

CORNELIUS EARLY SCHOLARS (CES)

Parent Handbook 2026/2027

Subject to change. Updated handbooks may be issued periodically.

Welcome

At Cornelius Early Scholars, we focus on each child's social, emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual growth. This handbook explains our philosophy, policies, and procedures, and we invite you to be actively involved in your child's preschool experience.

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1. Teaching Staff & Qualifications

2026/2027 Teaching Staff

(Subject to change)

- 2's Lead Teacher: Esthi Beer
- 3's Lead Teacher: Denise Zapata
- Pre-K 4's Lead Teacher: Jessica McDonald
- T-K 4/5's Lead Teacher: Carrie Hanes
- 4/5's TA: Sara Elliott
- 2's TA: Joselyn Sab
- 3's TA: Selena Chavez
- Chapel: Margy Nance
- Music: Margy Nance
- Science/Art: CES Teaching Staff
- Creative Movement: Carrie Hanes
- Librarian: Brittani Forbes

Staff Qualifications

Lead Teacher Qualifications

- College preferred
- 2 years minimum teaching experience
- Regular attender of a Christ-centered church
- Ability to work positively and professionally with children and adults
- Good written and verbal communication skills
- Clean background check
- CPR and First Aid certification

Assistant Teacher Qualifications

- High school diploma or GED
- Some related teaching experience
- Active in a Christ-centered church
- Ability to work positively and professionally with children and adults
- Clean background check

2. Preschool Goals & Philosophy

Mission Statement

To set children's lives on a path of success through early childhood education and a foundation of faith in Jesus Christ.

Our Educational Philosophy

Our preschool curriculum consists of carefully planned learning experiences that support each child's development and build the skills needed for success in school and beyond. We combine age-appropriate, research-based approaches and give teachers flexibility to enrich instruction according to their gifts and talents.

Building Strong Foundations

We believe a child's first school experience strongly shapes their attitude toward learning. At CES, we give each child opportunities to build self-esteem, confidence, independence, and self-discipline at their own pace through thoughtfully planned experiences.

Our Learning Environment

Our program provides a safe, stable Christian environment with age-appropriate, Bible-based learning. Using the Abeka curriculum and best-practice teaching methods, we prepare children for lifelong learning and spiritual growth through:

- Structured learning and discovery
- Active listening and exploration
- Play-based learning
- Decision making and problem solving

Whole Child Development

The Abeka curriculum uses learning centers and a whole-child approach to support each child's development across seven key areas:

- Social development
- Emotional growth
- Physical development
- Intellectual advancement
- Linguistic skills
- Moral foundation
- Spiritual growth

Learning Through Play and Exploration

We nurture each child's love for learning through play and exploration, helping children develop:

- Motor skills and physical coordination
- Language and vocabulary expansion

- Independent thinking abilities
- Social skills and cooperation
- Responsibility and mutual respect
- Decision-making capabilities
- Problem-solving skills

Preparing for Success

We believe the first five years of a child's life are critically linked to later success. Our graduates will be well-equipped for kindergarten, having developed both "pre-skills" that lay the groundwork for future learning and "school readiness" skills that help them understand school routines, group work, and student success strategies.

Celebrating Individual Differences

Every child learns differently, and we celebrate these differences. By acknowledging each child's unique character and learning style, we provide differentiated instruction and ensure equal access to all learning opportunities.

Building Character

We encourage the development of essential character traits including:

- Forgiveness and empathy
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Group participation skills
- Personal responsibility
- Smooth transitions from home to school

Partnership with Parents

We strongly believe that parents are an essential part of the educational process. We welcome and encourage parental involvement as we work together to support your child's growth and development.

3. Approaches to Learning

Balanced Learning Structure

CES balances classroom time and exploration time so children experience a variety of learning opportunities each day.

Classroom Time

During classroom time, children engage in focused, teacher-led activities with their peers that emphasize:

- Language development and communication skills
- Cognitive skill building
- Confidence through cooperation and negotiation
- Group problem-solving and teamwork

Circle Time

Circle time focuses on specific learning areas each day, including math, literacy, and Bible teaching. Children participate in two planned circle times daily, providing structured group learning opportunities.

Exploration Time

Exploration time allows children to discover their environment and independently choose their own learning experiences through various learning centers.

During exploration time, teachers observe and interact with children to build on their interests and discoveries. They use these observations to plan meaningful lessons and hands-on activities. This time is also especially helpful for developing fine motor skills.

Outdoor Learning

Outdoor play exposes children to a variety of experiences that promote both learning and physical development in the following ways:

- Active Play: Climbing, sliding, balancing, hopping, running, and jumping to develop gross motor skills
- Sensory Exploration: Water play, sandbox activities, and nature discovery
- Creative Play: Role-play scenarios and outdoor games
- Choice-Based Learning: Self-directed activities with teacher guidance

Building Community

Our curriculum helps children build meaningful relationships with teachers and peers while learning to appreciate the diversity within their community. As children grow in social awareness, they are better prepared to develop the academic skills needed for future success in school.

4. Areas of Learning Development

Social and Emotional

This foundational area of SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) focuses on helping children develop self-confidence, self-awareness, and the ability to manage and regulate their feelings and behavior as well as promote empathy for others. Through daily interactions, children learn essential social skills including:

- Taking turns and sharing
- Resolving conflicts peacefully
- Listening and following instructions
- Cooperating with others
- Showing kindness and love
- Learning to accept guidance and authority

These early social skills prepare children for positive interactions throughout their lives and help them form deep, meaningful relationships with teachers and peers.

