




Hillside
EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER



FAMILY HANDBOOK

512.621.7690

1700 Woodland Avenue, Austin TX 78763

HILLSIDECC.ORG

Hillside Early Childhood Center is proud to serve children and families in Austin and the surrounding areas. We offer quality early childhood education with a true play-based and developmentally appropriate curriculum. Our campus and environments are intentionally planned for children ages 6 weeks to 4 years old, with highly qualified teachers to guide them through this critical stage of early development.

Hillside Early Childhood Center
1700 Woodland Ave
Austin, Texas 78741
512-621-7690

Dear Families,

Welcome Hillside Early Childhood Center! Hillside is a very special community school that is dedicated to the education of young children and creating a culture that inspires a boundless love for learning, for one another and for the world.

This handbook outlines the policies of the school and is designed to help families navigate both what you can expect from the school, as well as what is expected from the family.

We look forward partnering with you as your child grows, develops and travels through the milestones of early childhood and thank you for trusting us to in share this beautiful stage of development with your family.

With Love,

Suzanne Garza
Head of School



Hillside

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to gather wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to long for the long and vast sea.

-Antone de Saint-Exupéry

Purpose/History

Hillside Early Childhood Center nurtures and educates children and their families. Together, we love to learn and learn to love so that we transform our neighborhood and community for the good of all.

2012

- Vestry commits to tithe 10% of the Capital Campaign to outreach
- Task Force discerns Kindergarten Readiness as an unmet need in Austin
- Episcopal Diocese of Texas gifts the Hill Campus to Good Shepherd Episcopal Church

2013

- Redevelopment begins at the Hill Campus, 1700 Woodland Ave
- Good Shepherd Episcopal School moves to the Hill for the 2014-2015 School Year
- Good Shepherd Episcopal Church Congregation confirms commitment to a school focused on school readiness from birth

2015

- Task Force explores partnerships with existing centers
- Task Force conducts formative evaluation to identify needs and demographics
- Stakeholders articulate Hillside Vision, Mission and Purpose

2016

- Task Force develops strategic Plan and detailed 3 Year Report
- The Hill worshipping Community launches

2017

- Vestry calls the Founding Board of Trustees for Hillside Early Childhood Center
- Board of Trustees starts the Head of School Search
- Suzanne Garza is named the Head of School for Hillside Early Childhood Center
- Preparations begin for the opening of the school and first teachers are hired

2018

- May 1, 2018 Hillside ECC opens with our first 7 families

Hillside Early Childhood Center

Mission

Hillside Early Childhood Center delivers a quality, full-day, year-round developmental program, that fosters healthy bodies, joyful hearts, curious minds, and engaged families, in an inclusive and innovative Episcopal Community.

Vision

Hillside Early Childhood Center envisions becoming a model for accessible and sustainable early childhood centers by creating a quality program that embodies the following values and principles.

Philosophy

Hillside ECC believes that a young child learns best with a daily balance of indoor and outdoor play. In addition, we contend that all forms of play are critical to the proper social and emotional development and must precede academic development.

Hillside ECC believes that every child learns best in an environment that honors the child's developmental age, that the child has the right to grow at his or her own rate, and that the child's developmental age may not equal his or her chronological age. Academic learning will develop through play and with the integration of literacy, math, and science concepts within classroom materials and planned learning opportunities.

Hillside ECC believes that careful observation and assessment of children and close communication with parents will allow for a cohesiveness between home and school. The home/school connection will allow for early interventions and individualized and developmentally appropriate plans for all children.

Values and Principles

Loves Learning

Hillside ECC fosters creativity, curiosity, and a joyful love of learning by providing a safe, child-centered, experiential learning environment.

Empowers Children

Hillside ECC fosters children's confidence and capabilities by encouraging children to explore, affirming each child's importance and uniqueness, and helping children realize that they each have God-given gifts to love and share.

Nurtures Community

Hillside ECC fosters a vibrant connected community by welcoming everyone, listening to the needs of families, encouraging full family participation, and building relationships.

Builds Stability

Hillside ECC fosters family and community stability by providing a full-day, year-round developmental program grounded in Episcopal faith, led by engaged and committed staff and broadly supported by Episcopal, corporate, nonprofit, and public entities.

Seeks Improvement

Hillside ECC fosters a culture of critical self-reflection by inviting innovation and requiring clear and transparent systems of accountability.

Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of Hillside Early Childhood Center not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or disability in its services or activities.

Episcopal Identity/Chapel

Episcopal schools have been established as ecumenical and diverse ministries of educational and human formation for children of all faiths and backgrounds. We practice intentional pluralism and serve students from many Christian denominations, non-Christian traditions, or no formal faith backgrounds. Valuing diversity in their student bodies, Episcopal schools provide financial aid to those living with economic challenges. Academically, Episcopal schools plan for an interdependent balance of faith and reason and encourage inquiry, critical thinking, and diverse points of view with a mutually respectful exchange of ideas, striving for academic excellence and provide an environment based on current best educational practices.

Once a month, we gather as a community of teachers, families, and students to celebrate, honor, and worship God as the center of life and recommit to our God-given calling to love ourselves and one another within and beyond the walls of our school.

