



Parent Handbook

*TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO, AND WHEN HE IS OLD
HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT."*

PROVERBS 22:6

Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church

A.W. Anthony Mays, Pastor
Brenda Kay Fowler, Director

W E L C O M E

Welcome to Mt. Sinai Christian Academy (MSCA)! We want to thank you for selecting MSCA to meet the early childhood educational and spiritual needs of your child. We commit ourselves to providing daily opportunities and experiences that will focus on the total development of all children enrolled in our academy.

This handbook is intended to serve as a guide to our academy. It describes our policies and procedures and offers your family information needed to transition smoothly from home to Mount Sinai Christian Academy.

The MSCA staff recognizes that we are but one entity and that we cannot accomplish the job of educating your child alone. Therefore, we encourage the continued support and involvement of you, the parents, and the community as we work hand-in-hand to continue to challenge and enrich the lives of the children at Mt. Sinai Christian Academy. An open relationship with the Director and with your child's teacher is encouraged.

The MSCA Advisory Council and Staff

MT. SINAI CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Address: 5900 Cameron Rd.
Austin, TX 78723

Telephone: (512) 451 – 3185

Fax: (512) 451 – 1781

Director: Brenda Kay Fowler

Hours of Operation: 7:00 am – 6:00 pm

Annual Registration Fee \$75.00

Tuition: \$490.00 Toilet Trained
\$545.00 Non-Toilet Trained

** 2 or more children from same household – 10% discount for 2nd and subsequent children.*

Student Population: 12 months through Pre-K

Meals Furnished: 8:00 am - Breakfast
11:00 am - Lunch
2:00 pm - Snack

School Colors: Navy Blue Bottom & Light Blue Top

Mascot: Lamb

School Slogan: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”
(Proverbs 22:6).

ACADEMY PLEDGES

Bible

“I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God’s holy word, I will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Its words will I hide in my heart that I might not sin against God.”

Christian Flag

“I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag and to the Savior for whose kingdom it stands; one brotherhood, uniting all mankind, in service and love.”

United States Flag

“I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

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HISTORY

The Mt. Sinai Christian Academy (MSCA) was founded under the leadership of Pastor A.W. Anthony Mays of the Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church. As a result of his vision, he organized a group of people to help create a childcare program. This group consisted of Christians with diverse backgrounds and experiences. The group worked diligently to accomplish the many challenges that were set before it. The result was an organization dedicated to childcare and education. The first Board of Directors consisted of President-Brenda Burrell, Vice-President-William Burgess, Jr., Treasurer-Ida Hunt, and Secretary-Lois Jones.

The Academy opened its doors on August 1, 1995 with an enrollment of twelve students, one teacher, a cook and a director. Two weeks later the enrollment increased from twelve to twenty students. Two additional teachers were then added to the staff.

During the first year of operation a number of developmentally appropriate activities were provided through group and individual instructions. During subsequent years, MSCA accomplished the following:

- 1995 - Served as a satellite site in Northeast Austin for Connections Resource Center
- 1996 - Offered Child Development Course through Austin Community College
- 1996 - Added Kindergarten
- 1996 - Obtained nonprofit Status as a 501C(3)
- 1999 - Added First Grade
- 2000 - Added Second Grade
- 2006 - Discontinued grades K-2 and shifted focus to early childhood education
- 2007 - Recognized as a Texas Rising Star Provider

PHILOSOPHY

Mt. Sinai Christian Academy, Inc. is an Educational Ministry that purposefully focuses on the developmental levels and needs of young children. We recognize the essential connection between cognitive, language, social, emotional, physical and spiritual development as parts of each individual child. We honor and celebrate diversity and the uniqueness of each individual, and plan for differences in abilities, interests, learning styles, and experiences.

We believe:

- The early years are critical learning years which offer the opportunity to maximize potential brain development in young children.
- Responsive, nurturing relationships are key to quality early education and care.
- Safe, predictable environments help children to develop trust.
- Positive guidance methods build competence and self-confidence.
- Children learn through active play.
- Parents and families are important teachers of children.
- Learning must be tied to positive emotions.
- All children need advocates.