Math and Cognition

Mathematical awareness begins naturally through our environment, daily routines, and everyday activities. Using the Abeka curriculum, children explore fundamental concepts including:

Basic Concepts

Shapes, size, weight, capacity, position, distance, time, and money

Mathematical Thinking

Counting, comparing, relating, identifying patterns, and problem-solving

Pre-K Advanced Skills

Introduction to adding, subtracting, graphing, grouping, sorting, and comparisons

Color Recognition

Reinforced through hands-on experiences like wearing specific colors or enjoying themed snacks

Language and Literacy

Strong literacy skills begin with oral language development. Our language-rich environment builds a solid foundation for reading and writing using the Abeka curriculum, which emphasizes phonics and writing skills. Children develop:

Early Literacy Skills

- Alphabet recognition and letter-sound relationships
- Upper and lower-case letter identification
- Phonological and phonemic awareness
- Print awareness and proper book handling
- Left-to-right, top-to-bottom reading concepts

Pre-K Language Development

- Verbal interaction in group settings
- Independent reasoning and problem-solving expression
- Emotional expression through language
- Story comprehension and content discussion

Throughout the program, children engage with books, listen to stories, and participate in activities that strengthen their foundation for future reading and writing success.

Hands-On Science

Preschoolers' natural curiosity makes science exploration especially engaging. Our interactive science curriculum builds background knowledge through hands-on experiences such as:

- Planting and caring for class gardens
- Waterplay activities and simple experiments
- Discovery/Theme-based learning experiences
- Environmental exploration

These early experiences build valuable background knowledge that children will expand on in later grades.

Science Exploration

Our science curriculum encourages children to explore diverse topics including:

- Organic and non-organic materials
- Energy, weather, and natural phenomena
- Health and the human body
- Magnets, machines, and technology
- Insects, birds, and animal life cycles
- Metamorphosis and nature studies
- Forest and farm environments
- Physical concepts like floating, sinking, hot, and cold
- The five senses
- Space and prehistoric life

Early Childhood Social Studies

Social Studies instruction helps children understand their community and the people within it. Students learn about:

- Community helpers (police officers, firefighters, Emergency Technicians)
- Different holidays and cultural celebrations
- Their own cultural background and traditions
- Civic responsibility and community involvement

Creative Development

Creativity and imagination are strongly emphasized throughout our program. The CES environment encourages children to explore and experiment with:

- Music and Movement: Creative expression and worship through songs and dance developing a sense of rhythm
- Art Experiences: Both open-ended exploration and teacher-directed projects
- Varied Materials: Paint, crayons, clay, and other engaging art supplies
- Skill Development: Colors, shapes, patterns, and textures while practicing fine motor skills

Creative activities encourage original thinking, develop problem-solving abilities, and nurture emerging critical thinking skills while allowing children to create masterpieces to share with families.

Physical Development — Fine and Gross Motor Skills

Our school provides comprehensive resources for physical development.

Fine Motor Skills (small muscle development)

- Using utensils and writing tools
- Drawing, coloring, and painting
- Building with blocks and manipulating clay
- Engaging with various manipulative activities and table games

Gross Motor Skills (large muscle development)

- Running, skipping, jumping, climbing, and balancing
- Ball skills including throwing, catching, hitting, and kicking
- Muscle strengthening and coordination improvement

Spiritual Development

Our primary goal at CES is to plant seeds for Christ in every child's heart. Spiritual development is woven throughout our program through:

- Abeka Curriculum: Bible stories and biblical principles integrated into all learning materials
- Weekly Chapel: Christian programming featuring songs with creative movement, puppet characters, and Bible lessons with memory verses
- Music: Children worship God through songs bi-weekly
- Daily Integration: Teachers use teachable moments to reinforce God's word and Jesus's teachings
- Core Messages: Children learn that God loves them and that they are called to love Him and others, treating everyone with kindness and respect

Diversity and Inclusion

We are an inclusive community that celebrates diversity in all its forms. Mutual respect and awareness are key elements in building our community of learners and developing global citizens who appreciate and value differences.

Collaboration

Excellence in early childhood education requires partnership between teachers, parents, and children working together as collaborators. We encourage children to be aware of their surrounding environment and find meaningful ways to work together with fellow community members, building skills they will use throughout their lives.

5. More on Our Curriculum & Enhancements

The Abeka Curriculum

CES proudly uses the Abeka Curriculum as our foundational educational framework. Abeka is a highly acclaimed Christian-based educational program that emphasizes phonics as the cornerstone for building the essential skills necessary for early and successful reading. This outstanding curriculum also incorporates writing instruction and emerging math skills to provide a well-rounded educational foundation. Scripture and Bible lessons are woven naturally throughout all learning experiences.

Academic Focus Areas

Weekly Themes

Each week features a director-assigned theme that connects learning across all subject areas.

Development of Core Skills Implementing Abeka

- Phonics and Letters: Systematic introduction to letter recognition and phonetic sounds
- Mathematics: Number concepts, counting, colors, and shapes
- Writing: Daily practice for 4-year-olds throughout both semesters and for 3-year-olds during the second semester
- Early Reading: 4-year-olds learn sight words and letter blends, building connections to independent reading

Educational Excellence

The Abeka curriculum is comprehensively designed to achieve both academic excellence and moral character development through:

- Professionally illustrated textbooks and teaching materials
- Hands-on learning activities
- Appropriately challenging exercises
- Purposeful repetition for skill mastery
- Systematic reinforcement of key concepts

This traditional educational philosophy provides outstanding tools for both academic success and character development, helping to equip each child with a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

Enhancements & Specials

In addition to our regular curriculum, students also participate in special subjects such as Music, Chapel, Creative Movement, Art/Science, and library visits from the Cornelius Public Library. These specials are included in monthly tuition.