Texas Department of Health and Human Services – Childcare Licensing

Hillside is licensed by the Texas Department of Health and Human Services

In compliance with the Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers, as established by the Texas Department of Health and Human Services, it is the policy of the program to:

- Promote the health, safety, and welfare of children
- Promote safe and comfortable physical facilities for young children
- Insure adequate supervision of children by qualified personnel
- Provide adequate and proper nutrition
- Provide an overall environment conducive to the child's individual mental and physical development and sense of well-being

A copy of the Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers is available in the Head of School's office for families to review. A copy of the center's most recent child-care inspection report is posted in the main portable in the office of the Head of School. You may also access, minimum standards, and licensing inspection reports online at The Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care licensing website anytime.

Contacting HHS:

512-369-7139

1340 Airport Commerce

Bldg 5, Ste 525

Austin, Texas 78741

PRS Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400 www.hhs.state.tx.us

Workforce Childcare Solutions

Hillside Early Childhood Center is a Workforce Childcare Solutions vendor and is currently pursuing Texas Rising Star Status.

Additional Community Resources

Hillside is proud to partner with community resources in the greater Austin area. If your family needs support, please let the Head of School know and we will gladly connect you with the resources you need.

Gang Free Zone

A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where prohibited gang related activity is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. A gang-free zone has been designated within 1000 feet of Hillside Early Childhood Center.

Hillside Staff

Head of School – Suzanne Garza

sgarza@hillsideecc.org

512-612-7691

Assistant Head of School – Sarah Gobble

sgobble@hillsideecc.org

512-621-7692

A current staff list including all Hillside teachers /Staff is posted on the Family Information Board in the Main Portable building and is updated regularly.

Policies/Procedures

Admissions

Hillside is full-day year-round child development center and we operate on a rolling admission schedule. Our classroom sizes vary according to the age range enrolled at any given time and follows specific child to caregiver ratios.

A deposit of the first month's tuition will be collected for future start dates and this will be applied to the child's tuition on the month that they are fully enrolled and in attendance. If the child does not fully enroll at Hillside, this deposit will be forfeited and will not be refunded. Once a child's start date is determined, a parent orientation with the classroom teacher will be arranged. At this time, parents will be oriented to the classroom organization, specific guidelines/procedures for the classroom, as well as provide parents the opportunity to bring supplies prior to the first day of the child's attendance.

Enrollment documents can be either filled out electronically or in writing and must be returned to Head of School prior to the child's start date.

The following documents are to be completed and submitted prior to admission:

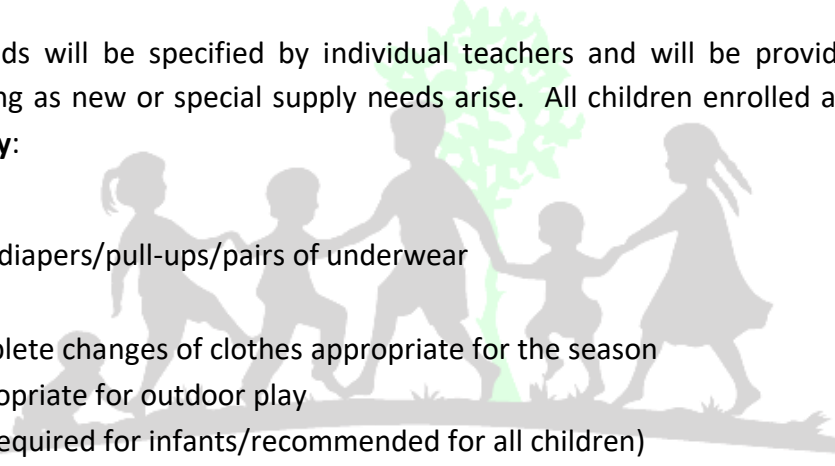
- Admission Form (Updated annually or when significant changes occur. For example, address, phone numbers or updates to emergency contact /pick-up information)
- Physician's Statement (Must be renewed once per year)
- Up-to-date Immunization Record
*Please note that current copies of immunization records must be kept up to date and provided to the school as immunizations are updated. All children are required to have current immunizations at all times.
- Infant/Toddler/Preschool Information Form
 - Infants (under 18 months) are required to update this form every 30 days
 - Toddler/Preschool (18 months and up) are required to update annually
- A Signed copy of Discipline and Guidance Policy (See Appendix for sample)
- Media Release Form – Provided (See Appendix for Sample)
- Parent Liability Form Outside of school childcare arrangements with HECC Staff (See Appendix for Sample)

Supplies

Diapering and toileting supplies

For all children enrolled at Hillside the necessary diapering and toileting supplies are critical and need to be replaced on a regular basis. Teachers will do their best to notify families when children are running low on needed supplies, however, it is ultimately the responsibility of the family to keep these items stocked, labeled, and ready to go each day. If your child is out of the needed supplies upon drop-off in the morning, we ask that you promptly bring the necessary supplies **within one hour of drop off**. After the 1-hour timeframe, we will call for an authorized person on the admission form to pick the child up from school, and the child may not return until all supplies have been provided.

Classroom supply needs will be specified by individual teachers and will be provided to families prior to enrollment and ongoing as new or special supply needs arise. All children enrolled are required to have the following supplies **daily**:

- 
- At least six diapers/pull-ups/pairs of underwear
 - Wipes
 - Three complete changes of clothes appropriate for the season
 - Shoes appropriate for outdoor play
 - Sun hats (Required for infants/recommended for all children)

Food from Home/Nutrition

Nutrition is a critical component of our mission to foster healthy bodies and it is an expectation that families partner with us to support their child's development in this way. Families are required to pack a morning snack, a lunch, and an afternoon snack from home, contained within a lunchbox or thermos with an ice pack. We ask that each container is labeled with both the child's name and the meal or snack during which you intend it to be served.