Therefore we offer:

- Experienced staff with extensive training in early care and education.
- Consistent, comforting and fun routines that meet the needs of each age group.
- Positive guidance methods including clear limits, redirection, modeling, opportunities to make choices and positive expectations of each child.
- Planned activities and experiences to develop self-help skills and independence.
- Extensive opportunities to actively use all five senses.
- A myriad of experiences to explore and discover our world and how it works.
- An environment that fosters the ability to work cooperatively within a climate of unity and interdependence.
- Support of parents and staff for the important work that they are doing
- Opportunities for everyone to develop, practice, and model happy, healthy behaviors.
- Small classes and low child-to-teacher ratios.
- Community building activities which lead to an extended family atmosphere where children feel at home.

RELIGIOUS STATEMENT

MSCA is a faith-based childcare organization that believes the caring for, teaching of, and socializing with children must be carried out in a loving environment based on *God's Holy Word*.

Christian beliefs from which the staff operates in relationship with the children are as follows:

- God created all persons and things.
- God loves all people and creatures.
- God makes each person unique and special.
- God is always present with us.
- We all do wrong but God forgives us and we can forgive others.
- God calls us to live together in community...enjoying, sharing, and helping each other.
- Jesus is God's only son.
- We learn about God through the Bible.

While these are difficult concepts for children to understand, they can be manifested in the caretakers' relationships with the children; the caretakers' everyday conversations with the children; through the telling of Bible stories appropriate to the children's age and ability to understand. Children daily say a prayer before mealtime, showing thankfulness for all the many blessings bestowed on them by God.

There is no *formal* religious study or Bible study at MSCA because it would be inappropriate for preschool age children. However, the children are introduced to Bible characters and stories through our weekly Bible focus and our monthly Bible memory verse. In addition, a chapel time is held once a week when all the teachers and all children (with the exception of the toddlers) come together to sing songs, say prayers, and hear Bible stories appropriate to the age of the children. Chapel time is led by the Director and/or Mt. Sinai Church minister.

The MSCA staff strives daily to adhere to Proverbs 22:6 which says:

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

MISSION

MSCA seeks to provide quality early childhood education and care based on Christian principles and values to children of diverse abilities and backgrounds in a safe, nurturing, Christian environment.

MSCA Goals

Mt. Sinai Christian Academy (MSCA) provides a loving, nurturing Christian environment. We are committed to ensuring that the spiritual, intellectual, social and developmental potential of each child can be realized in a positive, stimulating and creative manner consistent with best practices in teaching. We strive to accomplish the following:

- Foster healthy self-esteem in each child by respecting the individual's needs, abilities, personality, and culture.
- Foster the development of each child's social-emotional, cognitive, language, physical, spiritual and creative abilities through the use of developmentally appropriate activities and practices.
- Provide a responsive environment where children and adults feel supported and free to explore materials, ideas, and feelings.
- Provide a safe, clean environment that promotes safety, healthy practices, and an appreciation for healthy food.
- Ensure successful experiences during the early years.
- Establish a model training and demonstration center to support the on-going implementation of quality early childhood education programs in the Greater Austin community.
- Hire experienced staff with extensive training in early care and education.

ADMISSION/WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURES

Admission

Parents of all students must complete an enrollment packet. The following information is included in the packet:

Enrollment Information	Child Care Agreement
Emergency Care Card	Physician's Statement
Parent Agreement	Child Assessment
Immunization Records	Class Assignment
Uniform Policy and Guidance	

Upon approval of the Director, children are accepted on the basis of space availability. If no space is available, the child's name will be placed on a waiting list (at the request of the parent). A \$75 registration fee is required once the application has been accepted and an interview with the Director has been held. This fee is **non-refundable** once the space has been reserved. Parents are encouraged to visit the center.

