failing grade for that assignment and further disciplinary action as deemed appropriate for the incident. Students are also prohibited from forgery of any school documents, including falsification of signatures.
2. **Disrespect:** Students are expected to respect the authority of teachers, substitute teachers, staff, and administrators. Parent volunteers, visitors, or guests of Vista Ridge Academy shall be afforded the same respect by the students and staff. Students are also expected to show respect for their fellow students and for others’ property.
3. **Fighting/Physical Contact/Roughhousing:** Fighting or striking another student is an unacceptable means for settling a dispute. Physical aggression or aggressive confrontation, whether or not physical contact occurred, is not permitted and will be referred immediately to administration.
4. **Language:** The use of profane, obscene, or suggestive language, whether spoken, written, or gestured, is unacceptable. The possession of materials containing such language is also prohibited.
5. **Harassment and Bullying:** It is our intent to create a school culture that is safe both physically and psychologically. Students should feel part of a caring community that uplifts, supports, and strengthens them. Students should not participate in behavior which includes verbal abuse, inflicting physical harm, social alienation, intimidation, fighting, or hazing (willfully attacking, disturbing, tormenting, or forcing another student to do something he/she does not want.)
 - a. Bullying is defined as
 - i. the act of targeting another person for repetitive negative actions
 - ii. where an imbalance of power exists so that the victim cannot defend himself or herself

- iii. including physical aggression (destruction of property, threatening violence), social alienation (spreading rumors, racial slurs, excluding from group), verbal aggression (name calling, teasing), and intimidation (graffiti, coercion, taking possessions), including over social media, the internet, phone, or in person.
- b. Harassment occurs when an individual is subjected to treatment or to a school environment which is hostile or intimidating because of the individual's age, race, creed, color, national origin, medical condition, physical disability, or gender. Harassment can occur at any time during school or school-related activities and includes but is not limited to:
 - i. *Sexual Harassment*: Includes unwelcome staring, gestures, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other inappropriate verbal, nonverbal, written, graphic, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when such conduct interferes with a student's academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive school environment. Sexual harassment may also include, but is not limited to, shoulder massages, touching of clothes, hair, or body, patting, pinching, hitting, wrestling, brushing against another's body, invading personal space, and other verbal, written or physical contact of a sexual nature. Possession of sexually graphic or explicit material will also be considered creation of a hostile environment.
 - ii. *Physical Harassment*: Unwanted physical touch, contact, assault, deliberate impeding or blocking movements, or any intimidating interference with normal work or movement.

Students who observe conduct of a harassing or bullying nature or who are being subjected to any form of harassment or bullying by an employee, fellow student, volunteer, or teacher are encouraged to report the incident(s) to a teacher, administrator, or staff member without delay. Because some forms of harassment are also considered abuse, school employees are required by Colorado law to report allegations of harassment constituting abuse to the authorities.

- 4. **Theft and Vandalism**: Students are expected to respect the property of the school, other students, faculty, and staff. Any student who defaces, destroys, or takes without permission the property of others will be held financially responsible for reparations in addition to disciplinary consequences deemed necessary by administration.
- 5. **Public Display of Affection and Sexual Contact**: Vista Ridge Academy believes that students in our school are too young to pursue personal relationships with each other. With this in mind, we encourage our students to develop multiple friendships. If it becomes apparent that a couple is spending an excessive amount of time together or participating in public displays of affection, they will be counseled by administration or be placed on social restriction as deemed necessary by the administration. Students involved in any form of sexual behavior (e.g. petting, sexual intercourse) will be subject to suspension or expulsion as determined by the guidance committee.
- 6. **Possession of alcohol and drugs**: Students are not permitted to possess, use, share, sell, distribute, or be under the influence of any illegal drug, mind-altering chemical, intoxicant, inhalant, or alcoholic product on or off campus. Abuse of prescription and/or over-the-counter medications or tobacco is also prohibited. Possession of banned substances includes having said substances on the student's person or within an area of his/her control including, but not limited

to, locker, books, clothing, bag or backpack, or some other location known to the student. Students may be placed on immediate suspension pending investigation of incident(s) involving banned substances.

7. **Weapons and Gang Activity:** The use, possession, sale, or furnishing of any weapon, knife, firearm, explosive, or other dangerous device, including fireworks, is strictly prohibited. Participation in gang activity including, but not limited to, possessing or displaying gang-related clothing, symbols, literature, paraphernalia, graffiti, or materials is prohibited. Harassment of others or recruitment for gang membership or activity will not be tolerated. Any activity that appears threatening is prohibited.

