

Parent Handbook



ADVANTAGE
EARLY LEARNING CENTER



Welcome to Advantage Early Learning Center! We thank you for letting us take part in your child's education. This handbook is designed to answer many of the questions you may have and help you become familiar with our policies and procedures. It is yours to keep, as you may wish to refer to this information in the future.

Locations and Contact Information

Email: director@advantageelc.com

Website: www.advantageelc.com

Boise site: 9045 W Irving St

Boise, Idaho 83704

208-391-2222

Meridian site: 3677 Copper Point Drive

Meridian, Idaho 83642

208-391-2200

About Us

Advantage Early Learning Center is a preschool and child care center. We offer preschool and care for children ages 6 weeks to 12 years. We have full day programs and before and after school programs, as well as summer day camp for school aged children. We provide transportation to several area schools.

For children eating solid food, we provide breakfast, lunch, and snack at no additional cost. We use a six week rotating menu that can be provided to you upon request, and is posted in each classroom.

Advantage Early Learning Center offers enrollment to all children, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, disability, medical condition, or religion.

About Our Staff

All Advantage staff and teachers have federal and state or city background checks, current first aid and CPR certifications, and are required to take a number of continuing education credits/classes in order to keep up with relevant changes and current research that impacts early care and education. We go well

beyond state and city child care licensing requirements to ensure a positive, quality educational experience for you and your child.

Our Mission

Advantage Early Learning Center is dedicated to providing a safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment for all children. We are committed to enriching children's lives socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically in an atmosphere that enhances creativity and self-confidence.

Our Philosophy and Goals

In defining our philosophy, we work from the following foundational truths:

1. Early experiences determine a child's learning pattern for *life*, and early childhood is also the time when self-concept and self-esteem begin to develop. We provide a quality early care and education experience, offering challenging goals and opportunity for achievement, setting children up for future social and academic success.
2. Children learn through play and the active manipulation of materials in their environment. With that in mind we make materials available and offer a balance of child and teacher directed activity.
3. Partnerships between teachers and families are key to a positive educational experience for children. We encourage strong relationships between staff and families through our open door policy, volunteer opportunities for family members, and family events throughout the year.
4. Children are unique, and as such will grow and respond at their own pace. We're sensitive to the individual, and provide a rich variety of experiences.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) is the cornerstone of our philosophy. We understand how children learn and develop and the sequential progression of each stage, and we use this knowledge to meet children where they are in the developmental continuum. We encourage them toward challenging, yet attainable, goals. Armed with the knowledge that early experiences determine our learning pattern, we provide a quality early childhood experience that helps set children up for future success.

General Information

We know how difficult it is to choose the right early care and education facility for your family. Thank you for putting your trust in the staff of Advantage Early Learning Center and becoming a part of this special and unique community. To help you become familiar and ease the transition, we've put together some information and useful tips.

Ratios

We use the following teacher:child ratios and maximum group sizes based on the child's age:

6 weeks to 12 months: 1:4, with a maximum group size of 12.

12 months to 24 months: 1:6, maximum group size of 12.

24 months to 36 months: 1:8, maximum group size 16.

3 years to 4 years: 1:10, maximum group size of 20.

4 years to start of Kindergarten: 1:12, maximum group size 24.

Kindergarten to age 11: 1:18, maximum group size 48 (Meridian)

1:12, maximum group size 36 (Boise)

Program Hours of Operation

We are open Monday-Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Billing

Tuition is collected in advance, before care occurs. We use Tuition Express, an electronic payment system. Parents are provided with a Tuition Express account information form to be filled out and turned in before enrollment. After the account is verified, which takes 2 to 7 business days, we will auto-collect tuition based on your preferred schedule. Tuition payment options are as follows:

Monthly: 2nd of every month

Semimonthly: 2nd and 16th of every month

Biweekly: every other Friday

Weekly: every Friday

Your Schedule

For staffing and ratio purposes we require a regular schedule of the same days each week. For part time enrollment, less than 5 days, you choose which specific days of the week your child will attend (i.e. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays). We are unable to trade or substitute days, and tuition is not adjusted for days absent. We are often able to accommodate additional days should the need arise. Please see office staff for availability. If we are able to accommodate additional days your account will be billed for the difference using our normal rate structure.

Holiday Schedule

We are closed for the following holidays:

New Year's Day	January 1
Memorial Day	Last Monday of May
Independence Day	July 4
Labor Day	First Monday of September
Thanksgiving and the Friday after Thanksgiving	Last Thursday and Friday of November
Christmas	December 25

We close at 3:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve.

If a holiday falls on a Saturday, we will close the Friday before the holiday. If a holiday falls on a Sunday, we will close the Monday after the holiday.