Tuition and Fees

- A non-refundable annual registration fee of \$75 (per child) is due at the time of application.
- No child can be placed into a program without a paid registration.
- Registration fees are assessed annually in September to cover the cost of educational supplies materials.
- Tuition is due in advance or by the first (1st) and the fifteenth (15th) of the month per your signed agreement form.
- Tuition payments for the program you have selected are due in advance of services being rendered. Therefore, if you are unable to pay in advance and the account becomes 30 days delinquent, services will be discontinued.
- Payments received after 6:00 p.m. on the fifth (5th) or the twentieth (20th) will be charged a late fee of \$30.00.
- If the fee is not paid by the fifth (5th) day after tuition is due, your child will not be accepted at the school.
- Checks and money orders should be made payable to **MSCA** with the child's name written at the bottom of the check or money order.
- A fee of \$30.00 is assessed for each returned check.
- Two returned checks will result in your account being placed on a *money order or cash* only status.
- Absences from the center will **not** result in a tuition reduction.
- Once a child is potty trained, tuition adjustments will be made at the beginning of the following month. The teacher will provide a notice to both the parent and the office.
- A 10% discount is given for the second child (and subsequent children) from the same family who attend MSCA.
- A fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for students picked up after 6:00 p.m. This late fee is due on the day after the late pick-up.

Absences/Vacation

- Notify the school each time your child will be absent.
- Absences due to illness/vacation will not yield a reduction in tuition. Full tuition is still due.
- Delinquent tuition bills (over 30 days) will result in the forfeiture of your child's space at the center unless approved by the Director.

Withdrawals

- Should it become necessary for a parent to withdraw his/her child from our center, written notification must be submitted to the office at least 30 days in advance of the anticipated withdrawal date.
- Notification must include the child's name, class and the last date of attendance. All accrued fees are due at the time of notification of withdrawal.

Confidentiality

Families share confidential information with us as they complete and submit admission forms. Recognizing the right to confidentiality for children and families, child files are kept in a locking file cabinet in the Director's office. The Director, Administrative Assistant, and teachers who have direct contact with the child are the only individuals with free access to the files. Upon request, parents may have access to their child's file. Information about a child is shared with other professionals only when written parental permission has been given, except in the case of a regulation authority such as Child Protective Services (CPS), Law Enforcement and/or Childcare Licensing.

CURRICULUM

Our curriculum is based on our knowledge of the developmental process, the individual child's needs and interests, and the child's family culture. The curriculum is "play based" and integrated into the daily routines and transitions of the classrooms. Our curriculum is both planned and spontaneous and occurs during indoor and outdoor play. *Young children learn through play!* The curriculum focuses on all aspects of the child's development (language, cognitive, physical, social-emotional, and spiritual) and teaches concepts and develops skills that are meaningful to the child's developmental understanding.

Teachers use a planning process that includes observation, assessment, developmental goals, developmentally appropriate practice and reflection. Based on this information, the curriculum emerges overtime and guides how we structure the environment, activities, and routines/schedules within the classrooms.

The Academy strives to provide a variety of activities in which children can experience, explore, touch and examine things that will stimulate and reinforce critical thinking skills. By creating hands-on experiences, students will develop skills for decision making that will have great impact in all areas of their developmental growth. Therefore, daily schedules allow for blocks of time for indoor and outdoor free-choice activities; small and large group activities; breakfast/lunch/snack; clean-up, toileting and other routines. During this time, teachers interact with children to extend or enhance the learning/play by asking questions, supporting problem-solving, offering ideas or materials and observing or assessing what children know. Depending on the age of the child, some of the day's activities may be more teacher-directed or guided.

Teachers incorporate all skills into thematic teaching units. Thematic teaching units provide a means by which teachers can organize key concepts and make learning relevant as the units reflect the interest of the children; a current event in the family, school or community; or a developmental task/skill that our experienced teachers recognize as important to that age group. Themes are combined with the teachings of Christ.

GUIDANCE (Discipline)

One of the main objectives of MSCA is to help young children develop greater self-control over their actions while at the same time fostering their self esteem.