8. **Civil Authority:** Should a student choose to participate in any act which is in violation of civil or criminal law, that act will be reported to the proper authorities in addition to being referred to the school administration.

Incidents constituting a departure from our Core Values and Code of Conduct will be documented and may need to be reviewed by administration and the guidance committee. The following guidelines will be used by the principal and the guidance committee when evaluating the appropriate action to be taken.

Point Guidelines	Points
Academic Integrity	1 up to 6
Disrespect	1 up to 6
Fighting, Physical Contact, Roughhousing	1 up to 6
Improper use of language	1 up to 6
Harassment and Bullying	2 up to 12
Theft and Vandalism	2 up to 12
Public Displays of Affection and Sexual Contact	2 up to 12
Possession and or distribution of alcohol and drugs	2 up to 12
Weapons and/or gang activity	2 up to 12
Civil Authority	2 up to 12

The Guidance Committee may institute the following consequences with the right to accelerate the process:

- 6 points: behavioral or academic probation
- 10+ points: in school or at home pause to evaluate a safe return to the classroom
- 12+ points: student may be asked to withdraw from school

Complaints

Complaints pertinent to the Early Childhood Development Center at Vista Ridge Academy should be directed to the director, the school principal, and the Department of Social Services Division of Childcare in that order. Department of Social Services: 1575 Sherman Street, Denver, CO 80203, 303.866.5958 or 1.800.799.5876.

Confidentiality

In today's world, many of us take special precautions to prevent identity theft. Just as you keep your information confidential, information about children is considered confidential in a child care setting.

We have licensing regulations from the state to ensure confidentiality. We will not share information about your child with any other parent, and we request that you not ask for information about other children at the center.

Counseling

Each teacher and staff member on campus is available and willing to provide guidance services to students. Each teacher and staff member on campus is available and willing to provide guidance services to students. Your child may be referred for group/individual counseling by a classroom teacher, an administrator, parent or self-referred. It is usually recommended for a student to improve a specific behavior, effective communication skills, conflict resolution, interpersonal relationships, decision making skills, anger management, anxiety, or other issues that are impacting a student's performance in school.

We may offer some classrooms social and emotional skills classes. This opportunity allows children to develop appropriate coping, emotional, and social skills development for that age level. Confidentiality is important to develop a positive counseling relationship and is only broken in cases of indicated criminal activity or threats of harm to himself/herself or others by the student. Please contact your pediatrician and health insurance for a list of local counseling therapists that is available if you are considering the need for an evaluation, therapy, and/or family counseling.

Dismissal/Withdrawal

The following behavior is considered unsafe/inappropriate for the child care center:

- Repeated aggressive acts towards other children or teachers.
- Threatening and/or taunting peers or teachers.
- Sexual touching of other children and/or a focus on sexual matters.

Parents are expected to work positively and respectfully with the school and staff in upholding policies and guidance. If these requests are not met, a child may be asked to withdraw. When a parent chooses to withdraw written notification to either the director or principal is required. All accounts must be current upon departure.

Dress Code

Please refer to the Vista Ridge Academy Dress Code available on our website (vistaridge.org) or from the front office.

EdVentures (Field Trips)

There will be adequate notifications of scheduled EdVentures with permission slips outlining all the details of the EdVenture. All children must be secured in a child restraint system that is appropriate for the age and development of that child. The child restraint must conform to all applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards and Colorado Child Passenger Safety Laws. If the trip is planned on a day that is not your child's scheduled day, your child is welcome to attend as long as they are accompanied by their parent. Students are allowed to travel in their own parent's car or school transportation only. Parents will be responsible to have their child(ren) to the school on time to leave for scheduled trips. If your child arrives late, you will need to find alternate care for them that day. Supervising teachers will have a cell phone, consent to treat forms, parent contact information, and first aid kit.

Emergency Drills and Evacuations

The principal and the director will ensure that all applicable safety standards are met and maintained. We will have periodic facility review with the Erie Fire Department and Tri-County Health Department. All deficiencies noted in the review will be immediately brought to the school principal

and director. The principal and director will set up periodic drills and will maintain a record of each drill.

Should the building require emergency evacuation, the staff-child ratios will be maintained and the children will be evacuated to a nearby location. Each staff member responsible for a group of children will carry emergency contact information with them to the new site. Parents will be contacted by telephone as to the location of the children. (Depending on the circumstances, parents may be requested to pick up their children, or arrange for the emergency contact person to pick up their children).