There is no adjustment made to tuition for holiday closures.

Vacation

After six months of *continuous* enrollment, families are eligible for one week vacation per calendar year. Vacation request forms, available in the office, must be turned in at least one week before the vacation is to take place. During this time, your child must be absent for one consecutive week (based on number of days per week enrolled) and your account will be credited for the week's tuition. Refunds are not given for vacation requests made after normal billing has occurred, but we will apply your vacation credit during your next billing cycle. Vacation request forms are available in the office.

Hold

If your child will be absent for 3 to 12 *consecutive* weeks, you may use the "hold" option. For \$50.00/child we will hold your spot for 3 to 12 weeks with no other charges. You may use a "hold" once per calendar year.

Drop off and Pick up

After clocking in or out at the computer in the lobby, you will always accompany your child to and from the classroom (or playground, cafeteria, etc.).

Anyone out of the ordinary may drop off without notice to us, but we appreciate a phone call if possible so a staff member can meet them in the lobby. The staff member will either accompany or take the child to the classroom.

We will not release children to an irregular person without advance notice from you. Anyone picking up (including parents) must have proper photo identification (driver's license, state issued I.D.). Staff are trained to question and request I.D. from anyone in the building that they don't recognize as a regular client.

There is a period of transition when starting any new adventure and a new child care/preschool environment is no different. Every child adjusts somewhat differently and many may need extra comforting while getting used to the new surroundings. To help make the separation a little easier, try to give yourself a few extra minutes in the morning to spend at drop-off. Some children are more willing to explore the environment on their own if they first get to share it with their parents. We've found that when children believe their parents are willing to spend some time, they are less likely to need it. When children know that their parents are eager to leave, it's harder to separate. If you have time, find a favorite activity or toy, read a brief story, or just sit for a moment and observe with your child. If you can't spend time at drop off please don't worry; find a familiar staff member and drop off directly to them. Our kind and nurturing teachers will do what they do best and help make your child feel safe and comfortable.

We encourage you to drop off by 9:00 a.m. so your child will get the most out of their early education experience. Morning circle or planning time is an important part of the day and starts things off with an anticipated routine.

Open door policy

Parents and guardians are always welcome at Advantage Early Learning Center, at any time of day, without prior notice. We do ask that you inform us if unaccompanied guests (grandparents, aunts and uncles, etc.) will stop in for a visit with your child. Please be sure your visitors have proper identification.

Volunteering

We encourage families to get to know one another and our staff, building strong and lasting relationships. We offer several volunteer opportunities that support our open-door policy and promote continuing friendships. We love to have parents and other family members accompany us on field trips, help out at class parties, act as guest speakers or guest readers in the classroom, lead an activity or project, play a musical instrument, demonstrate a skill, or share traditions and cultural information. We will ask for volunteers frequently, but please don't hesitate to let staff know you're interested.

Regular/frequent volunteers over the age of 13 will need to get federal and state or city background check and obtain clearance before regular volunteering can begin. Please see center director for more information.

Cell Phones

Please refrain from cell phone use in the center. You may finish conversations in the lobby, before entering the classroom, if necessary. Your child will be excited to see you and needs your full attention at the end of the day, and teachers may need to share information with you as well.

Smoking

We are a smoke free facility, including the property outside the building. We do not have a designated smoking area.

Extracurricular Activities

There are several extracurricular activities, independent of Advantage Early Learning Center, available for participation at our facility during our normal operating hours. Information is posted in the lobby.

Family Events and Activities

We encourage our families to get to know one another and like to offer opportunities like volunteering in the classroom, going along on field trips, and other activities and events throughout the year.

Advantage Early Learning Center hosts several family events and activities throughout the year; some are classroom-specific, and some are center-wide. Information is provided in advance of events or activities. Suggestions, ideas, and volunteers are always happily accepted!

Policies and Procedures

Discipline and Guidance Policy

Problems are avoided through the use of defined and understood limits, engaging and age-appropriate curriculum, and daily routine. When the need for discipline does arise, we often personalize the method, allowing us to meet the needs of each individual child. One of the benefits of building strong relationships between center staff, children, and parents is the ability to individualize our discipline strategies.

What children believe about themselves is largely based on the way they are treated by the important adults in their lives. Because of this fact, we approach discipline in a positive manner that encourages compassion, self-control, self-discipline, and a positive self-concept. Natural and logical consequences are the basis of our discipline tactics. Natural consequences occur as the direct result of an action. Logical consequences make sense and are related to the action.

With younger children we rely on redirection and distraction while demonstrating and gently guiding appropriate behavior.

