ACCESS®
BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES

Academy
Student Handbook

Table of Contents

About ACCESS®

ACCESS Academy is part of ACCESS®, a 501c3 nonprofit offering evaluation services, full-time education, therapy, training and activities for individuals with developmental delays and learning disabilities. Founded in 1994 by two speech-language pathologists and a special educator, the center comprises four branches: ACCESS Evaluation and Resource Center, (offering developmental, psychological and cognitive evaluations; specialized tutoring; and technology training for students, parents and professionals), ACCESS Therapy (an outpatient pediatric speech, physical and occupational therapy clinic), ACCESS Schools (an infant stimulation program, preschool and academy serving children and youths ages six weeks old to 21) and two adult programs, ACCESS Life and Project SEARCH® Arkansas, both for young adults ages 18 to 35.

About ACCESS Academy

Founded in 1998, ACCESS Academy offers the most comprehensive education program in Arkansas for children and youths ages 5-21 with language learning differences. Indeed, ACCESS Academy was the first private school for school-aged children with disabilities in the Central Arkansas area. With the move to the Breckenridge location in 2001, ACCESS Academy tripled in student and teacher populations. The move also allowed ACCESS to expand student life activities: Students may now participate in swim, track, cheerleading and Special Olympics teams; student council and prom; the ACCESS Adventure summer program; youth, teen and young adult nights out; and in three retail businesses powered by students: ACCESS Ceramics, ACCESS Gardens and the ACCESS School Store.

Academic Programs

The core of ACCESS Academy's philosophy is the belief that the ability to effectively use language is crucial to academic success. The curriculum reflects this and students are given ample opportunities to develop reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Teachers use a variety of methods and programs to teach reading skills like phonics, decoding and comprehension. Students can practice their reading skills in all curriculum areas.

The academic programs emphasize individualized development and acquisition of language skills. Each student has an individualized program specifically designed to address the diagnosed needs in the areas of reading, spelling, writing and comprehension. Coursework also addresses the areas of math, language arts, social studies, science, study skills, literature and auditory/oral expression. This program provides rigorous remediation for students experiencing particular difficulty with written and oral expression. An integrated curriculum emphasizes and reinforces the relationships between listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Oral Expression

Literature and Study Skills
Children possessing metalinguistic awareness have intuitions about the structure of language and its components. Metalinguistic awareness serves as a scaffold for orderly processing and storage of information. Students with language disorders have difficulties with one or more of these linguistic areas. When assessed under sufficiently demanding conditions, dyslexic students also exhibit deficits in one or more of these linguistic areas: phonology (speech sounds), morphology (meaningful word parts), syntax (sentence structure), semantics (vocabulary, meaning) and pragmatics (multi-sentence level of discourse, social communication skills). Through direct instruction in each of these areas, students are immersed in the rules and structure of the English language. Thematic units and literature serve as vehicles for instruction in the linguistic areas.

Oral Expression and Use of Language
All of the students are exposed to oral expression coursework designed to enhance language proficiency and communicative competence. For each one of our students, a strong emphasis is placed upon verbal production as a means for strengthening language skills.

The oral expression curriculum is two-fold, serving to improve the students' ability to share information with others and to engage them in social communication and discourse. To facilitate the sharing of information in a concise and coherent manner, students are provided with scaffolding; for example, students refer to graphic organizers as they provide descriptions, express a comparison and contrast, report an event, retell a story in sequential order, explain a process, or state and support an opinion.

During oral presentations, students are evaluated in nonverbal communication skills (e.g., eye contact, posture, gestures, facial expression). They are also monitored for articulatory/prosodic features of voice (i.e., clarity, volume, pitch, quality, intonation) which enhance communicative intent.

To more effectively engage in social communication and discourse, students are expected to become responsible members of the classroom community - conveying communicative intent, listening to others in an attentive manner, demonstrating consideration of previous contributions while formulating a response, and disagreeing in a constructive manner, which reflects consideration of other points of view. Literature and thematic units serve as frameworks for instruction.

In addition to literature and thematic units, each classroom has pragmatics lessons, which are developed specifically with the needs of the students within each classroom. Lessons are developed by the staff with input from a speech-language pathologist and are taught by a member of the teaching team. Lessons focus on three major communication skills, including using language, changing

language and following rules. Using language for different purposes includes greeting, information, demanding, promising and requesting. Changing language refers to giving background information to an unfamiliar listener, speaking differently in a classroom than on the playground, and talking differently to different audiences based on familiarity and age. Finally, following the rules for conversation and storytelling includes taking turns during conversation, introducing topics of conversation, staying on topic, rephrasing when misunderstood, how to use verbal and nonverbal signals, how close to stand to someone when speaking, how to use facial expression and eye contact.

