



LOWER ACADEMY PARENT HANDBOOK

2022-2023



School Administration

Mrs. Vanessa Truesdale, Executive Director of Education and Administration

Ms. Sisi Barbin, Lower Academy Director

Beliefs

- Instruction is holistic and differentiated to meet the varying learning styles and abilities of children.
- All children can and will learn in a safe, high-engaging learning environment.
- Education is a joint school, family, and community venture.
- Honest and open communication by all school stakeholders is an essential component in building positive human relationships.

Mission Statement

Zion Baptist Academy exists to provide a high-quality curriculum, founded on academic excellence in a Christ-centered learning environment. Our educational program, based on Jesus' model in Luke 2:52, seeks to develop the child's growth in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. The application of this program lays a foundation for Biblically based living for today.

The Goal

At Zion Baptist Academy children are given the opportunity to initiate choices of activities, as well as having teacher-initiated instruction times. Our goals include increasing each child's capacity to reason and to encourage a spirit of inquiry in a creative learning environment. Most of all, Zion Baptist Academy wants each child to know that he/she is a worthy person, acceptable and lovable just as God made him/her. Having a good self-concept and the opportunity to learn in a developmentally appropriate environment are gifts that last a lifetime.

Our well-rounded programs provide for developmentally appropriate growth emotionally, cognitively, socially, and physically, while strengthening Christian values. We expect and encourage all faculty, staff, and students to lead lives of honor, integrity, and high moral character always.

Statement of Faith

- The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction.
- There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections.



- Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation.
- Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer.
- Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.
- Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility.
- God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Parent Covenant

Covenant Statement

As a covenant commitment with Zion Baptist Academy, we, as a family, hereby agree to the following standards:

- I. We have carefully examined and agree with the Statement of Faith of Zion Baptist Academy and desire Zion Baptist Academy to work as agents of our household.
- II. We pledge our loyalty to the intentions and principles of Zion Baptist Academy and will bring any disparagements directly to the teacher and/or administration so that they may be handled in a biblically appropriate manner (Matthew 18). We will avoid discussions with those not involved to avoid a spirit of dissension or division at the expense of our child or the school.
- III. We understand that a student may be dismissed due to student or parental noncompliance of school policy or if an administrative decision is made that Zion Baptist Academy is not the most appropriate setting for the student/family.
- IV. We have received the Zion Baptist Academy Parent Guide and will abide by the school's policies and procedures.



Organizational Structure

A Board of Directors has responsibility for setting school policies at ZBA. Administration of the total program is assigned to an Executive Director, appointed by the Board. Working in conjunction with the Executive Director to lead the school is a group of administrators and support staff. The Board of Directors oversees the business affairs of the school.

General Policies and Information

Zion Baptist Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, birth gender, protected disability, national or ethnic origin, genetic disease or disorder, or protected age in the administration of its admission, academic, and employment policies.

Days and Hours of Operation

The Academy is open year-round from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. There are closure days before the start of each semester for staff training. A list of closures are provided on the school calendar.

Daily Drop-Off and Pick-Up

Parents must bring children into the Welcome Center each morning no later than 9:30am (with exception of a doctor's note) and must come into the Welcome Center to pick up children in the evening. Children will not be allowed to leave the Academy with anyone except the persons designated on the emergency/registration forms. To keep track of the children, the teacher will take a head count upon leaving the classroom and upon returning.

- Please notify staff if the child will be absent or tardy.

Supervision of Children: Parents

For safety purposes, please do not allow your children to run ahead of you to the front entrance of the building when you drop off or pick up.

Tuition and Financial Policies Payment Plans

- Weekly based on current tuition rates – due on Monday by 6:00pm for the week services will be provided. Payments received after 6:00pm on the corresponding Monday will incur at \$75.00 late fee.
- We accept debit, credit and ACH payment. Cash, check or money order will not be accepted.

Financial Policies:

- † A \$275.00 non-refundable registration fee is due upon enrollment.
- † A \$75.00 late fee will be assessed for payments not received by Tuesday at 6pm.