Our guidance and discipline guidelines are as follows:

1. Guidance and discipline must be:
 - Individualized and consistent for each child
 - Appropriate to the child's level of understanding
 - Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control

2. A caregiver may only use positive methods of guidance and discipline that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include:
 - Identifying and accepting children's feelings while encouraging emotional expressions of those feelings
 - Modeling and reinforcing positive behavior by using praise and encouragement of appropriate behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior
 - Anticipating children's behavior and gently enforcing consistent limitations
 - Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements
 - Redirecting children's inappropriate behaviors to a more acceptable alternative
 - Encouraging social problem solving with peers
 - Following through on logical consequences when appropriate
 - As a last resort using brief supervised separation from the group

3. There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of guidance and disciplinary actions are prohibited:
 - Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
 - Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training
 - Pinching, shaking or biting a child
 - Hitting a child with a hand or instrument
 - Putting anything in or on a child's mouth
 - Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting or yelling at a child
 - Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language
 - Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed
 - Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age

4. Behavior problems are dealt with at school rather than parents being asked to discipline their child for events that occur at school. When behaviors continue to be a problem, parents will be involved in creating a guidance plan that will be implemented and evaluated over time. In some cases, a referral may be made or a consultant may be used to assist with solving the problem.

All adults are expected to follow the above guidelines while in the center. This includes staff, faculty, volunteers, parents, family members and others authorized to drop off or pick up a child.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Emergency Contacts

In the event of emergency or illness, it is important that the staff is able to contact parents or other designated contacts. Emergency contact information must be kept up to date at all times. This can be accomplished by completing an *Information Change Form* any time a change occurs. Parents will be reminded to review and update emergency contact information quarterly.

Immunizations

Each child must be immunized according to the requirements of the Texas Department of Health. A copy of the current immunization records must be on file in the office before your child can attend the school.

Illness

Should a child become ill while in our care, he/she will be isolated from the other children, made comfortable and supervised while the parent is notified. If staff is unable to reach a parent, an emergency contact person listed on the child's *Emergency Care Card* will be notified. MSCA does not have extra staff to care for an ill child. *The parent or designated adult must pick up the child within one hour of being notified or the late pick up fee will be charged.*

Children may not attend school if:

1. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in child care center activities, including outdoor play.
2. The illness results in a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in care.
3. The child has one of the following conditions, unless medical evaluation by a health care professional indicates that the child may be included in the child care center's activities:
 - Oral temperature of 100.4° or higher or 99.4° under the arm accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness
 - Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy and/or abnormal breathing
 - Vomiting – 2 or more episodes within 24 hours
 - Diarrhea
 - Rash with fever
 - Mouth sores with drooling
 - Conjunctivitis (pink eye) or any other communicable illness.
4. Health care professional has diagnosed child with a communicable disease and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate the child is no longer contagious.

MSCA strives daily to maintain a safe, healthy environment for your child. Thus, we respect your confidentiality and ask that you notify us of any pertinent medical diagnosis pertaining to your child that may affect other children in our care. A child who has any of the above described symptoms may *not* return to school until 24 hours after the child is symptom free.

Medications

In order for medication to be administered to a child at MSCA:

- Parent/guardian must complete and sign the *Authorization for Dispensing Medication* form.
- Medication must be *physician prescribed*, in its original container with instructions for dispensing, and labeled with the child's full name. Parents may want to ask the pharmacist for two separate containers – one for home and one for school.
- Medication can only be given in the doses recommended on the label.
- An accurate measuring device that measures the dosage specified on the instructions must be provided by the parent and labeled with the child's name.
- Medication will only be given up to two times per day between 10 am and 12 noon and 2-3 pm (except in special circumstances as documented by a physician). A standing order, available at the front desk, authorizing medication for chronic medical conditions (i.e., asthma) may be completed in special situations.
- MSCA staff *will not* administer non-prescription drugs. (i.e., Tylenol, Robitussin, Benadryl, etc.)

Handwashing

MSCA strives to maintain a healthy environment and keep the spread of illness to a minimum. Handwashing is the best way to keep from spreading germs. Hands must be washed by all children and adults entering the classroom. We encourage you to have your child wash his/her hands before going home. Adults modeling proper handwashing helps children develop this important healthy habit.