Guidance

Should students violate the trust placed upon them to abide by the rules of the school, guidance action may be necessary. This action is not a condemnation of the individual, but of the undesirable behavior that produced the guidance. It is the desire of the school to hold students responsible for their actions. It is the purpose of the guidance action to:

- Cultivate positive child, staff, and family relationships by creating and maintaining a socially and emotionally respectful early learning and care environment.
- Implement teaching strategies supporting positive behavior, pro-social peer interaction and overall social and emotional competence in young children.
- Provide individualized social and emotional intervention supports for children who need them; including methods for understanding child behavior and developing, adopting, and implementing a team-based (i.e. family, center administrator, teacher, development specialist, mental health or other consultant, etc.) positive behavior support plan with the intent to reduce challenging behavior and prevent suspensions and expulsions.
- Access an early childhood mental health consultant or other specialist as needed.

Hours of Operation

The Vista Ridge Academy Preschool program is offered for children ages 3 to 5 years of age. This program operates Monday through Thursday 8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and Friday 8:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. This program follows the school schedule for holidays, vacation, and breaks. Because of the differences in a preschool child's readiness for school, we offer a variety of attendance options for the parent to choose for their child.

Illness and Medication

All children experience childhood illnesses and at times spread their illness to other children. Any time there is a group of people together in a setting, there is potential for the spread of illnesses.

In our quest to stop germs from spreading, we request that you please safeguard your child and the others by keeping them at home if signs of illness are present. Reasons to keep your child home may include: fever 100 degrees or higher, diarrhea, vomiting, inflammation of the eyes, rash, head lice, sore throat, herpes (mouth sores) that are oozing, impetigo, scabies, constant runny nose, severe coughing, extreme sleepiness, ear pain, vaccine-preventable diseases, or other contagious illness. Children may not attend until condition has cleared. In the case of fever, diarrhea, or vomiting, children may not attend until symptom free without medication for 24 hours.

Children at school with fever, diarrhea, and vomiting must be sent home and not return for at least 24 hours with no symptoms or a doctor's note stating that the child is well enough to return to school. If your child becomes ill at school, we will call you to pick up your child as soon as possible. The child will be moved to the office until you arrive. If it is not possible to reach you, the emergency numbers on file for your child will be called. Please keep emergency numbers current.

Please notify the school if your child is diagnosed with or exposed to an infectious illness. Notice will be posted if an infectious disease occurs at the school.

Medication ~ All prescription and non-prescription medication given in preschool settings require a written authorization from your health care provider, as well as parent written consent. This is a childcare licensing requirement. The medication authorization forms are available from the director. The instructions from your health care provider must include information regarding the medication, reason for the medication, the specific time of administration, route of medication, and the length of time the medication needs to be given. All medication must be brought in the original labeled container, with prescription number, name of medication, date filled, name of physician, child's name, and directions for dosage. It is essential that a medication measuring spoon or other device be sent with the child's medicine to assure proper dosage.

Pursuant to and in compliance with the Colorado Nurse Practice Act section 12-38-103(10), preschool staff involved in medication administration receive special training and are supervised by our School Nurse Consultant. Preschool staff are not authorized to determine when an "as needed" medication is to be given. Specific instructions are necessary. For children with chronic health conditions, this can be determined in collaboration with the consulting registered nurse, who will write and maintain a care plan for that child.

An individualized health care plan must be updated at least every 12 months from the date of the initial plan and as changes occur. The plan must include all information needed to care for the child, must be signed by the health care provider, and must include but not be limited to the following:

- Medication schedule
- Nutrition and feeding instructions
- Medical equipment or adaptive devices, including instructions
- Medical emergency instructions
- Toileting and personal hygiene instructions
- Behavioral interventions
- Medical procedure/intervention orders

All medications are stored in a locked cabinet away from children's access and kept under the conditions as directed by the health care provider or pharmacist.

Colorado law requires every child to have a physical examination form signed by an approved health care provider.

Injuries

If a child received a minor injury (i.e. scrapes, etc.) while at school, the teacher or staff member will administer first aid in the form of water, soap, bandage or ice pack. In the case of severe emergencies, 911 will be notified first, and then the parents or guardian will be notified. An emergency release must be signed by parents in order to authorize staff to take appropriate steps on behalf of the child.

Lost Child

When a child is lost, the teacher will immediately contact the director and/or the school principal. They will institute a full building search for the lost child. If not successful within a few minutes, the parent and police will be contacted for help in finding the lost child.