We ask that families consider the sugar and sodium content of the food they provide for their child and strive to provide options for their children that foster healthy eating habits and promote and support physical and cognitive growth. This includes any selection or combination of whole fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins. We provide filtered, reverse osmosis water for the children throughout the day and ask that families provide only breastmilk, formula, or any other unsweetened milks for your child to drink.

We will not offer other drinks, such as fruit juices or other sweetened drinks without documentation from a medical professional. Please refrain from packing candy, cookies, or other sugary items for your child. These items will be saved in the child's lunch box for an after-school treat once they are picked up in the afternoon.

As a part of the curriculum at Hillside, we are teaching the children about recycling and composting in the classroom and encourage families to pack lunches in reusable containers and limit items that are not recyclable or compostable.

Food packed from home must be ready-to-eat and contained within a lunchbox with an ice pack. If your child prefers warm food, please note that we do not heat food in a microwave and recommend using a thermos for warm food. Liquids and food hotter than 110 degrees F are kept out of reach.

When packing food for your child, please avoid packing foods that are considered choking hazards and cut larger pieces of food into small pieces. Common examples of foods that are choking hazards include popcorn, grapes or cherry tomatoes that are not cut into quarters, cheese sticks, raw vegetables, and hot dogs or sausage.

Allergies

Any food allergies or dietary restrictions should be indicated on your child's admission AND information forms upon enrollment and all forms MUST be updated as any new allergies become identified. It is important that you provide documentation from your child's physician, dietician or specialist in order to help facilitate procedures and precautions in order to develop a plan of action. This written allergy plan must be provided to the school AND the classroom and will be posted in the classroom and kitchen with instructions for the administration of medication, in the event of an allergic reaction.

If there are severe known allergies in your child's classroom, we will ask that you refrain from packing certain items in your child's lunch and we will also exclude these types of foods in our snack rotation.

Examples of Nutritious Snacks and Lunches Enjoyed at School

- Quinoa
- Rice and beans
- Hummus with pita or tortillas
- Sandwiches cut into manageable pieces
- Sunbutter (sunflower seed butter) as an alternative to nut butters)
- Cheerios and applesauce
- Pasta with pesto
- Avocado
- Yogurt with fruit
- Leftovers of healthy meals enjoyed at home

Infants

- Infants are required to have adequate breastmilk/formula for the hours they are in care. Bottles should be prepared in advance or be in pre-portioned containers that can easily be prepared at school. Infant bottles must have caps and must be labeled. Breastmilk bottles must be labeled as breastmilk and have the date the milk was expressed.
- Pre-made bottles should be placed in the refrigerator and will be warmed using warm water in crock pot. Bottles are never warmed in a microwave.
- Until infants are able to eat the snacks provided at school, families are responsible for bringing purees, infant cereals, etc.
- Infant lunches are provided by families and should be cut to pieces no larger than ¼ inch, and be soft enough to prevent choking, but also promote self-feeding
- Water bottle/Sippy cup (6 months and up)

Toddlers/Primary

Please note that all items from home MUST be labeled DAILY

- Insulated water bottle with covered mouthpiece, preferably stainless steel or metal, which harbor less bacteria and stay cooler than plastic bottles
- Lunch/AM Snack/PM Snack in in an insulated lunch box w/ice pack, as we are unable to refrigerate food brought from home.

Breastfeeding

We willingly accommodate breastfeeding at Hillside. Families choosing to breastfeed on site will be provided with a secure, private space to breastfeed. If you have any questions about this policy or want to discuss additional accommodations or are seeking additional breastfeeding resources, please speak with our Head of School.

*Due to COVID-19, we will consider this policy on a case-by-case basis.

Communication

Communication **to** families and **from** families is imperative to providing the best care for your children and something that we take very seriously at Hillside. We have a variety of tools in place to get information to families and appreciate families providing the school with any and all information that will help us to provide the best care possible.

Brightwheel

Daily Sheets

Classroom Calendars

White Boards

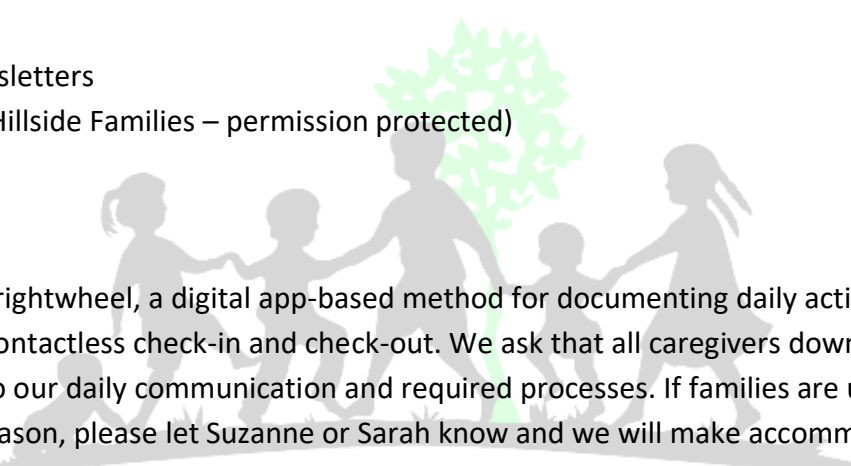
Parent Boards

Remind.com

Constant Contact Newsletters

Instagram (Private to Hillside Families – permission protected)