- ✠ There are no refunds or tuition adjustments given in the event of an act of God, government action, terrorism, or epidemic.

Holidays

ZBA will be closed the following holidays:

- Independence Day (4th of July)
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving ○ ZBA will be closed November 27th – 29th.
- Christmas ○ ZBA will be closed December 23rd – 26th.
- New Years ○ ZBA will be closed January 1st
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day

ZBA will be closed for the following Teacher Professional Development days:

- January 3rd-4th

Vacations

Each family will be awarded one vacation credit per school year. This will be worth a free week tuition. Notification of use should be submitted to school administration in writing by the parent. **Vacation does not accumulate and must be used by June 30th.**

Discounts:

Siblings 10% (to the second and subsequent child. Not applicable with GA PreK)

ZBC Church Members 10% (must provide documentation)

Full Time Clergy on Church Staff 10% (must provide documentation)

Active Military, Police, and Fire Personnel 10%

Academy Employees 50%

Late Fees:

\$75.00 late tuition fee

\$25.00 plus \$1.00/ minute ASP late pick up charge.



Admissions Decisions

- ZBA reserves the right to deny acceptance of students due to the conduct record, as well as other information presented in the student application.
- ZBA reserves the right to determine whether ZBA is an appropriate placement for the applicant and/or family.
- ZBA believes that a positive constructive working relationship between the school and parents/guardians is essential to the fulfillment of the school's mission. The school reserves the right not to continue enrollment or not to re-enroll a student if the school reasonably concludes that the actions of a parent/guardian make such a positive and constructive relationship impossible or otherwise seriously interferes with the school's accomplishment of its educational purposes.
- ZBA reserves the right to deny enrollment with non-disclosure of reasons. There is no process for appeal.

Notification of Changes

Parents are expected to notify the Academy immediately and in writing of any changes in name, address, employment location and/or phone numbers so they can be contacted in the event of an emergency.

Clothing and Other Items

Each child will be assigned a cubby in his or her classroom. This is a place to store all items brought from home. **To avoid lost items, make sure everything is labeled in permanent marker with your child's name. Please bring:**

Infants

- Disposable Diapers
- Change of Cloths (labeled with child's name)
- Wipes
- Diaper Cream/Ointment
- Pacifier (if needed)
- Bottles Labeled with Name and Date

Toddlers/Preschool

- Diapers/ Pull Ups
- Extra changes of clothes
- A small blanket for napping
- Appropriate clothing for unexpected weather changes (extra layers for warmth)
- Water Bottle



*Please note, although we do our best, items occasionally get lost. Therefore, we ask that you not bring items that are important to you

Things you should not bring to the Academy:

- Toys
- Food or gum
- Money in pockets
- Medicine in child's bookbag

Change of Class

When teachers and the director agree that a change in classrooms would be desirable, parents will be consulted. Before a child's classroom assignment is changed, the child will be given opportunities to visit and become comfortable with the new children and new teachers. A lot goes into consideration when planning for a move. Examples include the child's age, length of stay in the current room, demonstration of readiness for the next level, class availability, and the timing. We usually try to avoid a move when the child has experienced a big change such as a new sibling, moving homes, etc.

Custody Policies

In situations where a student is living with a guardian or with one parent following a divorce, copies of custody papers or guardianship papers must be on file in the school office. Unless ZBA has official documentation on file, the school cannot prevent a natural parent from picking up a child.

Dismissal

- Delinquent payments – Parents who have been delinquent in payments repeatedly in an academic year may lose their child's place at ZBA.
- Failure to provide or renew your child's immunization record can be cause for dismissal. This form is required for our State license.
- Lack of cooperation with the Academy's efforts to resolve differences or to address behavioral issues disruptive to normal class functioning can be cause for dismissal.
- Abusive behavior and/or verbal threats toward children, staff or other parents is cause for dismissal.

*All reasons for dismissal are at the discretion of the Executive Director.

Notice of Withdrawal

The Academy requires a 2-week written notice of your intent to withdraw your child from the Academy. If we do not receive this notice, tuition will be automatically charged.