ACCESS Academy stresses sound character development through daily classroom interactions, group projects, social skills instruction and participation in the community service activities. Responsibility and respect for self, as well as others, is emphasized throughout the program.

Auditory and Oral Expression
To promote improved phonological skills, students are trained to discriminate speech sounds, associate speech sounds with letter symbols and identify syllable units within words. The students are also engaged in the study of meaningful word parts, sentence structure, vocabulary, meaning, discourse and social communication. Through exposure to literature and poetry read aloud, students become linked to the richness and cadence of our language.

Literature

For elementary students who are not yet independent readers, literature class involves reading loud and discussing age-appropriate literature of varied genres. Students are exposed to literature, which challenges their abilities to assimilate information and evaluate stories. They are encouraged to draw upon prior knowledge and real-life experiences as they participate in group discussions. Literary elements (plot, character and setting) are introduced. Through brainstorming activities, main ideas and sequence of events are determined.

The literature curriculum is dynamic; selections each year are determined by the current profile of the students. Age-appropriate selections of varied forms and genres follow alternating strands: literature, which the entire class can decode and read aloud together, and quality literature, which is above the students' decoding level but serves as a rich resource for higher-level discussion and analysis. Discussion of setting, plot and character development is ongoing. Incorporating the graphic organizers from oral expression activities, students express comparisons and contrasts of characters, plots, settings and authors"points of view.

Templates are used to facilitate coherent delivery of description, opinion accompanied by supporting data, and inferences or predictions based upon logic. The students engage in discussions drawing from prior knowledge and real-life experiences relating to each selection and/or theme. Theme-related topics of study

accompany the literature. Literature and theme serve as vehicles for development of oral expression skills.

Reading Instruction

Reading groups are organized homogeneously, according to decoding level, chronological age, independence and social maturity. Literacy profiles of students lie along a wide spectrum of development, and no single approach to reading instruction meets the needs of all students. Following formal and informal evaluation of pre-literate, literacy and comprehension skills, an individualized reading program is constructed for each student. Students who demonstrate a severe phonologically-based reading disability are provided intensive training in development of phonological and phonemic awareness, direct instruction in decoding skills emphasizing the alphabetic code, and direct instruction in the structure of the English writing system. As students acquire basic decoding skills, emphasis is placed on fluency and enhancing visual memory for sight words. The study of root words, addition of morphological endings (prefixes and suffixes), and syllabication are emphasized. For students decoding at or above grade level, improvement of rate and fluency is stressed, as well as advanced syllabication and word attack skills. Reading instruction is direct, sequential and hierarchical; tutors employ a multisensory approach involving auditory, visual and tactile-kinesthetic techniques.

Comprehension
Comprehension is developed concurrently with oral reading from fundamental reading levels through the most advanced. An appreciation for literature of quality is emphasized, incorporating literal, figurative and interpretive levels of language as appropriate. All students have a reading selection and use literature as a basis for developing vocabulary and comprehension. Students are taught to recognize and retain specific details, draw conclusions, detect and relate sequence, locate information and determine the main idea of selections. Related skills such as critical analysis are presented as student's progress to more advanced reading levels.

Spelling
Spelling instruction follows an ordered progression of patterns closely paralleling oral reading. Basic skills such as application of sound-symbol relationships and awareness of common syllable types are taught until automatized. More advanced patterns, multisyllabic words, and suffix addition rules are introduced, with an emphasis on linguistic principles rather than rote knowledge. Sight words and common sequences (days, months, numbers) in frequent use are practiced throughout the program.

Handwriting
All students utilize cursive handwriting in all work. Instruction is provided in basic writing strokes and correct formation of upper and lower case cursive alphabets. Fluid, legible handwriting is emphasized as a component of correct spelling and written expression, as well as a vocational skill. In addition to handwriting skills, students use

keyboards are instructed keyboarding programs when age-appropriate. Once students achieve proficiency in their keyboarding skills, certain assignments may be completed using word processing.

Language Arts
Language arts class encompasses guidelines from the Arkansas Language Arts Curriculum Frameworks, concentrating heavily on the areas of language and composition, in keeping with our mission of remediating significant deficits in specific literacy skills.

Within the language strand, there is an emphasis on the development of oral to written expression (talking, listening, discussing, analyzing and brainstorming for ideas prior to writing.) In addition, language instruction incorporates theme-centered and structured linguistic approaches to teaching language skills. Learning is a collaborative effort that provides opportunities to learn pragmatic skills and engage in oral rehearsal. As students participate in formal and informal discussions, they listen to the ideas of others and contribute information to acquire new knowledge. They also are guided to apply their increasing knowledge of English language structure in all contexts. Thematic units based on a selection of literature (e.g., "Medieval Life and Times" based on the literature *The Paper Bag Princess*) provide the basis for instruction and include additional reading materials that meet the students' comprehension levels. These units extend to other subject areas such as science, social studies, math, art and music.
Theme-related pictures are used to tap into the students' visual abilities, stimulate word retrieval and foster contextual associations. Electronic media such as videos and films are viewed when they appropriately supplement a thematic unit.