Brightwheel



Hillside has adopted Brightwheel, a digital app-based method for documenting daily activities, school-home communication, and contactless check-in and check-out. We ask that all caregivers download this app, as it is a critical component to our daily communication and required processes. If families are unable to download Brightwheel for any reason, please let Suzanne or Sarah know and we will make accommodations for your family. Upon downloading Brightwheel, please enter important health information, allergies, a photo, and people you authorize to pick your child up from school and serve as emergency contacts. This also allows you to update contact information without staff assistance. Each day, you will check your child in using the app and enter information about your child's morning thus far. Teachers will then continue to update Brightwheel with information from the day. The messaging feature on Brightwheel is used as a method of direct communication between families and teachers/administration and we ask that it is used with discretion, as it may not be possible for teachers to respond immediately. If an urgent need arises, we will call via phone.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Attendance Policy

We understand that parents like to seize every moment they get to spend quality family time with their children. Because of this, we do not have a strict attendance policy. However, in order for children to benefit fully from our curriculum, they should regularly attend. Our teachers plan for all areas of your children's development: physical, intellectual, language, social, and emotional. If your children miss too many days, they miss out on experiences that enhance their developing skills. We encourage parents to bring their children early enough in the day so that they can fully engage in the program and not disrupt the classroom flow.

Arrival and Dismissal

***See addendum for current policies during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Arrival

Drop-off begins at 7:30 am and each classroom has specific procedures to ensure a smooth transition from home to school that will be shared during your parent orientation. All classrooms adhere the following guidelines:

- Remove your shoes and your child's shoes
- Wash your hands and your child's hands
- Help your child put away their belongings
- Label any items that are missing labels or have illegible labels
- Sign your child in on the classroom sign in/out sheet
- Fill out your child's Daily Sheet
- Discuss any new or pertinent information with teachers
 - Inform teachers about changes to pick-up schedule
 - Inform teachers about any signs of illness, rashes, cuts, scrapes or any other concerns (This conversation is critical for teachers to evaluate the child's overall health and is part of our mandatory, daily health check)

Please have children at school no later than 9:00 am, in order to allow time for morning snack, diaper changes, etc. Routine is very important for young children and establishing a consistent drop-off procedure helps both the children and the teachers begin the day.

Separation can be difficult for many children and it is important to limit the time that you stay in the classroom. A lengthy goodbye can be confusing for your child - and it is best to say your goodbyes and exit the classroom quickly. This is truly what is best to help your child establish bonds with their caregivers and develop a healthy routine. Reminding your child that you will be back is always a comfort to a child experiencing separation anxiety.

Dismissal

- Dismissal looks different depending on your child's classroom placement and specific classroom procedures will be outlined in your parent orientation. All HECC classrooms adhere to the following guidelines:
- In an effort to adhere to staff scheduling, we ask that pick-ups are completed by 5:30pm. This allows teachers to properly prepare the classroom for the next morning and complete other closing duties without accruing overtime.
- If you encounter any unexpected delays prior to pick-up, please contact the school at 512-621-7690 as soon as possible.
- At pick-up - sign your child out for the day with your name and the time
- Gather your child's belongings, *especially* lunch containers, bottles, and possible soiled clothing

- Take and review the Daily Sheet or the posted Daily Report
 - **Make sure to check for communication from teachers on these reports regarding supply/extra clothing needs*
- Check in with your child’s teacher or teacher representative for other information
- Inform the school if anyone new will be picking your child up from school
 - Anyone that is new to picking your child up from school must have a valid photo identification
 - We will verify that they are on the pick-up list and make a copy of their identification for your child’s file
 - If we are not informed in advance – we will contact enrolling family members to verify the change in pick-up and confirm the person’s identity. **Please note that without advance notice, this process could take time and may prolong the pick-up greatly.*
 - Take and review the Daily Sheet or the posted Daily Report
 - **Make sure to check for communication from teachers on these reports regarding supply/extra clothing needs*

Media Release

At Hillside, we utilize photos as an observation tool to document and assess the children/classrooms as well as a to keep families informed about the wonderful things that are happening throughout the school day. The photos taken at Hillside are stored in a password protected Google Photos account and are posted to our private Instagram account. The media release form allows families different options for the sharing of these photos. The Hillside staff also signs a release form that outlines their ethical responsibility for utilizing this type of media documentation.

Illness

***See addendum for current policies during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Illness in early childhood centers is inevitable, but as children build their young immune systems – we must have policies in place to reduce the spread of illness in our classrooms and to recognize symptoms and behaviors that could lead to the spread of communicable illnesses.

We may recommend that your child be seen by a medical professional when certain symptoms present during the school day and ask for confirmation that no contagious illness is present before returning to school.

If your child is experiencing symptoms that prevent them from being able to participate fully in the school day (for example extreme tiredness, or overall malaise) we will send them home until they are able to return to full participation.