Discipline

The goal of Zion Baptist Academy is to help develop self-discipline, encouraging adaptation to acceptable standards of behavior from inner motivation rather than from external controls. Discipline emphasizes limits and rules that are understandable and consistent.

Teachers are expected to try to prevent problems before they arise by arranging programs and classrooms that meet the developmental needs of the children. Examples include having a wide selection of toys, arranging classrooms so that children can be as independent as possible, offering a daily schedule that balances the need for physical activity and rest, and allowing children the choice of challenging activities suited to their developmental level.

Discipline is caring control. When correction is necessary, teachers will use a kind, firm voice to redirect or restate the rule. No physical or harsh verbal discipline of children is allowed. The tone of our school environment is respect. Teachers model and encourage respect for each other, the children, and the environment. We do not allow children to hurt others, themselves, or to damage the classroom materials.

Children whose behavior endangers others are supervised away from the situation until they are ready to rejoin the group in a more socially acceptable manner. Teachers facilitate the development of responsibility, self-regulation, and self-control in children.

Outdoor Activities

Outdoor Play

Outdoor activities provide an extension of our learning environment. With the exception of days of excessive heat or cold, all classes spend a portion of the day outside. If you feel your child is not well enough to participate in outdoor time, then he/she is probably not well enough to be at school. Please make sure your child has appropriate clothes to be comfortable in the changing weather conditions. Before children go outside teachers do a daily playground safety check. Classroom ratios are maintained outside.

The Goals of Our Curriculum

The most important goal of our early childhood curriculum is to help children become enthusiastic learners. This means encouraging children to be active and creative explorers who are not afraid to try out their ideas and to think their own thoughts. Our goal is to help children become independent, self-confident, inquisitive learners. We do this by allowing them to learn at their own pace and in ways that are best for them. By giving children good habits and attitudes, particularly a positive sense of themselves, we will make a difference throughout their lives.



The activities we plan for children, the way we organize the environment, select toys and materials, plan the daily schedule, and talk with children, are all designed to accomplish the goals of our curriculum and give your child a successful start in school. Our curriculum identifies goals in all areas of development:

- **Social:** to help children feel comfortable in school, trust their new environment, make friends, and feel they are a part of a community. Teachers interact with children in groups and individually in warm, caring, responsive ways.
- **Emotional:** to help children experience pride and self-confidence, develop independence and self-control, and have a positive attitude toward life.
- **Cognitive:** to help children become confident learners by letting them try out their own ideas and experience success, and by helping them acquire learning skills such as the ability to solve problems, ask questions, and use words to describe their ideas, observations, and feelings. Children are read to daily. Opportunities to explore a variety of materials such as sand, water, blocks, and science materials are provided.
- **Physical:** to help children increase their large and small motor skills and feel confident about what their bodies can do. Plenty of well supervised physical activity is offered throughout the day. Creative Curriculum embodies our philosophy.

Staff

The most important component of a preschool program is its staff. Zion Baptist Academy staff is comprised of a professional team of individuals who share one common goal: the nurturing, guidance, safety, and education of young children. **All of our staff members must have a satisfactory Comprehensive Records Check Determination letter from Bright from the Start (licensing agency) prior to being allowed to work with children.** When hiring teaching staff, we make every effort to hire the most qualified candidates available. We also encourage and provide ongoing training opportunities for our staff.

The staff is carefully chosen to provide the best care and consistency for your children. All teachers undergo yearly evaluations by the Executive Director. To further enrich the teaching experience, each staff member is required to complete 10 hours of annual training as well as attending all staff in-service trainings. First aid, medication administration, CPR, fire safety, and child abuse trainings take place annually.

Communication

Conferences

Parents/guardians are encouraged to confer with teachers. Parents/guardians are urged to contact the teacher for an appointment when a change in the student's behavior occurs, or when a concern about an academic, emotional, social, or disciplinary matter arises. If desired, the student may be invited to attend this appointed meeting.



Food Program

The Academy participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). This is a federal nutrition program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to ensure that children have access to nutritious meals while they are in a day care setting. Food served includes breakfast, lunch and snack. All menus adhere to CACFP guidelines.