Allergies

Please notify the Director and your child's teacher if your child is allergic to any foods, plants, animals, medications, or other substances. A *physician statement* identifying the allergy and the specific instructions for dealing with the condition must be provided for your child's file. This information will assist us in providing the appropriate care for the child on a daily basis.

Medical Emergencies

While every effort is made to ensure children's safety, accidents with young children will occur. Staff are trained in CPR and First Aid procedures. In the event of a minor injury (i.e., scrape, bump, bruise, etc.) a staff member will administer appropriate first aid and comfort the child. First aid kits are available at all times in case of emergency. An accident report form will be completed explaining the nature and treatment of the injury. If the injury is major (i.e., broken limb, laceration requiring stitches, chipped tooth, etc.) a parent is contacted immediately. Should a parent be unavailable, alternate names on the child's *Emergency Care Card* will be contacted. When no one can be reached, the child's physician is contacted to determine what action should be taken. Should immediate medical attention be needed, EMS will be called to transport the child to an emergency room accompanied by a staff member. The staff witnessing the accident will complete an accident report.

Vision/Hearing Screenings

Texas State Law requires all four year olds be screened for vision and hearing. MSCA will provide these screenings or refer families to appropriate community resources annually. Parents are responsible for providing the results of outside screenings to the center so they can be reported to the Texas Department of Health as required by law. These screenings must be completed by the end of the first semester or at the end of 120 days of enrollment which ever is longest.

Fire Safety

To help children understand fire safety, the staff will introduce them to simple rules they need to follow in case of fire emergency. Unscheduled fire drills are conducted once a month. We encourage you to reinforce fire safety in your home.

Child Neglect/Abuse

Texas State Law requires the staff of this childcare facility to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (Child Abuse Hotline 800-252-5400) or a law enforcement agency. As outlined in the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct, staff is oriented and trained regarding symptoms of child abuse and reporting policies and procedures. When staff has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect they are required to report to Child Protective Services.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Program Staff

Each classroom has a full-time Teacher and Teacher Assistant. Questions about your child's development, curriculum, daily schedule, routines, and other classroom information should be directed to these full-time teachers. Questions about tuition, paperwork, or other general questions should be directed to the Administrative Assistant. The Director will address any questions or concerns that cannot be answered by the above staff. A current list of employees is posted on the Parent Board near the front desk.

Child Assessment

MSCA staff employ a variety of tools to gather information about the children with whom they work. Information gathered is used to ensure each child is making progress in all of their developmental areas; to identify the children's interest and needs; to improve our curriculum and to adapt our teaching practices; and to describe such progress.

Special Needs

If your child has special needs and/or is receiving services from another entity we request that you share a current Individual Education Plan (IEP) so that we can best meet your child's needs. If an IEP is not available, we will work collaboratively with other organizations providing services to your child to develop an IEP.

Daily Schedule

MSCA is open Monday through Friday. Hours of operation are 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Please make every effort to have your child arrive by 8:00 a.m. so he/she can participate in breakfast, morning devotion, and other activities which help your child establish a full daily routine. Children should not arrive later than 9:30 a.m. unless they have a doctor's note.

Arrival at School

- Parent/guardian **must** bring his/her child into the building.
- Parents must sign in each day when dropping off their child. (Logs are located in each classroom).

Leaving the School

- Your child should always be told who is picking him/her up.
- Parents must notify the administration in writing when there is any significant change in your usual schedule or any change in the person who will pick up your children.
- The parent or designated adult must sign-out the child on the appropriate form.
- Staff will not permit a child to leave the building with anyone not previously identified to us in writing by the parent. For the protection of your child, MSCA ask that you notify the center in advance if there is to be a change in the pick-up and/or drop off person.
(These precautions are for the safety of your child and must be followed).

Items from Home

MSCA seeks to keep your child happy, safe, healthy, clean, and comfortable while in our care.

Please *bring* the following items to school:

- A change of clothes - as accidents and spills can happen at any age. Label (permanent ink) each article of clothing and any other item with your child's full name.
- A *small* blanket (crib size) for nap time.
- Toddlers/Twos need to bring diapers/pull-ups/wipes.
- Your child's teacher will give you a list of any additional items needed.

