



Parent/Guardian Guidelines
Updated March 2024

Goals of the Early Learning VPK program at Oakland Avenue Charter School

- Build a strong foundation for our early learners, ensuring their future success as they demonstrate continuous social, emotional, and cognitive growth along standards-based learning progressions, K – 12.
- Build a strong foundation for our early learning teachers, ensuring ongoing professional growth through learning and collaboration for continuous growth along the continuum for implementation of a standards-based, developmentally appropriate curriculum.
- Build a strong foundation by partnering with families of our early learners, ensuring they have access to resources; information, and guidance that will enable them to support and enhance their child’s approaches to learning (foster curiosity, encourage persistence, express creativity, and provide opportunities for planning and reflection through play).
- Build a strong foundation for early learning in our community, ensuring the needs of our early learners are addressed both inside and outside of the school day.

Our Philosophy

We believe that all children are intelligent, creative, and resourceful and that they communicate their gifts in many different “languages” including the arts, literacy, math, science, social/emotional, and physical languages.

We respect all families as essential collaborators who contribute distinct experiences and knowledge we value as an integral part of our early learning program.

We create learning communities of children, families, and educators whose work depends upon listening and responding to each other’s needs.

We provide opportunities for children to take the initiative in their own learning as they make sense of the world.

Our VPK Program

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) is a program that is funded by the Office of Early Learning at the Florida Department of Education. The Early Learning Coalition of Orange County (ELCOC) offers the VPK program free of charge to families as a 540- instructional hour school year. All children who reside in Florida, turning four by September 1st of the school year, are eligible to participate in a VPK program. Children with VPK delayed enrollment certificates are not eligible for placement in a school district VPK program. To participate in the free 3 hours of VPK instruction, parents must obtain a VPK Certificate of Eligibility (COE) from the Early Learning Coalition of Orange County. To apply for the certificate, a parent/guardian must submit verification of the child's age and proof of residency.

OACS VPK is a private provider of Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Programs. Private providers do not require the same level of teacher certification. This limitation impacts our ability to adequately support students with exceptional service needs through an IEP. To address this, OACS looks for families of children with IEP services to seek support through early intervention services in Orange County or Lake County, depending on your residence. These services can provide information about the locations of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Pre-K classrooms within your district.

Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Pre-K classrooms are specially designed to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities. These classrooms provide a supportive environment where qualified professionals can offer specialized instruction and services tailored to the individual requirements of each child.

If your child needs such services or you suspect such, we encourage you to contact the early intervention services of either Orange County or Lake County, depending on your residence, to find information about the locations of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Pre-K classrooms within your district so that you can enroll your child in a program designed to meet their unique needs.

Attendance

Although it is voluntary for your child to enroll in a VPK program, it is NOT voluntary for your child to attend. It is expected that your child will be on time and in school every day unless there is an excused absence. It is the parent's responsibility to advise the student's teacher if a child will be absent or tardy. If your child has more than (3) three unexcused absences and/or tardiness per month (or more than 20 total days), your child may be removed from the program. A child is considered absent when arrival occurs after 9:45 a.m. All absences must be documented. Parents are required to sign and date a monthly attendance certification form and teachers are required to maintain them for auditing purposes. Attendance concerns may result in the Voucher being voided. If the Voucher is voided due to attendance, a child will not be permitted to move to self-pay. **Pick-Up Fees:** It is expected that your child will be picked up promptly at the end of the instructional day. If a parent is tardy in picking up his/her child after dismissal time, a late pick-up fee will be charged. Parents will be assessed a \$15 late fee for every 15 minutes past the end of the day. A student may be withdrawn from the program if there are repetitive late pick-ups.

Volunteer Requirements at OACS

OACS truly appreciates the dedication of our volunteers! Your commitment and involvement play an important role in the success of our school. We encourage you to volunteer on & off campus and participate in school and PTO events throughout the year. The minimum requirement per family per school year is 20 hours for 1 child or 30 hours for 2 or more children. The deadline for mandatory hours is May 1st for all students in grades VPK through 5th. Hours volunteered after May 1st will apply to the following school year. Parents can view their hours by logging onto VolunteerAtSchool.com. If your hours are not completed by the May 1st deadline, your child(ren) will be removed from the following school year's roster and 5th graders lose end-of-year privileges.

On-Campus Visitors & Volunteers

All visitors and volunteers must check in at the front office and sign in on the computer to receive an on-campus badge. Badges must always be worn. Please enter and exit through the front of the school only.

All adults who volunteer on-campus or attend field trips must be approved through OCPS ADDitions. All ADDitions applications must be updated every school year. Go to the Volunteer page on the school website for instructions and a link to the ADDitions site.

All visitors are to park in the main parking lot. The parking spaces in front of the school are designated as 10 minute-only. Parking is prohibited in all fire lanes.

Student Behavior and VPK Discipline Policy

VPK teachers design classroom environments that support healthy social, emotional, and cognitive development. The Early Learning Department collaborates with teachers and paraprofessionals to support student behavior that advances this important area of development with attention to self-regulation, appropriate emotional expression, relationship development, and developing independence. In partnership with parents, we value modeling and reinforcing behaviors that are safe and appropriate in a variety of situations. Our program embraces a foundational framework for behavioral support and social-emotional development prioritizing students' safety and security within stimulating learning environments. Teachers recognize that relationships are essential for learning, and they intentionally design environments and foster interactions so that students are in healthy connected relationships with adults and peers. With the essential foundation of routines, rituals, and structures in place, VPK students thrive.