If a child's diet must be modified for health reasons, a physician's written explanation is required. If a child's diet is modified for cultural or religious reasons, the parent is asked to put the request in writing and may be asked to help provide supplemental foods. Please be aware that if your child has special dietary needs that you may need to supplement with food from home to meet the requirements for a well-rounded meal.

Allergies

If your child has allergies, please discuss them in detail with the teacher and director. For food allergies, a written description signed by parent and doctor must be on file and updated every year. The staff of the Academy will take appropriate precautions to prevent allergic reactions. If at any time your child develops an allergy, please let us know immediately. **ZBA is a Nut-free zone due to an increase number of children with nut allergies.** Please keep this in mind when packing a lunch for your child or providing snacks for the classroom during special occasions. This includes peanuts, peanut butter, as well as tree nuts such as almonds, cashews, walnuts, pine nuts (pinon), etc.

Health and Safety Policies

Accidents

First aid kits are kept in each classroom and on all outside playgrounds. All non-emergency accidents will be documented on Procure our parent engagement app. Teacher will notify admin along with providing a description of the accident in app with pictures if applicable.

Health Supplement

First aid treatment will be rendered for minor injuries. If an emergency medical situation arises, medical treatment for the child will be sought at the nearest hospital.

Medical Emergencies

When a medical emergency arises, every effort will be made to contact the parent(s), guardian(s), or an emergency contact after 1st notifying 911. In the event the parent or emergency contact cannot be reached, the director and/or lead teacher will have an authorized representative from the Academy accompany the child to the hospital or medical facility and remain with him/her until a parent arrives. The emergency information form filled out at the time of enrollment serves as consent for your child to be transported by ambulance to a local medical facility to receive emergency care. Zion Baptist Academy assumes no responsibility for the costs associated with emergency care.



Pandemic

In the event of a pandemic in our area, the children's Academy may close for an undetermined amount of time to ensure less spreading of disease, while considering the safety of our staff and students. We will follow the guidance of local, state and federal public health authorities.

Cancellation of School Due to Inclement Weather

In cases of inclement weather, a decision about a delayed start will be made by 5:30am on the day in question. School closings will be communicated via at the earliest convenience once all information has been gathered regarding the circumstances. While the Executive Director will make a decision for the school, each family has the right and responsibility to decide what is in their best interest. Families, for any reason on any day, who fear they cannot get to school safely, should not attempt it.

If there is a delay in opening or a closing, we will initiate the contact with parents in the following order:

- Procure
- Social Media (Facebook)
- School Website

Abuse or Neglect

In the state of Georgia, all teachers and school volunteers are considered mandated reporters and are required by Georgia law (O.C.G.A. 19-7-5) to report any reasonable cause to believe a child is being abused or neglected. Zion Baptist Academy will comply with this law out of concern for the welfare of the children in our care.

Cooperation with Other Agencies

ZBA is committed to cooperating with state agencies in supporting state and local laws, codes, and regulations. As such, suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect, on-site illegal possession or used of a controlled substance, and on-site possession or use of a weapon will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

Elastic Clause

ZBA reserves the right to enforce disciplinary procedures when, in their judgement, the health and welfare of an individual student or the community is best served. The school reserves the right to require a student to withdraw for cause, medical or otherwise.

Daily Health Inspections

For the safety and protection of the children, each classroom will follow the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) by checking each child for the following:



- Severe coughing
- Breathing difficulties
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Pinkeye (redness of eyelid lining, visible irritation, swelling, discharge, etc.)
- Infected skin patches or a rash accompanied by a fever
- Fever or ill appearance
- Unusual behavior - crying more than usual, lethargy, generally feeling unwell

Parents are expected to have an alternative childcare arrangement in place when children are ill. Parents are also expected to promptly (within one hour) pick up their children from the Academy when any of the conditions above exist.

When a child becomes ill during the school day, we make every effort to reach parents. If after 30 minutes we have not been able to contact a parent, we will call the emergency contact listed in the child's file.