Our classrooms are filled with a variety of exciting age-appropriate equipment and materials that are available to children at all times. Therefore, please *leave* the following items at home:

- Valuables that you and your child treasure
- Candy, chewing gum, junk food
- Toys from home (Special arrangements may be made for an item that benefits the curriculum such as books, science items, CDs, cassettes, etc. In such cases, the parent and teacher will agree on the conditions under which the item may be used.)
- Money (especially coins as these are potential choking hazards)
- Toy guns and other toy weapons

*MSCA will **not** be responsible for lost or damaged personal items.*

Nutrition

- The Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards require that children in full time care receive half of their daily nutritional needs while in childcare.
- MSCA provides, breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack. Meals meet all Child and Adult Care Food Program requirements.
- Monthly menus are posted in each classroom and in the main office.
- Additionally, we do not offer children younger than four years these foods: hotdogs (whole or sliced into rounds); whole grapes; nuts; popcorn; raw peas and hard pretzels; spoonfuls of peanut butter; or chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole.

Clothing

Children should wear comfortable, washable clothing that is suitable for active and messy play. The children go outside everyday unless it is raining. Therefore we ask that you dress your child appropriately for the seasonal weather (e.g., cool, light clothing for summer and jackets, hats, and leg coverings during colder months).

- The school uniform (Light blue top and Navy bottoms) must be worn Monday-Friday.
- Each child must have a change of clothing (shirt, underwear, pants/dress, and socks) suitable to the season in their classroom at all times to be used in case of an emergency (accident or spill).
- Outerwear such as hats, coats, sweaters, gloves, boots, etc., must be clearly labeled with your child's name.
- Shoes must have rubber or other non-slip soles. Closed-toe shoes are preferred. If a child's shoes appear to present a developmental issue or safety hazard (difficulty running/climbing or poor fit) we will ask you to substitute another pair of shoes.
- *Flip-flops* are not allowed.

Toilet Training

Toilet training is a process that requires strong parent/teacher communication and planning. If you feel your child is showing readiness signs, talk with your child's teacher.

Personal Belongings

MSCA provides a personal storage area for each child's belongings. Label all of your child's belongings with *permanent ink*. Please send a back pack or tote bag each day to help your child keep track of important items.

Birthdays

Birthdays are very special days for children. Each classroom has its own method of honoring the birthday child. Children are welcome to bring a special food treat to share with his/her class. Birthday treats should be consistent with program's healthy nutritional goals. Acceptable treats include muffins, cupcakes, banana bread, fruit kabobs, etc. For safety reasons, balloons, candy and certain party favors are not allowed at the center. Please discuss your plans ahead of time with the teacher. This allows us to plan for food allergies or restrictions. If you plan to distribute birthday party invitations at school, please bring enough invitations for all of the children in your child's class or mail out the party invitations instead.

Holidays

Holidays are celebrated by incorporating child-centered, hands-on concrete activities into the children's daily routines. The emphasis is on recognizing and appreciating diversity while introducing the children to family customs and traditions found within and between cultures. School-wide celebrations are held each year when families are encouraged to share their own traditional foods, symbols, or customs with each other. MSCA does not follow the AISD holiday calendar.

Naptime

Children will be required to rest each day. Each classroom has a designated rest period of 2 hours as a part of the daily schedule. Children who do not nap or who rise early are offered alternative quiet activities after one hour of rest time. Parents are responsible for taking nap items (small blanket, snuggly) home at the end of each week and returning them clean at the beginning of the new week. MSCA provides rest mats for the children.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is important!

- Children go outside to play everyday except in extreme weather conditions. Health experts agree that when children are properly dressed, cool weather is rarely harmful and being outside in the fresh air is essential even in cold weather.
- Please dress your child accordingly. Layers that can be removed or added as necessary are very helpful in autumn and spring. Girls need to have pants or stockings on their legs in winter. All items such as jackets, gloves, and hats should be labeled with your child's name.