6. Inside the Classroom

An Engaging Learning Environment

Our classrooms are designed with learning centers that allow children to explore independently and collaborate in small groups. These centers support social, language, and academic development. Our learning centers include:

- Art and Writing Center: Creative expression and early literacy development
- Sensory Table: Hands-on exploration and scientific discovery
- Cozy Reading Corner: Quiet space for literacy and language development
- Blocks/Trucks/Cars: Spatial reasoning and cooperative play
- Manipulatives: Fine motor skills and mathematical concepts
- Home Living/Dramatic Play: Social skills and imagination
- Math Center: Number concepts and problem-solving
- Science Center: Investigation and discovery learning
- Life-Skills: Cutting and practical activities

Each center is equipped with carefully selected materials and activities designed to foster the specific developmental skills preschoolers need. Our teachers are especially attuned to the emotional aspects of classroom interactions, helping children identify emotions (both their own and others') while teaching effective problem-solving strategies.

Real-World Learning

For example, our dramatic play area may become a supermarket where children count money and sort items, make signs and labels, and explore foods from different cultures.

Dynamic Environment

Learning centers are updated regularly to reflect monthly themes, emerging interests, and individual learning goals.

Learning Fun

We choose age-appropriate themes and activities that support creativity, literacy, problem-solving, social growth, and independence. Themes change weekly, and each week highlights a specific letter and shape across learning activities.

Daily Discoveries

On any given day, you may find your child participating in a group science experiment, practicing early writing skills, counting manipulatives, or using their imagination to create a unique masterpiece. While our days include a rich variety of scheduled activities, children are offered choices so they can pursue activities that most interest them.

Encouraging Independence

Our teachers work diligently to foster each student's sense of independence and self-help skills through meaningful daily activities. We guide children in:

Self-Care Skills

- Putting on and fastening jackets (zippers and buttons)

- Removing sand or dirt from shoes and putting them back on
- Serving their own lunch portions
- Getting their own cups of water

Health and Hygiene

- Proper handwashing procedures (practiced multiple times daily)
- Covering their mouth with their arm when coughing
- Blowing their own nose independently
- Cleaning their faces after eating

These independence-building activities help children develop confidence and prepare them for future educational settings while building essential life skills.

7. Safety

Our Commitment to Your Child's Safety

At Cornelius Early Scholars, your child's safety and security are our top priorities. We maintain clear safety procedures to provide a secure learning environment for students and staff.

Licensing and Compliance

Cornelius Early Scholars operates under state religious exempt licensing.

Emergency Preparedness

Safety Drills

CES conducts regular safety drills with all children to ensure they are familiar with emergency procedures and can respond appropriately in various situations.

Emergency Planning

Each classroom has designated safe locations and specific protocols for different types of emergencies, including:

- Natural disasters
- Lockdown procedures
- Evacuation plans

Our staff receives ongoing training to handle emergency situations effectively while keeping children calm and secure.

Campus Security

Controlled Access

Our campus features staff-controlled doors that restrict building access. All visitors must be screened before entering the facility, providing an additional layer of protection for your child.

Your Partnership in Safety

Your cooperation with visitor procedures and pick-up/drop-off guidelines helps us maintain a secure, nurturing environment for all children.

Please update us right away if your emergency contact information changes and keep your cell phone nearby during preschool hours in case we need to reach you.

8. Arrival & Dismissal Procedures

Hours of Operation

CES operates Monday through Thursday from 9-1 p.m.

Daily Drop-Off Procedures

Morning Arrival (8:55 - 9:10 AM)

Park and walk your child to the double French doors, where the director will greet you. A staff member will safely escort your child to the classroom.

Late Arrivals

If you arrive after 9:10 AM, please:

- Park and walk your child to the main entrance
- Ring the bell to access the preschool area
- Wait for staff assistance

This security protocol protects all students and maintains classroom routines.

Daily Pick-Up Procedures

Afternoon Dismissal (12:50 - 1:10 PM)

We use the same system as morning drop-off. Your child will meet you at the French Doors once their name is called via Walkie Talkie.

Authorization Requirements

- Children will only be released to you or people listed on your child's authorized pickup forms
- Photo ID is required for anyone we don't recognize, even if they're on your approved list. This policy protects your child and ensures their safety

Schedule Changes and Communication

Advance Notice

Any change to your child's regular drop-off or pick-up plan must be submitted to the director. You will also need to add the person to the carpool form in your child's registration packet.

Same-Day Changes

For emergency schedule changes:

- Contact the office before 11:45 AM
- Call the main number (704.301.6851) or send a message via Class Dojo
- Send a written note
- This timing allows us to properly communicate changes to staff and your child
- Early pickup ends at 12:30 except for an emergency

Punctuality and Your Child's Well-Being

The Impact of Tardiness

Frequent late arrivals can be stressful for young children. Being late may feel unsettling and can disrupt their sense of security and daily routine.

Understandable Reasons for Late Arrival

We understand that delays sometimes occur due to:

- Family emergencies
- Illness or medical appointments
- Vehicle mechanical problems
- Unexpected traffic or road conditions

When these situations arise, please call to let us know you're running late so we can reassure your child and prepare for their arrival.

9. Classroom Ratios & Student Placement

Student-to-Teacher Ratios

Our student-to-teacher ratios are listed below and may be adjusted to meet the evolving needs of our community. The director reserves the right to increase class size up to a 6:1 ratio, with an ideal ratio of 5:1.

Classroom Placement

Children are placed in age-appropriate classrooms based on their birth date. To enroll in a classroom, a child must reach the required age for that level by August 31st of the enrolling year. Exceptions may be considered at the director's discretion based on the child's social, emotional, academic, and developmental needs.

CES also offers a Transitional Kindergarten program designed for children who: miss the age cut-off for kindergarten entry; would benefit from additional developmental challenges; need more time to build language skills, kindergarten readiness, maturity, or other foundational skills.