Lunches

The hot lunch program is an optional service at an additional cost. Lunches are prepared by volunteers and usually offered Monday-Thursday.

Media/Technology

We have implemented the use of media/technology to take advantage of the vast amount of educational resources available to children. Media/technology time will be approved by the Director/Principal.

Nutrition

Snacks are provided mid-morning. We offer two healthy choices in order to accommodate taste preferences as much as possible.

Outside Play

The children play outside on the playground at the discretion of the preschool staff. In the event that the weather is hot (above 95°F) or cold (below 32°F), too rainy or too snowy, we will participate in activities indoors that will help develop large muscles. Children are always offered water after playing outside and may have a drink anytime during the school day. It is recommended that parents apply sunscreen to their children prior to school. The children are welcome to wear sunglasses and hats on the playground. If you wish a staff member to apply sunscreen to your child, please see the Director for details and a sunscreen permission form. If your child has had an illness, they must be well enough to play outside before returning to school. We are not staffed to provide both indoor and outdoor supervision.

Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent Teacher Conferences are scheduled twice a year. This is a special time where your child's teacher can give you their undivided attention and discuss your child and their development in detail. Sometimes there is a need for further discussion regarding your child and his/her needs. Parents are welcome to request a conference regarding your child and your child's progress at any time.

Pick Up Authorization

A grace period of 15 minutes (3:30-3:45 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 12:15-12:30 p.m. on Friday) is provided for you to pick up your child. Children that are not picked up at the end of the grace period will be escorted back to preschool/preK where late fees of \$1 per minute apply.

Parents must provide the school with a list of all adults who have permission to pick up their child(ren). Only authorized adults will be allowed to pick up children. In the attempt of an unauthorized adult pick up, the parents will be called. If staff are unable to reach the parents, the child will remain in the care of the center.

Readiness Skills

Here are some important skills children will need to have to ensure a successful school year.

- **Attention Span:** Students will be able to sit for a short 5-10 minute story.
- **Concentration:** Students will be able to focus on assigned activities for 10-20 minutes.
- **Emotional readiness:** Students will be able to say goodbye to mom and dad without too much anxiety.
- **Stamina:** Students will be able to wait for short periods of time.

- **Follow directions:** Students will be able to do what is asked without repeated reminders as well as follow 2-3 step directions.
- **Social Interaction:** Students will be able to take turns with others and share.
- **Behavior:** Students will have positive behavior the majority of every school day.

Staffing

Vista Ridge Academy employs a state certified director and a state certified teacher who work diligently to make your child's transition to Kindergarten as smooth as possible by providing a developmental and academic environment.

Student Tracking

Per state regulations, children must be signed in and out each day in the log book

Sunscreen

It is the parent's responsibility to apply sunscreen on days it is needed. In the rare instance this is not possible, sunscreen will be applied by staff if the student has provided their own sunscreen and written authorization has been obtained.

Supervision

Students are not to be in any unsupervised areas. Should a child not be where they are expected to be, they will be assumed lost and immediate action will be taken to locate the parents and police are contacted. The Director/Supervisor will double check that all students have gone home at the end of the day. In addition, the Director/Supervisor will conduct a final walk through of the premises before leaving for the day.

Toilet Training

We realize that some children will have special needs or may not be ready to be toilet trained; however, all children in our care are required to be toilet trained. We do not have the proper staffing nor the facility requirements to have students that are not yet trained.

Toys

Your child is welcome to bring a transition item to help him/her feel comfortable (blanket or stuffed animal). However, other toys from home are not allowed at the center for safety reasons. There may be scheduled show-and-tell when your child may bring a toy. Gum and candy should not be brought. The center will not be responsible for any breakage or loss of toys brought to the center. Please never allow your child to bring money to school.

Visitors

All visitors must register at the office before entering a classroom. Parents are welcome to visit their child's class during school hours with prior arrangements with administration at least one school day in advance. Siblings of students, no matter their age, who are not students at Vista Ridge Academy should be accompanied by a parent whenever present on school grounds.

This handbook may be updated at any time to comply with changes and/or additions to state licensing requirements. (Last updated: June 28, 2022)



VISTA RIDGE
ACADEMY

As a parent/guardian of a student attending Vista Ridge Academy, I have read the Early Childhood Education Handbook and agree to comply and support all policies and procedures.

Parents/Legal Guardian Signature

Date

Name(s) of Children in the Early Childhood Program