- Sometimes parents ask if their child can remain inside during our outdoor play time due to health concerns. However, if a child is well enough to be at school, he/she is assumed to be well enough to go outside. Our child-staff ratios rarely allow us to stay inside with one or two children while the rest of the children go outside. Therefore, if you have questions about whether or not your child can participate in outdoor play, you might want to consider keeping your child home until you feel your child is able to fully participate in our daily program, both inside and outside.
- Outdoor air quality is checked daily. In the event of unhealthy air quality, outdoor time will be adjusted according to government recommendations. All children have the opportunity to play in the shade, but when the children do play in the sun, they should wear sunscreen or sun block with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher.
- During summer months, we ask parents to apply bug repellent and sunscreen prior to morning arrival. School staff will reapply in the afternoon only with parent permission.

Study/Fieldtrips

Fieldtrip notices are posted in the classroom at least 48 hours in advance. The fieldtrip location and activity determine adult-child ratios. Participation forms must be completed by the parents prior to any trip (no exceptions). Emergency forms, a cell phone, and a first aid kit are taken on all fieldtrips. Parents are encouraged to accompany their child when possible.

Animals

Small animals such as hermit crabs and fish are housed at the center. Classroom pets such as birds, hamsters, guinea pigs, etc., must be examined by a veterinarian prior to being placed in the classroom. Outside animals may not be brought into the center without prior arrangements and examination of current vaccination records. Please let us know if your child has allergies or fears related to animals.

Inclement Weather

- Tune into local news or contact the center station in case of severe weather.
- If Austin ISD announces closing due to severe weather, MSCA will also be closed.
- If severe weather develops during the school day and you are delayed in picking up your child, rest assured that your child will remain in the care of a staff member until you arrive.

Security

Visitors to our program **must** sign-in/out at the front desk when they arrive and when they depart the center.

PARENTAL COMMUNICATION

Open parent-staff communication is one of the cornerstones of quality childcare because it is only through open communication that we can work as partners to provide children with the highest quality care possible. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions and/or share any concerns. Translator or interpreter services are available upon request.

Daily Communication

The most important way for parents to be involved in the education of their child is through regular communication with staff. Knowing anything unusual that has taken place will help us better understand your child's behavior and needs. It is also helpful if you let us know if there are any major events occurring in your family life, visits to or from special people/places, or changes in family status (weddings, divorces, birth, death, etc.). Knowing this type of information helps us better provide for your child's needs. Please ask to speak with the teacher away from the classroom if you are more comfortable sharing information privately. Usually, sufficient staff members are present for teachers to accommodate these requests; however, sometimes due to schedules or staffing, the teacher may have to ask that you schedule a special time to speak with each other.

MSCA will share information with you about your child's day at the center. For younger children, written information concerning eating, sleeping, and toileting will be provided. For all children, there will be verbal exchanges of pertinent information. Additionally, information about the day's planned activities is posted in each classroom.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

All parents are encouraged to participate in the parent/teacher conferences which are scheduled in the fall and spring of each school year. These 30 minute conferences afford teachers and parents the opportunity to discuss a child's progress, share concerns, and plan together to meet a child's developmental needs thus providing the best care possible. These conferences also help increase consistency between home and school.

The need for extra parent/teacher conferences may arise from time to time. Staff who have concerns about behavior that we are seeing at school may request a conference. Parents may request a conference if they have questions about their child or about things that are happening at school. We are always willing to meet with parents to discuss your child and/or our program.

Newsletters/Bulletin Boards

A *Parent's Bulletin Board* is located in each classroom. The board provides up-to-date information on the menu, weekly program plans, special announcements, and health alerts. A copy of the monthly newsletter which includes descriptions of activities in all classrooms, as well as, information for parents about center/community happenings, is also posted and sent home monthly.

Parent Involvement

Parental involvement is important to the life of MSCA. Your active participation in the children's educational experiences at MSCA is encouraged. Opportunities for parents and teachers to work together include but are not limited to the following:

- Get to know your child's teacher and friends.
- Keep communication with the teacher open and be aware of what is going on at school.
- Talk to your child about his/her day.
- Show your child you are happy about all the new things he/she is learning to do by displaying his/her artwork or special projects at home.
- Share your ideas or concerns about the child's activities with the teacher.
- Share your talent (e.g., singing, dancing, sewing, carpentry, etc.)
- Tell us how we can help you with your child.
- Encourage your child to do things by him/herself.
- Attend scheduled meetings/conferences.
- Join us for some of our special activities.
- Share your culture and ethnic background.