10. Preschool Calendar

CES follows the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school calendar for all holidays, teacher workdays, and most weather. Preschool is closed when public school is not in session. The preschool day officially dismisses at the end of all special events such as our annual Thanksgiving feast, Christmas pageant, Picnic Day, and our parent-chaperoned field trips. CES does not make up missed days due to inclement weather.

11. Inclement Weather

Our preschool follows the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) calendar for holidays and weather-related closures. If CMS schools are closed due to inclement weather, preschool will also be closed.

To Stay Informed, Please Monitor

- Preschool emails
- Class Dojo updates
- Local news websites and television stations

Delayed Start Guidelines

- If CMS operates on a one-hour delay, preschool will also begin one hour later.
- If CMS announces a two-hour delay, preschool will be canceled for the day.

Make-up days for weather-related closures will be scheduled only if CMS designates them. For the most current updates, please refer to the CMS website. Preschool families will also receive direct notifications.

12. Tuition Policies and Procedures

2026–2027 Tuition (Non-Scholarship Students)

Tuition for students not receiving a scholarship is invoiced mid-month and covers September through May. Tuition is paid one month in advance. No refunds or adjustments are given for illness, holidays, family travel, teacher workdays, or inclement weather.

- September tuition is due by August 30
- Final payment for May is due by April 30
- No payment is required in May, unless there is an outstanding balance

We Accept the Following Payment Methods

- Cash or Check
- Automatic monthly draft
- Automatic bill pay
- Zeffy

Important Fee Notice

- A \$35.00 fee will be charged for any returned payment.
- All fees and outstanding balances must be paid before the end of the school year.
- After two or more returned checks for non-sufficient funds (NSF), future payments must be made by cash or money order.
- A child's seat may be forfeited if tuition remains unpaid for more than 30 days without a prior payment arrangement.

Extended Absences

If a non-scholarship student is absent for an extended period but intends to return, tuition will continue to be charged to reserve their spot. If tuition is not paid, the vacancy may be filled.

13. Scholarships, Refund & Withdrawal Policy

Scholarships

Cornelius Early Scholars offers full and partial scholarships to qualifying families in Cornelius. CES is currently accepting applications for the 2026–2027 school year.

How To Apply

- Apply online at: www.corneliusearlyscholars.org/apply
- Pick up/drop off an application at:
 - The Neighborhood CARE Center (19711 Smith Circle, Cornelius)
 - First Baptist Church of Cornelius (21017 Catawba Ave., Cornelius)
 - Angels and Sparrows (15016 N. Statesville Ave., Huntersville)
 - Ada Jenkins (212 Gamble St., Davidson)
- Documentation is not required at the time of application but will be required for enrollment
- Remit \$25 application fee per family

What Documentation Is Required?

- Proof of child's date of birth
- Child's immunization records
- Proof of residency – utility bill, lease, driver's license, water bill
- Proof of income – Tax return, paystub, typed letter from employer

Do I Qualify for a Scholarship?

- Child's birthday is between 9/1/2021 – 8/31/2024
- Child is potty-trained
- Childhood immunizations up to date
- Cornelius residents preferred

Family Size	Poverty Guideline	150% FPL
2	\$21,640	\$32,460
3	\$27,320	\$40,980
4	\$33,000	\$49,500
5	\$38,680	\$58,020
6	\$44,360	\$66,540
7	\$50,040	\$75,060
8	\$55,720	\$83,580

FPL	Subsidy %	Level	3's Monthly Tuition	4's Monthly Tuition
200% +	0%	A	\$280.00	\$300.00
185-200%	25%	B	\$210.00	\$225.00
170-185%	50%	C	\$140.00	\$150.00
150-170%	75%	D	\$70.00	\$75.00
<150%	100%	E	\$0.00	\$0.00

Attendance Policy to Maintain Scholarship

School Attendance Policy

Preschool students receiving a scholarship must make every effort to not exceed 10 absences during the academic year. Excessive absences beyond this limit will put their scholarship status at risk and may result in scholarship suspension or termination.

“Beginning in kindergarten, if any enrolled student under the age of 17 has 10 or more unexcused absences, and the parent/guardian is not making a good faith effort to address attendance challenges, the parent/guardian may be prosecuted.”

“A school representative will contact parents/guardians when their child accumulates 3, 6 and 10 unexcused absences. After 10 unexcused absences, the principal's designee or attendance official will issue a 10-day letter stating that the student is in violation of the NC attendance law and parents may be referred for prosecution and the Department of Social Services notified.” (CMS Parent Handbook)

Parent Night Classes

Parents must attend monthly Parent Night classes to maintain scholarship eligibility. These classes support families with parenting strategies and financial guidance. If you cannot attend, please notify CES in advance. Multiple unexplained absences may lead to a review of scholarship status.

Volunteering

Families receiving scholarship assistance are expected to contribute to our preschool community through volunteering, including participation in five Special Centers per year if possible and Parent Night clean-up. For a full list of volunteer opportunities and additional ways to be involved in your child's preschool journey, see Section 15.

Refund Policy

Tuition is NOT REFUNDABLE OR PRO-RATED due to vacations, illness, snow or ice days, or any other closing.

Withdrawal Policy

Partnership Approach

We are committed to supporting every child's success in our program. When concerns arise, we work with families to find solutions that support both the child and the classroom community.

When Withdrawal May Be Considered

The preschool reserves the right to request a child's withdrawal in the following circumstances:

- Developmental readiness: When a child may benefit from additional time before entering a preschool environment
- Specialized support needs: When a child requires resources, training, or equipment beyond our current capacity to provide
- Policy compliance: When families are unable to adhere to essential preschool policies and procedures
- Safety concerns: When behaviors pose ongoing safety risks to the child or others
- Lack of potty training
- Non-payment of tuition

Our Support Process

Before any withdrawal decision is made, we will:

- Schedule a parent conference to discuss concerns and observations
- Develop an action plan collaboratively with parents to support the child's success
- Implement strategies and monitor progress for 3-4 weeks
- Provide ongoing communication about the child's adjustment and growth

Withdrawal will be considered only after these supportive steps have been fully attempted.