Fever

- Fever is an indication that further observation is necessary. A true fever is a consistent temperature of 100.4 or higher. If your child has a temperature of 100.4 or higher, they will be sent home for further evaluation and observation.
- Children that have been sent home with a fever may not return to school until their temperature returns to normal without the use of fever reducing medications (Tylenol or Motrin) for at least 24 hours.
- If children are running a fever of 100.4 or higher at home, they may not return to school until they have not had a temperature of 100.4 or higher for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.
- When your child goes to the doctor, documentation from the medical professional outlining when the child may return to school must be provided prior to the child returning to school.

Stomach Illness

- Diarrhea/Vomiting are an indication of a stomach virus that is potentially very contagious to both children and staff. If your child has diarrhea or vomiting more than 3 times during the school day, we will send them home as a precaution.
- Children may return to school after the presence of symptoms have not occurred within 24 hours without the use of any medications or with a release/return date from a medical professional.
- If your child is experiencing these symptoms at home, please follow the same guidelines and keep them home until they are symptom free for 24 hours.

Other Illnesses

There are numerous other illnesses that arise in early childhood and we will follow the Center for Disease Control protocol for determining the exclusion period for children with each specific illness.

When you take your child to the doctor, due to any type of illness, please make sure to ask for written documentation regarding their return to school, the time frame for their return and or the contagious period for their specific illness.

Please note that as potential illness occurs with your child(ren), we may call you to discuss symptoms and suggest strategies for you to try at home or suggest a visit to a medical professional. Our goal is to protect your child as well as the other children entrusted to our care.

We will follow guidelines set by the center for disease control regarding reporting contagious illnesses to other families at the school. This protocol is critical in reducing the spread of illness.

Head Lice

Head lice is common in young children and can be a frustrating situation for families and uncomfortable for the child. If we suspect a child to have head lice, we will contact the family, and provide resources for treating the child and the home. Families will be asked to pick up their child and treat them before returning to school. Head checks will be conducted at school and a re-treatment is recommended 2 weeks after the initial treatment. We strive to prevent the spread of head lice and take precautions in the classroom as well. All questions or concerns related to head lice should be directed to the Head of School or Assistant Head of School. Families will be notified when cases of lice are present in the classroom.

Medication

We do not administer any medication other than emergency medications for severe allergic reactions, such as an EPI-Pen. A written document signed by a medical professional is required, and families are required to provide a specific plan and all staff will be trained to administer the plan.

Diaper rash ointments, sunscreen, insect repellent and other, over the counter topical ointments can be used if families have given permission on admission form.

Injury

If your child is injured at school, a teacher will treat the injury and upload an incident report to Brightwheel if the injury is minor. In the case of a more severe injury, the appropriate first aid measure will be taken immediately to care for the child and parents or an emergency contacts will be notified through a phone call. If necessary, parents will be asked to pick up the child for medical treatment. Emergencies will result in a call to 911. It is important that all telephone numbers and emergency contact information are continually updated in your child's Brightwheel profile.

Clothing

Children should be dressed comfortably and in clothing appropriate for the season. We recommend clothing that is for school, with the understanding that the children will be experiencing messy play throughout the day. It is important that children have several changes of clothes at school, but at least three complete outfits at all times.

Please bring an over-sized t-shirt for your child that can easily fit over their existing clothes. This is a perfect "smock" that can be used for messy art and sensory experiences. This shirt can be left at school and will be washed for continual use.

Sturdy, closed toed shoes, are recommended for children and are necessary for safe outdoor play. Children are encouraged not to wear boots, open-toed shoes or flip-flops to school. These types of shoes restrict the child's ability to play actively on the playground and increase the risk of injury.

Discipline & Guidance

Discipline must be:

- 1) Individualized and consistent for each child;
- 2) Appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and
- 3) Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least the following:

- 1) Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
- 2) Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
- 3) Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
- 4) Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- 1) Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
- 2) Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
- 3) Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
- 4) Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
- 5) Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
- 6) Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
- 7) Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
- 8) Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed or open; and
- 9) Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

Challenging Behaviors

Young children are learning how to interact with the world and every stage of early childhood development comes with both joy and challenges. At Hillside we work with families to understand these challenges and to help children develop both language skills and social emotional awareness in order to navigate a big world filled with many big feelings.

Some of the most common challenging behaviors include hair pulling, hitting, scratching, kicking, shouting, and biting. The one thing in common with all of these behaviors is that they are all age appropriate and that they stem from children trying to get their needs met with few words.

One of the most challenging and misunderstood of these behaviors is biting.

Biting Information:

Children under three are just beginning to develop language and social-emotional skills. Biting at this age, while mistaken, is almost never premeditated or aggressive, but due to a temporary lack of the skills and physical abilities necessary to control their emotions and thoughts. It is not unusual for teachers and families alike to feel upset or to have big emotions when a child is bitten. By working together and communicating regularly, we can help the children get what they need and stay safe.

At the Hillside we aim to teach children what **TO** do *instead* of biting, and to track patterns and trends to prevent biting behaviors. As one expert phrased it, biting is “unfortunately, to be expected”, and while not every child will bite, each year, a few will. NAEYC estimates that 1 in 10 Toddlers/Twos will engage in biting behavior.

At the Hillside, we have highly trained staff who use advanced strategies and tools to prevent bites and help children move quickly through biting phases. We take data on when, where, and why bites occur, and then we make purposeful changes to the classroom environment and materials, daily schedule, and groupings of children to avoid identified triggers. The Head of School or other teachers may observe the class briefly to notice any trends and make suggestions to support the staff.