The following types of discipline are prohibited:

1. Corporal punishment/ threats of corporal punishment, or physical punishment of any kind
2. punishment associated with food, naps, outside time or toilet training
3. putting anything in or on a child's mouth
4. Humiliation, rejection, ridicule, or yelling. Harsh or profane language of any sort is prohibited.
5. Placing a child out of sight of caregiver: closets, hallways, bathrooms etc.
6. Requiring silence or inactivity for time periods inappropriate to child's age.

Illness Policy

When a child becomes ill while in our care, but does not require immediate medical attention, we must determine whether or not exclusion from group care is required. (By exclusion, we mean that you must come and get your child from the center.) We base our decisions on the policies outlined in two publications by the American Academy of Pediatrics: Caring for Our Children and Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools. There are 3 things to consider in determining if a child needs to be excluded from care:

- Illness prevents the child from participating in the normal activities of his/her classroom routine
- Illness requires a level of care that is greater than we can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children
- Illness poses a risk of spread of disease to others

If any of these criteria are met, the child will be excluded, regardless of the type of illness. You will be called, and asked to pick your child up from our care within one hour.

Along with the above three points, temporary exclusion (removal) from child care is recommended when the child has any of the following conditions:

- Appears to be severely ill
- Has a fever of 100 degrees or higher taken axillary (armpit) *and* behavior changes or other signs and symptoms (sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea). An unexplained temperature above 100 degrees axillary in a child younger than 4 months should be medically evaluated. Note: an infant younger than 2 months with a fever should get medical attention within an hour.
- Diarrhea – defined by more watery stools, decreased form of stool that is not associated with changes of diet, and increased frequency of passing stool that is not contained by the child's ability to use the toilet – until the diarrhea resolves.
- Blood in the stools not explained by dietary change, medication, or hard stools
- Vomiting more than 2 times in the previous 24 hours, unless the vomiting is determined to be caused by a non-communicable condition, and the child is not in danger of dehydration
- Abdominal pain that continues for more than 2 hours or intermittent pain associated with fever or other signs and symptoms
- Mouth sores with drooling
- Cough that is severe, rapid or difficult breathing, wheezing, cyanosis (blue color of skin and mucous membranes)
- Rash with fever or behavioral changes
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye mucus drainage (signs of a bacterial infection), often with matted eyelids after sleep and eye pain, or redness of the eyelids or skin around the eye, until treatment has been started
- Tuberculosis, until the child's physician or local health department states child is on appropriate treatment and can return
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has been started
- Strep throat, or other streptococcal infection, until 24 hours after treatment has been started
- Head lice or nits
- Scabies

- Chicken pox, until all lesions have dried or crusted (usually in about 6 days)
- Pertussis, until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment
- Mumps, until 9 days after onset of parotid gland swelling
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash
- Hepatitis A virus, as directed by the local health department and pediatrician
- Any child determined by the local health department to be contributing to the transmission of illness during an outbreak

If it is determined that a child does need to be excluded from group care, the procedures are as follows:

- Care for the child will be provided in a place where the child can be comfortable and feel safe, away from the other children
- Family will be called to pick up the child as soon as possible, but **within one hour**
- Family is asked to relay the advice/diagnosis of the health professional, if a medical visit is deemed necessary
- Contact the local health department if there is a question of a reportable communicable disease
- Sanitize toys and other items the child may have put in his/her mouth
- Document actions in the child's file with date, time, symptoms, and actions taken and by whom, sign and date document

Medication Administration Policy

The administration of medicines at Advantage Early Learning Center shall be limited to:

- a) Prescribed medications ordered by a health care provider for a specific child, with written permission of the parent or legal guardian
- b) Nonprescription (over-the-counter or OTC) medications recommended by a health care provider for a specific child and a specific condition, with written permission of the parent or legal guardian

For prescription medications, the parent or legal guardian will provide the medication in the original, child-resistant container that is labeled by a pharmacist with the child's name, the name and strength of the medication; the date the prescription was filled; the name of the health care provider who wrote the prescription; the medication's expiration date; and administration, storage, and disposal instructions.

For OTC medications, the parent or legal guardian will provide the medication in the original, child-resistant container. The medication will be in a Ziploc baggie labeled with the child's first and last names. There will be specific, legible instructions on the container for administration, dosage and age/weight requirements, and storage of the medicine. We will also need the name and contact number of the health care professional who recommended the medication for the child. **WE CANNOT GIVE MEDICATION TO A CHILD IF THE LABEL INDICATES THE CHILD'S AGE OR WEIGHT IS INAPPROPRIATE FOR THAT MEDICATION.** If the label indicates your child's age or weight requires that a medical professional must be contacted, then we need the following: Your child's medical provider can write a standing order for an OTC medication that defines exactly the amount, reason, and when the medication should be used. This standing order should also include an end date, or a date when it should be reevaluated. We cannot accept parents' directions or reasons, if they are in conflict with the instructions on the medication.