Voluntary Withdrawal

If your family chooses to withdraw because of a move or program change, we ask for two weeks' notice whenever possible so we can support your child's transition and enrollment planning.

14. Class Cancellations

The school reserves the right to cancel any classes and/or registrations if there is not sufficient enrollment to justify its continuance.

15. Parent Participation & Birthdays

Volunteer Opportunities

The following are ways you can get involved at CES:

- Career Week
- Room Parent
- Serve on the CES Board
- Become a substitute teacher
- Guest Reader
- Volunteer for Special Centers

Classroom Visits

You are welcome to join your child's class during snack time on their birthday. Please let the teacher know at least one day in advance so the class schedule can be adjusted.

Safety Guidelines

For the safety of all children, the following items are not permitted:

- Balloons (choking hazard)
- Candles (fire safety)
- Chewing gum (choking hazard)
- Small candy pieces (choking hazard)

Birthday Treats and Gifts

- Goodie bags may be distributed at departure time, not during class
- Personal gifts should be opened at home, not during school hours
- Consider healthy snack alternatives that all children can enjoy

Party Invitations

Birthday party invitations may only be distributed at school if the entire class is invited. For smaller celebrations, please arrange distribution outside of school hours to avoid hurt feelings.

16. What to Bring and Not Bring to Preschool

Appropriate Clothing

Please dress your child in clothes that are comfortable, easy to move in, washable, and manageable for independent dressing and bathroom use.

- Comfortable and allow easy movement
- Washable and suitable for messy activities

Because children take part in outdoor play and art activities, we recommend play clothes rather than special outfits. Smocks are provided for messy activities, but they may not fully protect clothing.

Daily Essentials

Your child must bring a book bag every day. It should contain the daily communication folder, take-home materials and artwork, and any notes between home and school.

- Daily communication folder with important information
- Take-home materials and artwork

When a child arrives without a book bag, important communication may be missed.

Footwear for Safety

For active play and safety, please avoid:

- Sandals or flip-flops
- Clogs or backless shoes
- Dress shoes with slippery soles

Choose closed-toe shoes with good traction that allow children to run, climb, and play safely.

Required Spare Clothing

All families must provide a complete set of spare clothing for their child, including:

- Seasonally appropriate shirt and pants/shorts
- Underwear
- Socks
- Shoes

Storage and Labeling

- Place all items in a labeled Ziploc bag
- Label each individual item with your child's name
- Bring spare clothes on your child's first day
- We'll notify you when seasonal clothing changes are needed

Seasonal Items

As weather changes, consider sending:

- Winter: Hats, mittens, and warm coats for outdoor play
- All seasons: Light jacket or sweater
- All outerwear should be clearly labeled with your child's name

Remember: We go outside in most weather conditions, so appropriate outerwear helps ensure your child stays comfortable during outdoor learning and play.

Toys and Personal Items

To minimize loss, conflicts, and distractions during learning time, personal toys should remain at home.

Show and Tell Exception

Toys are welcome only when designated for Show and Tell presentations. Show and Tell items will be:

- Stored safely in your child's cubby until presentation time
- Returned to the cubby after sharing to prevent loss or conflicts
- Your child's responsibility to remember and care for during the day

17. Breakfast, Snack & Lunch

Breakfast

Please ensure your child has eaten breakfast before arriving at preschool. This helps:

- Maintain consistent classroom routines
- Prevent confusion among children about food rules
- Ensure your child is ready to participate in morning activities

Please do not send breakfast foods or drinks with your child to school.

Morning Snack

We provide a nutritious mid-morning snack for all students. Please tell your child's teacher about any food allergies or dietary restrictions so we can provide safe options.

Lunch Program

Provided Lunch Service

Daily lunch is available through our partnership with Angels and Sparrows. This service provides nutritious, age-appropriate meals, supports consistent classroom routines, and reduces preparation time for families.

- Nutritious, age-appropriate meals
- Consistent mealtimes that support classroom schedules
- Reduced preparation time for busy families

Lunch Options for Families

You have three choices regarding lunch:

- School-provided lunch: Your child receives the daily meal from Angels and Sparrows
- Early pickup: Pick up your child by 11:45 AM before lunch time
- Pack lunch from home: Send a complete lunch with your child

Allergy and Dietary Considerations

Please ensure we have current information about any food allergies or dietary restrictions. This information helps us:

- Coordinate safe meals with our lunch provider
- Prepare appropriate alternatives when needed
- Train staff in emergency procedures if applicable

CES is a peanut-free environment. Because classes often combine special centers, events, celebrations, and recess, even cross-contact can create a serious risk for students with peanut allergies. Please do not send foods containing peanuts or peanut products. Contact your child's teacher or the main office anytime you need to update dietary information.

18. Health and Wellness Policies

Our Commitment to Child Safety

CES is committed to protecting the health and safety of every child in our care. We rely on parents as partners to help prevent the spread of illness and maintain a healthy learning environment for everyone.

Immunizations

Immunizations must be current for each child. A copy of your child's most recent immunization record is required at enrollment and must be updated as additional vaccines are received. Immunizations must follow the schedule set by the U.S. Public Health Service and the American Academy of Pediatrics. As part of the registration packet provided at Open House, families must also submit either a copy of the child's well visit or a signed physician's statement.