We document every bite we witness on the incident report form, and make sure to tell both sets of families about what happened the same day.

If a child becomes temporarily “stuck” in a biting phase, we may bring in outside help and assistance from a play-therapist or other early childhood expert who works with the staff and families to come up with an appropriate plan. Like any behavior, it takes time to see changes, and our goal is to help the student learn the skills they need. At Hillside, we believe it takes collaboration and support from both the school and the family an require full participation from families as we work together to prevent recurring and consistent challenging behaviors. If we feel that the family is not complying and participating with the protocol and plans set in place for the child, we reserve the right to withdraw enrollment.

Biting Policy

Some reasons children bite and possible solutions a staff member may use:

- Teething Relief – teething discomfort can be soothed by providing cold teething toys, washcloths, and chew beads.

- Oral Exploration – we provide alternatives by giving children clean, safe items to chew and bite.
- Frustration – Help children use words, sign language, gestures, and pictures to express wants and needs. Teach children to express anger through stamping feet or ‘crashing’ on pillows in a calming area.
- Not Enough Space – Avoid crowding. Help protect children’s space. Play on floor interactively and stay close to children who easily feel crowded.

Emergency Protocol

School Closures

We follow the Austin Independent School District’s school closures and delayed start days. In the event of a school closure we will also utilize remind.com to get information to families regarding said closures.

Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement weather during the school day, we will utilize remind.com, email, and/or phone calls depending on the event and access to the internet. Families will be notified if children need to be picked up due to inclement weather, and this will include any re-location information or additional changes to regular daily procedures.

Emergency Preparedness/Fire and Severe Weather Drills

A copy of The Hillside Emergency Preparedness Plan is located in each classroom and includes evacuation routes and protocol for different types of emergency situations. Evacuation Routes are posted in each classroom near the exit doors and include distinct routes for different emergency situations.

Fire drills are conducted monthly and Severe Weather and Lock down drills are conducted 4 times per year. A record of all drills is posted in the hallway of the Main Building. This record includes routine testing of smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.

All emergency Drills include all classrooms and HECC staff are trained in protocol for evacuating the buildings/playground. Having the opportunity to practice these procedures prepares both the teachers and the children in the event of an actual emergency situation.

CPR/First Aid Certification & Location of AED

At least one teacher per classroom is certified in infant/child CPR and First Aid with the goal that all staff members become certified as employees of Hillside Early Childhood Center. Certifications are valid for two years, and periodic trainings are held throughout the school year as new staff are on-boarded. The AED (Automated External Defibrillator) is located in the Parish Hall in the church building and is equipped with pediatric pads/electrodes designed for children 8 and under.

Child Abuse & Neglect & Safeguarding God's Children

Hillside Early Childhood Center requires annual training of all employees in methods for increasing awareness, recognizing warning signs, and strategies for coordination in cases of suspected child neglect and abuse. Texas law requires school staff to report immediately any suspected neglect, sexual, physical or emotional abuse. A confidential report will be made directly to the Texas Department of Health and Human Services without hesitation within twenty-four (24) hours. No notice will be given to the family of the child before the call is made to HHS.

All employees, volunteers, interns, and substitute teachers must be trained in Safeguarding God's Children. This training is required by the Episcopal Diocese and covers topics, and policies related to sexual abuse and reporting requirements.

Volunteers/Interns & Substitute Teachers

In addition to our full-time and part-time staff, Hillside Early Childhood Center may have volunteers or interns working with your children. All volunteers/interns will be screened with a comprehensive background check and fingerprinting as outlined in the Minimum Standard for Childcare Centers.

Volunteers and Interns are never counted in the child to teacher ratio. In addition, volunteers and interns will be fully trained in Safeguarding God's Children before working in the classrooms.

Substitute teachers are counted in the child to teacher ratio and have the same background check/fingerprinting requirements as a classroom teacher as well as meet the same training requirements.



Hillside

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Safe Sleep Policy

Hillside ECC has adopted the following safe sleep policy directly from the Texas Department of Health and Human Services. Infant cribs are labeled with information regarding each infant's ability to roll over, their age in months, what whether they use a sleep sack or sleep suit.

All staff, substitute staff, and volunteers at will follow these safe sleep recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) for infants to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome/Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS/SUIDS):