The parent or legal guardian will sign our medication form, providing specific instructions for the dose, time, and method to be used, and duration of administration will be provided in writing, either by a signed note or prescription label. We cannot give medication longer than the prescription label states. For OTC medicines, we will only give while symptoms persist, will not give over the stated amount of daily doses unless directed in writing by the child's medical provider, and the smallest effective dose will be administered.. For either type of medication, we must also know the reason it is being given to the child. Please note: we cannot give medication on an "as needed" basis.

A physician may state that a certain medication may be given for a recurring problem, emergency situation, or chronic condition. This could include an allergic reaction requiring an Epipen, asthma intervention, or other such conditions. In these cases, we would need a note from a physician including the child's name, the name and dose of the medication, how often it may be given, conditions for its use, and any precautions to follow.

Maintaining Continuity for Children and Families Policy

When you enroll at Advantage Early Learning Centers, we are committing to do our best to ensure a positive, enriching experience for your family. Although rare, and only after we've exhausted all options, we may have no choice but to exclude a child or family temporarily or permanently. Note: Our staff members are knowledgeable and trained to recognize the difference between normal and abnormal developmental behaviors, and would discuss with director and parents before any permanent decisions would be made regarding exclusion.

Some of the reasons we may exclude a child or family are:

- Child is at risk of causing serious injury to self or others, uncontrollable outbursts of anger or rage, and/or verbal or physical abuse of others
- Parent is physically or verbally threatening or intimidating staff, children, visitors, or other parents
- Failure to pay tuition/fees or continual late/declined payment
- Repeated failure to notify staff that parent or other is picking up at school, and child will not ride yellow bus or Advantage bus back to center
- Continual late pick up- arriving at the center after closing time

Before excluding a child from our care, we have several proactive steps in place:

1. Staff will reassess program and environment to determine if there may be a contributing factor.
2. Staff will continue to use positive discipline and language, logical and natural consequences when appropriate, and model appropriate behavior at all times.
3. Staff will document consistently disruptive behavior, to be kept confidential and shared only with parents and director.
4. Parents will be notified verbally and given copies of incident/accident reports and behavior logs.
5. Parents, director, and involved staff will work together to develop and individualized plan and strategies to promote positive interactions and behaviors. Parents will also be provided with community resources and/or referrals.
6. If significant progress does not occur, child will be excluded for a determined amount of time. We will attempt to give enough notice so family can find alternative care but this will depend on the circumstances.
7. Parents will be informed of the exclusion, length of time, and expected behavior changes before returning at an established time.
8. When the established time and behavior changes have occurred, child may return. Failure to satisfy the terms of the plan may result in permanent expulsion.

The following actions will not result in retaliatory exclusion:

1. Making a complaint to licensing agency
2. Report of suspected abuse or neglect occurring at facility

Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

As childcare providers, we are required by Idaho law (IDAHO CODE TITLE 16 JUVENILE PROCEEDINGS CHAPTER 16 CHILD PROTECTIVE ACT; 16-1619) to report suspicions of child abuse. Any observation or suspicion of child abuse or neglect will be reported to Child Protective Services. Employees are encouraged to notify Director or center Coordinator before reporting suspected abuse or neglect.

Staff of Advantage Early Learning Center suspected of child abuse will be reported and suspended or given duties that do not involve interactions with children until investigation is complete. Parents of children involved in suspected abuse by staff will be notified by Director or center Coordinator. If staff member is found guilty of charges employment of staff member will be terminated.

Severe Weather Closure/Emergency Evacuation Policy

In the event of severe weather or snow, management may decide not to open the center before normal opening time. If that happens, we will notify families through our facebook page, which can be accessed through our website at www.aelc.com. You DO NOT need to have a facebook page to view our status changes, but if you “like” us on facebook any status changes will be sent to you directly. We will also update our voicemail and attempt to keep it as current as possible.

If public schools are closed, it is possible that we will delay opening until travel is safe, or remain closed entirely. Please check our facebook page or call the center to listen to our updated voicemail before attempting to travel and drop off at Advantage Early Learning Center.

If management decides to close during normal operating hours we will notify families by telephone, email, or our facebook page. If we are unable to reach parent(s), we will call emergency contacts. If weather prevents parent or other authorized person from picking up child, staff members will continue to care for child until parent or other authorized person can safely travel to the center to pick up child. If severe weather requires children and staff to remain at the center over night, staff members will care for children until departure is deemed safe. We will maintain a 3 day emergency supply of food and other essential items for children, infants, and staff members.

If there is ever a need to evacuate the center, we will attempt to use the same methods to contact you and provide you with any other information.