In some cases, a student may continue to display disruptive or unsafe behaviors even with these foundational components in place. For those students, VPK teachers implement the following progressive discipline plan to intensify support and/or reconsider placement:

Step One: Establish a safe and connected classroom environment by implementing routines, rituals, and structures that benefit all students. Provide redirection, issue consequences (as applicable), and notify parent/guardian of concern. If behavior continues or escalates,

Step Two: Develop a plan with timelines for intensifying behavior support including notification to parents and other school personnel. If behavior continues or escalates,

Step Three: Withdrawal from the program will be required.

Students are expected to behave during the time they are at school, and school activities. Students may be disciplined for any infraction including but not limited to:

- Harassment of others
- Engaging in injurious behavior
- Damaging property
- Disrupting class or school activities
- Dishonesty

Transportation

Transportation is not provided for students in the VPK program. Parents are responsible for transportation arrangements to and from school. On-time arrival, use of car line processes, and timely pick-up are expectations for continued enrollment. Morning arrival is between 8:00 -8:15 a.m. We will promptly close the gate at 8:15 a.m. without exception. The afternoon class should arrive between 12:15 p.m. and 12:30 p.m. Specific instructions on drop-off locations will be provided by the VPK staff at the start of each school year.

Dress Code

Schools adhere to dress code policies as outlined in the Oakland Avenue Charter School website, (<https://oaklandfl.gov/230/Oakland-Avenue-Charter-School>), as well as will be sent home in a hard copy. Our curriculum encourages active learning. Children will work with paint, sand, water, and many other types of materials. Children will also play outside daily and should wear comfortable clothing, along with closed-toe shoes.

Personal Care and Toileting Issues

Children who are enrolled in the VPK program are expected to be toilet trained. Please contact the school if there are medical issues that require attention. VPK teachers and paraprofessionals will assist with guiding toileting, but staff will not be able to assist with the buttoning/zippering pants and/or wiping of children. Any child who shows difficulty using the potty independently will be withdrawn from the program.

Important Classroom Information

Bloomz (or current OACS electronic parent communication method), email, or phone call is required for communication with VPK teachers. Currently, OACS uses Bloomz as the primary form of communication. Changes to the communication methods will be shared as needed.

Snacks and water bottles are to be provided daily. If your child is in wraparound care a lunch must be provided daily.

Classroom Celebrations

All food and drink items for student consumption must be store-bought, unopened items with an ingredient label on the package. Birthday celebrations will consist of a "Birthday Bag" being sent home for the family to fill with Birthday surprises for their child. She/he will share this Birthday Bag with the class. Food-related items should not be given as gifts for any reason.

Outdoor Explore

Children are provided daily time to run, play, and explore outside. Outdoor play opportunities are essential to growth, development, and learning. Our program offers unstructured play opportunities as well as outdoor exploration stations which are designed to provoke children's curiosity about curriculum topics they are currently investigating in their classroom.

Children choose which activities to engage in during outdoor exploration. Teachers play with children to encourage physical, social, and cognitive development and assess students' growth in these areas.

Staff will monitor the need to shift gross motor activities indoors due to poor weather conditions including excessive heat.

Quiet Time

Oakland Avenue Charter School guidelines regarding nap time or quiet time in our VPK program are aligned with the latest research in this area. All students in our VPK wraparound care program are offered a time during the day that allows them to rest or relax. Children are not required to nap during quiet time, but we ask them to be respectful to those who still need their quiet time. This allows all children time for unstructured rest but does not require children to sleep if they are not tired. We request the quiet time blanket be as big as what can fit in your child's backpack. VPK staff will work with the children to establish expectations regarding quiet time. If a child struggles with quiet time expectations, progressive discipline processes will begin.

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VPK PARENT GUIDELINES

This parent handbook has been developed to provide our students and families with information on the policies and expectations for VPK at Oakland Avenue Charter School. Parents are encouraged to review the parent handbook and partner with us as we begin their child's formal educational journey.

FAILURE TO REVIEW THE GUIDELINES WILL NOT RELIEVE A STUDENT, PARENT, or GUARDIAN OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPLIANCE WITH THE POLICIES OR ACCOUNTABILITY FOR LOSS OR DAMAGE TO OAKLAND AVENUE CHARTER SCHOOL PROPERTY.

I have read, understand, and agree to the Oakland Avenue Charter School VPK Parent Guidelines:

- **VPK Attendance Policy** If your child has more than three unexcused absences and/or tardies per month, your child may be removed from the program. All absences must be documented. Parents are required to sign and date a monthly attendance certification form and teachers are required to maintain them for auditing purposes. Daily on-time arrival and pick-up using the established car line processes are expected. Failure to arrive during the established timelines through the car line will result in removal from the program.
- **Late Pick-Up Fees.** Your child is expected to be picked up promptly at the end of the instructional day. If a parent is tardy in picking up his/her child after the established dismissal time (for extended care), a late pick-up fee will be charged. Parents will be assessed a \$15 late fee for every 15 minutes past the end of the day (extended day care). Repetitive late pick-up for non-extended day students may be withdrawn from the program.
- **VPK Student Behavior & Discipline Policy** Adherence to all OACS Policies and Guidelines is expected for continued enrollment.

Parent/Guardian signature acknowledges receipt and understanding.

Parent/Guardian Name (Print): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Child's Full Name (Printed): _____