- Always put infants to sleep on their backs unless you provide Form 3019, Infant Sleep Exception/Health Care Professional Recommendation, signed by the infant's health care professional [§746.2427 and §747.2327].
- Place infants on a firm mattress, with a tight-fitting sheet, in a crib that meets the CPSC federal requirements for full-size cribs and for non-full-size cribs [§746.2409 and §747.2309].
- For infants who are younger than 12 months of age, cribs should be bare except for a tight-fitting sheet and a mattress cover or protector. Items that should not be placed in a crib include: soft or loose bedding, such as blankets, quilts, or comforters; pillows; stuffed toys/animals; soft objects; bumper pads; liners; or sleep positioning devices [§746.2415 and §747.2315]. Also, infants must not have their heads, faces, or cribs covered at any time by items such as blankets, linens, or clothing [§746.2429 and §747.2329].
- Do not use sleep positioning devices, such as wedges or infant positioners. The AAP has found no evidence that these devices are safe. Their use may increase the risk of suffocation [§746.2415 and §747.2315].
- Ensure that sleeping areas are ventilated and at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult [§746.3407(10) and §747.3203(10)].
- If an infant needs extra warmth, use sleep clothing (insert type of sleep clothing that will be used, such as sleepers or footed pajamas) as an alternative to blankets [§746.2415 and §747.2315].
- Place only one infant in a crib to sleep [§746.2405 and §747.2305].
- Infants may use a pacifier during sleep. But the pacifier must not be attached to a stuffed animal or the infant's clothing by a string, cord, or other attaching mechanism that might be a suffocation or strangulation risk [§746.2415 and §747.2315].
- If the infant falls asleep in a restrictive device other than a crib (such as a bouncy chair or swing, or arrives to care asleep in a car seat), move the infant to a crib immediately, unless you provide Form 3019, Infant Sleep Exception/Health Care Professional Recommendation, signed by the infant's health-care professional [§746.2426 and §747.2326].
- Our child care program is smoke-free. Smoking is not allowed in Texas child care operations (this includes e-cigarettes and any type of vaporizers) [§746.3703(d) and §747.3503(d)].

- Actively observe sleeping infants by sight and sound [§746.2403 and §747.2303].
- If an infant is able to roll back and forth from front to back, place the infant on the infant's back for sleep and allow the infant to assume a preferred sleep position [§746.2427 and §747.2327].
- Awake infants will have supervised “tummy time” several times daily. This will help them strengthen their muscles and develop normally [§746.2427 and §747.2327].
- Do not swaddle an infant for sleep or rest unless you provide Form 3019, Infant Sleep Exception/Health Care Professional Recommendation, signed by the infant’s health care professional [§746.2428 and §747.2328].



Hillside

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Tuition/Tuition Assistance

Tuition

Infants 0-18 months	Toddlers 18-24 Months	Primary 2-4 years
\$1400 per month	\$1300 per month	\$1100 per month

Paying Monthly Tuition

Smart Tuition

Smart Tuition is an online tuition management system that is structured similarly to other familiar bill-pay systems. Families create a profile in the system and have the option to have tuition drafted automatically each month, or to login and pay tuition each month.

Families can choose either the 1st or the 15th as their due date. Smart Tuition manages these payments and will notify families when payments are late and will also collect any late fees associated with their account.

If families are having difficulty paying their tuition due to hardship or other circumstance, please notify Head of School or Assistant Head of School as soon as possible.

Late payments are a fee of \$40, charged through Smart Tuition.

Refunds are processed on a case-by-case basis. Holding fees and deposits are non-refundable. If a family withdraws from Hillside without 30 days prior notice, Hillside will not be able to refund the current month's tuition if already paid.

There are no refunds for absences or vacations. No spots will be held for a non-paid absence from the school (such as during the summer months). Spots will not be guaranteed for families who remove their children temporarily from the program (e.g., during the summer) unless tuition is paid in full for that period.

Full tuition is due for months (December and March) when we close for winter and spring breaks.

Tuition Assistance

SMART Aid

Smart Aid is our online scholarship application and is available to families that may need tuition assistance. This system manages financial information in order to determine financial need.

Once the application is complete, the Scholarship Committee will review the application and determine the family's eligibility.

The number of scholarships set aside annually and amount of scholarships available are determined by the Scholarship Committee and families will be notified if there are available monies prior to having them complete an application.

Fundraising/Stewardship

We have periodic opportunities for fundraising and or stewardship events that raise funds to foster growth and outreach at Hillside. We may ask for Hillside families to support these efforts by attending events that to promote our school within the community.

Hillside Sunday

Hillside Sunday is an annual event that happens every October and is both an Open House and Fall Festival. Hillside Sunday provides an opportunity to showcase what is happening at Hillside during a school wide open house followed by a fun filled fall festival. This event brings together the communities of The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, Good Shepherd Episcopal School, The Hill Episcopal Church, Hillside Early Childhood Center, and our surrounding neighborhood. Hillside Sunday is a beautiful celebration of the supportive community that shares in our growth and helps us prepare for our future.



Hillside

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Family Involvement

Committee for Family Engagement

The Committee for Family Engagement or as we lovingly refer to it, The CFE, is the parent organization at Hillside ECC. This organization is led by parents and is yet another amazing way we are establishing community at Hillside. The CFE gives parents a voice at Hillside and a way to stay informed and be a part of the ever-evolving culture that *is* Hillside. Some of the functions of the CFE are as follows:

- Organizing and volunteering at the Hillside open house and fall festival, Hillside Sunday
- Seeking community donations for Hillside Sunday
- Helping to fundraise for the Hillside scholarship program
- Planning/Organizing out of school family outings
- Sponsoring Chapel family fellowship breakfasts
- Creating a teacher appreciation holiday bonus fund
- Organizing teacher appreciation luncheons

There is no membership involved with the CFE and family members are welcome to attend meetings as they are able. Minutes from meetings will be emailed to all families.

Volunteer Opportunities

Families will be informed of volunteer opportunities as they arise. If you have specific talents that may benefit the school, please let us know.



Hillside

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

General Classroom Information

Supply Needs/Donations

Each classroom has specific expectations and supply needs that are unique to each age group and their ever-changing developmental growth. Classroom teachers will conduct a family orientation prior to each child's enrollment and provide families with supply/classroom needs, as well as, on-going requests for donated items needed for specific lessons/units.