When to Keep Your Child Home

Please do not send your child to school if they have any of the following symptoms or conditions:

Fever and General Illness

- Fever of 100.0°F or higher within the last 72 hours
- Vomiting within the last 24 hours
- Diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Stomachache or loose stools
- Severe cold, sinus infection, or upper respiratory infection

Respiratory Symptoms

- Deep and/or persistent cough
- Sore throat
- Discolored runny nose
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

COVID-19 Related

- Diagnosed with COVID-19 (may return 3 days past first symptom onset AND 72 hours fever-free)
- New headache
- Fever or chills
- Body aches
- New cough
- New loss of taste or smell

Skin and Eye Conditions

- Unexplained rash or mouth sores
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
- Head lice or scabies (must provide treatment receipt before returning)

Contagious Diseases

Any diagnosed contagious condition including:

- Influenza
- Chicken pox
- Strep throat
- Impetigo
- MRSA
- Shigellosis
- Rotavirus
- Fifth Disease
- Other communicable disease

If Your Child Becomes Ill or Needs Medical Attention

Children with any of the symptoms listed above may not remain at school. We will contact a parent or emergency contact for immediate pickup. If your child needs medical attention and we cannot reach you, we will contact medical authorities.

Stay Connected

Please ensure we can reach you during school hours and update emergency contact information whenever it changes.

- Keeping cell phones on during school hours
- Checking voicemails, emails, and Class Dojo messages regularly
- Updating emergency contact information when changes occur

Contagious Disease Notification

If your child is diagnosed with a contagious disease, please notify the preschool right away so the director can:

- Inform other families of potential exposure
- Take appropriate cleaning and safety measures
- Follow state health department guidelines

Return to School Requirements

- Fever-free for 72 hours (without fever-reducing medication)
- Symptom resolution appropriate to the illness
- Doctor's clearance may be required for certain contagious conditions
- Treatment verification required for head lice or scabies

Medication Policy

CES staff do not administer medication to students. This policy supports child safety, clear medical oversight, and consistent care procedures.

- Child safety and proper medical oversight

- Clear liability boundaries
- Consistent care protocols

If your child needs medication during school hours, please speak with the director about other arrangements.

Allergies

Each classroom maintains a copy of any known allergies and posts a list as a reminder. All EpiPens are locked in a cabinet inside the director's office in the case of anaphylactic reaction. All EpiPens must be returned at the end of the school year to the parents and resubmitted when preschool begins in the fall.

Partnership in Health

Thank you for your cooperation in maintaining a healthy environment for all our students. When in doubt about whether your child should attend school, we encourage you to err on the side of caution and keep them home until they're feeling better.

19. Discipline Policies and Procedures

Our Philosophy

Discipline is an important part of your child's learning experience at CES. We guide children toward appropriate behavior through positive, supportive strategies rather than punishment. Our goal is to help children build self-regulation, empathy, and conflict-resolution skills in a safe, nurturing environment.

Creating a Positive Learning Environment

Our teachers work to maintain an orderly classroom while ensuring safety, respecting each child's feelings and individuality, setting clear age-appropriate expectations, and using prevention-focused strategies whenever possible.

- Safety for every child
- Respect for each child's feelings and individuality
- Clear expectations that are age-appropriate and consistent
- Prevention-focused strategies that address issues before they escalate

Teaching Appropriate Behavior

We help children build these skills:

- Communication skills: Teaching children to verbalize their feelings through modeling appropriate words, phrases, and actions
- Problem-solving abilities: Guiding children to think through conflicts and find solutions
- Empathy: Understanding how their actions affect others
- Self-regulation: Learning to manage emotions and make positive choices

Learning Through Choices and Consequences

Our discipline approach is focused on learning, not punishment. Children understand that:

- Every choice has a consequence
- They have the power to make better decisions
- Mistakes are opportunities to learn and grow

Progressive Discipline Approach

Step 1 – Initial Intervention: When inappropriate behavior occurs, teachers first use a calm, firm voice with direct eye contact, redirection to appropriate activities, and clear reminders of classroom expectations.

Step 2 – Quiet Time: If the behavior persists or becomes disruptive, the child receives a brief quiet time (maximum 3 minutes), teachers discuss better problem-solving strategies, and the child returns to activities when ready to make positive choices.

Step 3 – Director Intervention: For continued or aggressive behavior, the child visits the director's office for discussion, clear expectations are reviewed with understanding, and the child returns to class with renewed focus on appropriate behavior.

Step 4 – Parent Contact and Early Pickup: If disruptive behavior continues, parents are contacted for immediate pickup, a conference is scheduled to discuss strategies, and home and school approaches are coordinated for consistency.

Step 5 – Suspension (Rare Circumstances): In exceptional cases where behavior continues to disrupt learning, a one-week suspension may be implemented, a family conference is required before return, and additional support strategies are developed.

Step 6 – Dismissal (Last Resort): Only after all interventions have been exhausted and in the best interest of all students' safety and learning environment, dismissal may be considered through our withdrawal process.

Positive Reinforcement Strategies

Our teachers emphasize:

- Recognition of positive behavior and good choices
- Encouragement of problem-solving efforts
- Celebration of growth and improvement
- Peer support and friendships

Partnership with Families

We value your partnership in supporting your child's behavioral growth:

- Share successful home strategies so we can maintain consistency
- Communicate openly about challenges and progress
- Work together on common goals and expectations
- Celebrate improvements both at home and school

Our Commitment

We are committed to creating a secure, loving environment where:

- Limits are reasonable and consistent
- Children learn to make positive choices
- Individual differences are respected
- Every child can develop confidence and independence

Important Policy Note

Corporal punishment is strictly prohibited at our preschool. All disciplines focus on teaching, guiding, and supporting children's emotional and social development. Our goal is to help each child develop the skills and confidence needed to resolve conflicts independently, show empathy toward others, and make positive choices throughout their lives.