Illness

Our goal is to provide childcare for well children. Having ill children at the Academy presents a high risk of infecting other students. While we understand that parents need to be at work or in class, we need to enforce this policy to protect all children and staff from unnecessary exposure to an illness or communicable disease. We follow the guidelines developed by the *Georgia Department of Public Health* and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. Parents who repeatedly fail to follow policies related to keeping children at home when they are ill may be required to withdraw their child(ren) from the Academy.

The school reserves the right to send students home when it is determined that the health of other students may be in jeopardy, or when the child is clearly ill enough that he/she is not benefiting from the school experience on a given day. In an effort to maintain student body health and wellness, students who are sent home due to illness or injury during the school day should be picked up within one hour of parent contact.

Infectious Diseases

When a communicable disease has been introduced into the Academy, parents will be immediately notified.

The Academy also will report these occurrences to the state and local health departments when required. Parents are urged to notify the Academy when their child is known to have been exposed to a communicable disease outside the Academy.

The Executive Director/ Director may determine that a child who does not appear to be fully recovered from an illness cannot return to the Academy without a letter from a physician stating that the child is able to return and participate in the activities of the Academy and is no longer contagious.

We reserve the right to refuse care due to illness.



In the case of impetigo, lice, ringworm, pinworms, rashes, chicken pox, thrush, etc. your child must be NONCONTAGIOUS before returning to the Academy.

When a Child Needs to Stay at Home

- A child's temperature should be normal without medication for at least 24-hours before returning to the Academy. If your child has a fever in the evening, he/she should not return to the Academy in the morning, even if his/her temperature is normal. Fever is defined as 100° F or higher.
- If your child vomits during the night, he/she should not be brought to the Academy the next day, unless it is certain that the vomiting was not due to an infectious condition.
- Diarrhea, as defined by the CDC, consists of more than one abnormally loose stool. A child should not return to the Academy until his/her bowel movements have returned to a normal consistency.
- Conjunctivitis (Pinkeye): a child with pinkeye must be on medication for at least 24 hours before returning to the Academy.
- Rash: body rash, not associated with diapering, heat or allergic reactions, especially with fever or itching, the child should remain home until rash has improved or provide written clearance from a doctor.
- Sore throat coupled with a fever or swollen neck glands.
- Lice, Scabies: Children must not return to childcare until they are free of lice and nits (eggs). Children with scabies may return after treatment.
- If your child is unusually tired, pale, shows a lack of appetite, is difficult to wake, confused, or irritable, please seek immediate medical attention and do not bring them to school.
- Excessive coughing and or mucous from nose other than clear **will be monitored and may require pick up.**

Please note: Classroom teachers will use their best judgment, as well as these guidelines, to determine when to send children home.

Health Consultant

The qualifications of a health consultant may include pediatrician, pediatric nurse practitioner, a R.N. or Ph.D. experienced in childcare health. Our health consultant reviews changes to health policies before implementation.

Infection Control and Personal Hygiene

Children are encouraged to develop desirable habits of personal hygiene, including washing hands after toileting, returning from outdoor activities, blowing nose, and before and/or after meals. Eating a variety of nutritious foods is also encouraged.



Medications

Medications will be administered to a child only when the parent and physician have completed and signed the "Permission to Administer Medication in Child Care" form. This form must accompany the medication, or we will not be able to administer the medication to your child. You may retrieve this form from the Executive Director/Director.

Parents will be asked to sign a medication permission form for each prescription given, noting time, dose/quantity, and number of days to be given. A teacher trained to administer medications will do so and note time, date, and dose given on a medication log. **At this time, Zion Academy is NOT administering any over the counter medication.**

Medication Storage

Medication prescribed must be kept in the original container bearing the original pharmacy label, which shows the prescription number, date filled, doctor's name, directions for use, and child's name. Medication will be kept in a locked medication cabinet or refrigerator out of the reach of children. Parents need to check expiration dates on medications. All medications must be taken home daily. We reserve the right to dispose of expired medications.



ZBA board of directors and administration reserves the right to make changes in the entire handbook and to policies contained herein. Parents will be notified in writing of any changes deemed necessary.