We currently do not charge a supply fee but will periodically ask for donations to the school for items that consumed regularly and consistently. The following is a list of items that are regularly needed:

- Sunscreen and insect repellent
- Boxes of Tissues
- Hand Sanitizer
- Bubbles
- Board Books

Classroom Communication

Communication to parents on a regular basis is a priority at Hillside. Classroom teachers post photos of activities to the family Instagram account, send periodic newsletters, and provide information verbally as well as on the daily sheets.

Lesson plans are created for all age groups and are posted in the classrooms. This is a wonderful way to stay informed about the activities planned in your child's classroom.

Every classroom has a dry erase calendar that allows families to let teachers know about scheduled time out of school, doctor's appointments, etc. Teachers also write in special activities, chapel reminders, and birthdays.

Check for other updates and reminders on white boards, as well as through the remind.com app.

Developmental Assessments & Parent Teacher Conferences

Observations and developmental assessments are ongoing at Hillside and we utilize the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment Tool to document this information. This tool is critical to monitoring all developmental domains, planning activities and reporting information related to your child's development back to families.

In conjunction with this assessment tool, we also utilize both the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 (ASQ-3) and the Ages and Stages-SE (ASQ-SE) to collect developmental and social/emotional information from families. These questionnaires are filled out electronically, approximately every 2 months by families and are reviewed by both the teachers and the administrative staff. This information coupled with information in the teacher assessment is utilized to prepare and conduct

Parent/Teacher Conferences. Formal conferences take place 3 times per year, and informal conferences are ongoing. Families may also request a conference at any time.

Enrichment

Hillside currently offers a Music Enrichment class for all age groups once per week. There is no extra charge for this class, and children are exposed to a developmentally appropriate music and movement curriculum that includes the introduction of simple songs, instruments, and rhythm exercises. Utilizing music to enhance children's cognitive, social, and motor development is another way that we strive to foster learning through play.

Physical Activity

Across all age groups, teachers scaffold daily gross-motor opportunities, practicing developmental concepts like balance, hand-eye coordination, and strengthening large muscle groups. Once mobile, all children are provided with daily opportunities for physical activity outdoors. If weather limits opportunities for outdoor physical activity, children will be provided with ample space for indoor physical activity.

Screen Time

We believe that children learn best through organic, hands-on, play experiences and, therefore, we do not provide any screen time as part of our curriculum.

A silhouette illustration of five children of various ages playing together on a grassy field. One child is sitting on the ground, while others are standing and holding hands. A large, stylized tree is in the background.

Hillside

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Grievance and Confidentiality

Grievance Process

When a parent has a concern about any aspect of their child's school experiences, open and honest communication with the Lead Teacher is the key to resolving all issues. Our teachers and the Head of School are in constant communication in order to respond to all needs of the students and families. If an issue is not able to be resolved with the Lead Teacher, the Head of School will be consulted.

Grievance Against Head of School or School Policy

If a parent has a grievance against the Head of School or against a school policy, please discuss the concern directly with the Head of School. If the matter remains unresolved after the Head has been informed, the parent may submit the grievance in writing to the President of the Board of Trustees and request a hearing with the Board President

Confidentiality in All School Matters

Hillside Early Childhood Center staff members are instructed to maintain confidentiality in all matters pertaining to students, their families and/or other staff members. Parents are urged to honor this policy about matters relating to other children, their families, and/or any staff members during daily exchanges and/or any formal Parent-Teacher Conferences.

Acknowledgment

An acknowledgment of the receipt of these policies will be on your child's admission form. An electronic copy of these policies is provided to all Hillside families and staff. Updates to this manual may be in the form of emails/memos and updated manuals will be distributed regularly.

Please bring any and all questions or concerns to the Head of School or Assistant Head of School as soon as possible.

*On a summer morning
I sat down
on a hillside
to think about God –*

a worthy pastime.

*Near me, I saw
a single cricket;*

it was moving the grains of the hillside

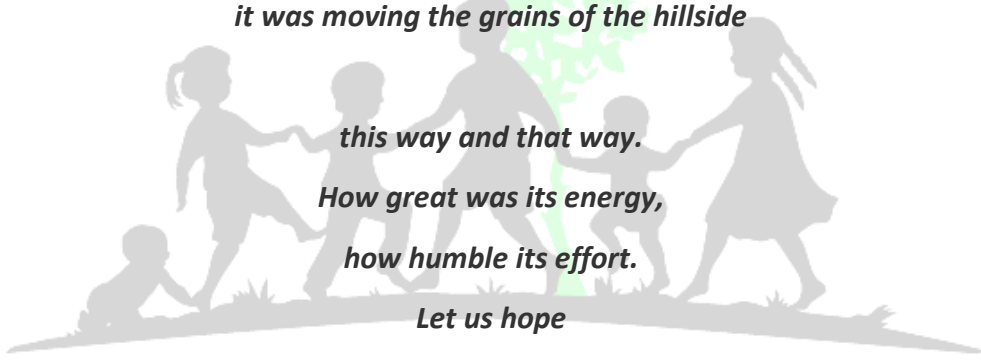
this way and that way.

*How great was its energy,
how humble its effort.*

Let us hope

*it will always be like this,
each of us going on
in our inexplicable ways
building the universe.*

-Mary Oliver



Hillside

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