20. Child Protection & Biting

Child Abuse and Neglect

The safety and well-being of every child in our care is our highest priority. Staff members have both a moral and legal responsibility to protect children from all forms of abuse and neglect, including physical, verbal, emotional, and sexual abuse.

Mandatory Reporting

Any suspected abuse or neglect, regardless of its source, will be reported to the appropriate authorities as required by law. All reports are handled with strict confidentiality to protect both the child and family involved.

Biting

Biting is a common part of early childhood development, especially for toddlers and young preschoolers. Children at this age use their senses to explore and understand their world, may treat people as objects to investigate through touch, taste, and other senses, and often lack the verbal skills to express their needs, frustrations, or emotions. Because young children are still developing language and self-regulation, they may bite when exploring, frustrated, or overwhelmed. While this behavior can be developmentally typical, we take it seriously and work with families to address it promptly and consistently.

Our Response Protocol

When a biting incident occurs, our staff follow these immediate steps:

Stop and Separate

- Firmly say "NO!" to stop the behavior
- Immediately separate the children involved
- Prioritize care for the child who was bitten

Care for the Victim

- Clean the bite area with soap and water
- Provide comfort and reassurance
- Apply appropriate first aid if needed
- Encourage the child to use their voice: "Ouch, don't bite!"

Address the Biter

- Respond immediately with clear, age-appropriate language
- Explain that "biting hurts" and "we don't hurt our friends"
- Help the child understand the impact of their actions

Natural Consequences

Depending on the situation and child's development:

- Brief time-out (age-appropriate duration)
- Opportunity to help comfort the child who was hurt

- Practice using words instead of biting

Documentation and Communication

- Complete incident reports for both children
- Contact parents before pickup if the bite is severe
- Maintain confidential records of incidents

Environmental Assessment

Teachers evaluate:

- Triggers that may have led to biting
- Environmental factors that contributed to the situation
- Adjustments needed to prevent future incidents

Partnership with Families: Communication

- Confidentiality: The identity of children involved in biting incidents remains confidential
- Notification: Parents of children who are bitten are always informed
- Collaboration: We work closely with families to ensure consistent approaches at home and school

When Additional Support Is Needed

Multiple Incidents

If a child bites more than once, parents will be called for a conference to discuss triggers and patterns, develop coordinated strategies between home and school, and create an individual support plan.

Persistent Biting

When biting becomes a recurring pattern, after parent consultation, the child may be sent home for a three-day break following each incident. This allows time for reflection and strategy adjustment, and return includes a review of support strategies.

Extended Break

In exceptional circumstances where safety concerns persist, the school may request a predetermined time away from the program. This allows the child additional developmental time, and re-entry includes a comprehensive plan for success.

Our Commitment

We understand that biting can be distressing for all families involved. Our approach focuses on supporting both the child who bites and the child who was bitten, teaching appropriate social skills and emotional regulation, maintaining a safe environment for all children, and working in partnership with families throughout the process.

Remember: Biting is typically a phase that children outgrow as their language and social skills develop. With consistent support from both home and school, children learn more appropriate ways to express their needs and interact with others.

21. Special Needs

CES is committed to welcoming children with differing abilities because inclusion benefits all children. While CES is not a therapeutic program, we provide opportunities for children with disabilities and typically developing children to learn, play, and grow together. We recognize that children have a wide range of abilities, behaviors, and needs, and we strive to accommodate as many as possible.

Enrollment and Placement

CES seeks to be as inclusive as possible when enrolling children with disabilities, developmental delays, or chronic illnesses. We work with families to determine the most appropriate placement for each child, which may include:

- Selecting the best teacher to address the child's specific needs
- Distributing children with special needs across classes to ensure that no single classroom or teaching team is overwhelmed
- Assigning children to classes based on developmental age rather than chronological age (children will never be placed in classes older than their chronological age)
- Adapting educational and developmental goals for children with special needs

Whenever possible, CES will make reasonable accommodations to meet each child's individual needs. However, the safety and successful functioning of the classroom always take priority over any individual child's needs.

Family Partnership

We ask that families of children with special needs maintain open communication with administrative staff and their children's teachers. A healthy dialogue between parents, teachers, therapists, and administrators is essential for success. For families whose children receive therapy services:

- Provide a copy of the therapy schedule to both the classroom teacher and preschool office
- Indicate if the therapist requires dedicated space outside the classroom so appropriate accommodation can be provided
- Contact the preschool office and classroom teacher when evaluations or observations are scheduled

Admission Process

When a child who has been identified by a medical specialist as having special needs applies for enrollment, the director conducts a thorough interview with parents to gather information about the child's developmental strengths, areas of concern, and support needs. Relevant past and current records, as well as professional evaluations, may be requested.

The child and parent are often invited to visit a classroom for observation and assessment. If the child is transferring from another local program, we may consult with their previous teachers.

Based on all collected information, the director will decide whether to accept the child if enrollment would be mutually beneficial for both the child and CES.

Important Note: CES does not formally test children before admission. The evaluation process outlined above is designed to provide sufficient information to determine whether there is a feasible and beneficial match between school and child.

Probationary Period: After enrollment begins, each child is observed closely for three to four weeks. Teachers, the director, parents, and professionals working with the child collaborate during this time. If at any point during this probationary period the child's needs are determined to be exceptionally demanding in the classroom environment, dismissal from preschool may become necessary.

When professional intervention is required, the situation is carefully monitored. The decision to continue enrollment is based on professional recommendations, the child's behavior, teacher input and concerns, parental feedback, and the director's assessment of all collected data.

Mid-Year Identification

Children not initially identified as having special needs may exhibit concerning behaviors during the school year. When this occurs, the same process outlined above will be implemented.