*ALL parents must sign in at the front office and receive a visitor's badge **before** entering a classroom.*

Dealing with Problems

If you have questions or concerns, they should be addressed first with the teacher in your child's classroom. If you are not satisfied with the information the teacher provides or if you are unable to speak with the teacher, please contact the Director. Typically, all problems can be resolved working with the teacher and/or the Director.

Parent Council Meetings

Meetings are held on the **3rd Thursday** of designated months at 6:00 p.m.

September	November	February
October	January	April

Academy Advisory Council (AAC)

The AAC meetings are held on the **4th Tuesday** of each month at 6:00 p.m.

A copy of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Minimum Standard rules for review . . .

is available at the center, along with the latest inspection — the Director will be happy to pull out a copy of the standards for you to review at anytime. In addition, the standards are available for review at www.tdfps.state.tx.us or you may contact your local child care licensing office at (512) 834-3195.

Child Abuse Hotline: (800) 252- 5400

MT. SINAI CHRISTIAN ACADEMY, INC., NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

This agency (provider) is in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-352), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-135), and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-112). This is an equal opportunity program. No person will be denied benefits, excluded from participation or otherwise subjected to discrimination because of national origin, age, sex, disability, political beliefs or religion. IF you believe you have been discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, age, sex, a disability, political beliefs, or religion, you may lodge a complaint against the management staff of this agency and/or write immediately to the Civil Rights Department, HHSC Civil Rights Office, 701 West 51st Street, Suite 104, MC W-206, Austin TX 78751, (512) 438-4313.

Compliant Procedure

1. **Right to file a complaint:** Any person alleging discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, sex disability, political beliefs, or religion has the right to file a complaint of the alleged discriminatory action with HHSC Civil Rights Office, 701 West 51st Street, Suite 104, MC W-206, Austin TX 78751, or the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. The agency will explain the complaint system to each individual who expresses an interest in filing discrimination in either or both systems. All complaints must be filed no later than 180 days from the date of the alleged discriminatory action. Under special circumstances this time limit may be extended by the Civil Rights Department.
2. **Acceptance:** All complaints, written or verbal, not handled by the HHSC Civil Rights Department, shall be accepted by the provider agency. Complaint information will be sufficient to determine the identity of the individual toward which the complaint is directed, and to describe the intent or situation about which the allegation is made. Anonymous complaints will be handled just as any other complaints.
3. **Verbal Complaint:** In the event a complainant makes an allegation in person or through a telephone conversation and refuses or is not inclined to put such allegation in writing, the person to whom the allegation is made must put the elements of the complaints in writing. Every effort shall be made to have the complainant provide the following information:
 - Name, address, and telephone number or other means of contacting the complainant.
 - The specific location and name of the provider agency delivering the benefits.
 - The nature of the incident or action that led the complainant to feel discrimination was a factor, and an example of the method of administration which is having a disparate effect on the public, applicants, or participants.
 - The basis on which the complainant feels discrimination exists (race, color, national origin, age sex, disability, political beliefs, or religion).
 - The names, titles and business addresses of persons who may have knowledge of the discriminatory act.
 - The date(s) during which the alleged discriminatory actions occurred, or if continuing, the duration of such actions.
4. **Discrimination Complaints Processed by the Provider Agency:** The provider agency shall submit to the appropriate HHSC office a report on each discrimination complaint processed by the agency within 90 days of the date the complaint is filed. The report shall contain the information described in item 3, above, the findings of the investigation, and if appropriate, the corrective action planned or taken.

PARENT HANDBOOK

I have read and understand the MSCA Parent Handbook.

I give permission for my child to participate in the total Mt. Sinai Christian Academy Program.

Parent's Signature _____

Child's Name _____

Date _____

Please sign and return this page.