Emergency Situations

The final decision regarding continued enrollment is made by the CES Board of Directors following the preschool director's recommendation. In cases where a student endangers themselves or another child, immediate removal may be the only viable option, and standard protocol may not be followed due to safety concerns.

Suspected Special Needs

Preschool teachers are often the first to notice possible developmental delays, making them an invaluable resource in identifying children's difficulties. Teachers spend significant time with children (second only to parents) and have experience with many children over time, helping them establish a foundation for understanding typical development.

Process for Suspected Delays

- The teacher discusses concerns with the director, who may observe the child.
- The teacher then communicates those concerns with the parent.
- While we never attempt to diagnose an illness, delay, or disability, our experience allows us to notice developmental differences that may be less apparent to family members.

CES's policy is to work in partnership with families to provide the best possible care and environment for each child by openly communicating any concerns we observe.

22. Toilet Training & Classroom Placement

Toilet Training Requirements

All children must be fully potty trained before the school year begins. We understand that accidents may occur, especially with newly potty-trained children. If your child has recently completed toilet training, please provide extra clothing and undergarments in case of accidents.

Age Requirement

CES follows North Carolina's kindergarten age cutoff date of August 31st. Children must reach the required age for their classroom by August 31st to enroll in that age group.

Year-Long Placement

Children stay in their assigned age group for the full school year, regardless of when their birthday occurs. We do not move children to an older classroom during the year after they have a birthday.

Example: If your child turns 4 on October 5th, they will remain in the 3-year-old classroom for the entire school year rather than moving to the 4-year-old class.

Long-Term Academic Timeline

Following this policy means that children with fall birthdays will be among the older students in their grade level throughout their academic career. For instance, using the October 5th birthday example, the child will turn 6 on October 5th of their kindergarten year and will turn 18 on October 5th of their senior year, graduating at a slightly older age than many classmates.

Research shows that older children in a grade level often have several advantages:

- Greater emotional maturity
- Enhanced academic readiness
- Better self-regulation skills
- Improved social development

We encourage parents not to feel pressured by age considerations or feel compelled to have their child "tested out" of their appropriate grade level. In many cases, being among the older students in a class provides developmental and academic benefits that serve children well throughout their educational journey.

23. Field Trips, Communication & Conferences

Field Trips

All field trips are parent-chaperoned events. The director collects trip fees prior to the scheduled event.

Important Field Trip Guidelines

- There is no regular school on field trip days, except when inclement weather requires the preschool to operate on a normal schedule.
- Field trips cancelled due to inclement weather are typically rescheduled for a future date.
- School is officially dismissed at the end of the field trip — we do not resume classes at preschool if the trip ends early.

Communication

Weekly Updates

Each preschool family receives a weekly newsletter, both in print and by email, with reminders about upcoming events, announcements, and policy updates.

Contacting Teachers

Please do not contact your child's teacher during preschool hours except in an emergency. During school, teachers are focused on supervising and teaching their students. Your child's teacher will communicate with you regularly through:

- Behavior sheets
- Class Dojo
- Emails
- Written notes

Appropriate Communication Times

Please be respectful of our teaching hours. Teachers are required to remain in the classroom with their students, and it is inappropriate to discuss confidential information about your child in hallways during school hours.

For safety and privacy, drop-off and pick-up are not the best times for detailed conversations about your child. If you need to talk with the teacher, please schedule a meeting before or after school.

Conferences

We are always willing to share our observations of your child with you. Most communication occurs through informal conversations, phone calls, or emails.

Formal Conference Schedule

- Pre-K and T-K students: Two conferences per year (early fall and January)
- Three-year-old students: One conference in early May

If you would like to meet with your child's teacher at any time, please arrange to meet before or after school hours.

24. Grievances, Social Media & Confidentiality

Grievances

We want you to feel satisfied with our program, and we believe open communication is essential.

Resolution Process

- First Step: Share thoughts and concerns directly with your child's teacher as issues arise. Every effort should be made to resolve issues at this level.
- Second Step: Contact the preschool director if you and the teacher cannot reach a satisfactory solution.
- Final Step: If you remain unsatisfied after speaking with the director, present your complaint in written form to the preschool board.

Social Media and Confidentiality

Social Media Policy

Posting negative comments about any aspect of Cornelius Early Scholars on social media platforms is strictly prohibited. Violations of this policy may result in your child's removal from the program when identified by CES staff, board members, or other observers who report such posts to the school.

Confidentiality Guidelines

Please contact your child's teacher or the director before discussing your child's individual progress with other families. These matters are confidential and should only be shared with appropriate parties involved in your child's care.

This approach ensures you receive accurate information to help you make informed decisions regarding your child's academic, social, emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual development.

25. Graduation

Celebration of Achievement

Graduation for our 4-year-old students is a special way to celebrate the end of preschool and the beginning of kindergarten.

Event Details

Attendance

This intimate ceremony is limited to parents and relatives of our graduating students. It is not a school-wide event, allowing us to focus exclusively on honoring our graduates and their families.

Venue & Program

- Ceremony: Held in the Sanctuary with a formal graduation program
- Reception: Beautiful celebration in the Fellowship Hall following the ceremony

Costs and Materials

All festivities are provided free of charge to graduating students and their families, except for the cap, gown, and tassel, which are ordered in early May.

Graduate Gifts

Each graduate receives special gifts from preschool:

- Official preschool diploma
- Children's Bible

Our Commitment

We roll out the red carpet for our graduating students, ensuring a memorable and stunning graduation ceremony that families will treasure for years to come.

Closing Message

Thank you for choosing Cornelius Early Scholars. We are honored to be part of your child's early learning journey and to help build a lasting love of learning.

“Start children off on the way they should go, and when they are old, they will not turn from it.”

— Proverbs 22:6

#Go CES Cubs!