Language arts incorporates elements of composition through extensive practice, generating examples of complete sentences (e.g., expanded kernel sentences, compound and complex sentences, paragraphs, themes). There is a heavy emphasis on clarity of expression and the use of rich vocabulary. Lessons in basic capitalization and punctuation are presented within the context of written expression. Outlining skills are taught in highly structured sentence and paragraph frames, which improve students' abilities to organize material visually, structure the patterns of newly introduced sentences into appropriate, effective sequences, and produce a variety of paragraph formats. Special attention is given to proofreading all written work and editing writing using standard English conventions. Culminating activities, student presentations and short reports provide purpose to the daily lessons as well as a synthesis of what has been learned.

Awareness of the sound and syllable structure of words is emphasized, and students are encouraged to apply phonemic-based spelling principles to represent new or unfamiliar words. The effective organization of work on paper, which relies on legible handwriting, as well as following directions, is stressed. Accurate copying, from both near and far points, is an area of ongoing concern and is an important part of most class assignments. Vocabulary expansion focuses on generating theme-specific vocabulary and providing appropriate synonyms and antonyms.

Emphasis is placed on identifying and generating specific nouns, action verbs, prepositional phrases and adjectives. The accurate use of these words in context is a focus as well. Adverbs are taught once adjectival description is mastered. Both language and composition activities also provide introduction and practice in the use of electronic media such as computers and the Internet as language arts tools.

It is important to note that the literature strand is more heavily emphasized in our literature classes, individualized tutorials and content areas due to the language-based thematic nature of instruction across the curriculum. We understand and endorse the need for students to be familiar with certain core authors and their works, but the priority in language arts class is to address our students' need to access (decode) and respond (with written expression) to text. The assessed reading and written expression levels of students generally reflect a need for increased skills and considerable growth before they can succeed at grade- level expectations. Accordingly, works chosen for students to read independently are at their level of readability and do not correspond in many cases to grade expectations for specific authors or books.

Mathematics

The mathematics program provides a learning environment tailored to the individual needs of the student. Academic goals are created to provide necessary remediation while moving toward grade level curriculum. Emphasis is placed on developing math skills that provide students with a depth of understanding, reflect applications in the real world, and relate to other curricular areas.

Students are assigned instruction based on mathematical ability. These levels are determined by informal and formal placement tests, as well as past academic performance. Students' abilities and needs are continuously assessed by the classroom teachers, with specific attention given to individual learning styles and needs.

Mathematics is viewed as a language, subject to the same obstacles encountered by students with language-based learning disabilities. Instruction is sensitive to these issues. Compensatory strategies, which limit sequencing demands are employed, for example, with some students.

We currently use Growing With Mathematics and Saxon Math as core math programs. We supplement these commercially available programs with Language Math, a component of The DuBard Association Method® and other benchmark-based skills needed to round out the math program.

Growing With Mathematics is an activity-based, integrated and problem-solving approach to learning mathematics for students in grades K-5. The program incorporates computation and skill development as a major component, thus maintaining a balance between concepts and skills. Through hands-on activities, and with teacher guidance, students explore and construct their own knowledge.

Emphasis is placed on content that encourages thinking, problem-solving and in-depth development of concepts. Computation and practice of skills are included so that students develop a strong basis of understanding. Connections are made between the different areas of mathematics and other curriculum areas and the real world. A major focus of the program is number sense, which is an integral part of all lessons on number and operations. A separate number sense strand also builds from lesson to lesson through connected activities found at the beginning of each lesson. The program provides the tools that create the context for both oral and written communication to help build understanding of mathematics concepts.

Saxon Math has been described as a hands-on approach with a difference. All new concepts are developed through hands-on activities and rich mathematical conversations that actively engage students in the learning process. Concepts are developed, reviewed and practiced over time. Students move from the concrete to the pictorial to the abstract. Saxon Math provides daily mixed practice; frequent, cumulative assessment; opportunities for connections, communication, and justification; minds-on support and complete transcripts of math conversations in every lesson. Teachers gain techniques to guide students to conceptual understanding.

Our teachers often combine components from each of the math programs available to meet the needs of our students. Parents may expect their child to do well with math for a variety of reasons. They suspect their learning disability will only impact their reading, or because they have done well with math in the early years of education. However, math is a complex subject and has many components that children must master for proficiency.

Why do children struggle with math?
Children with learning disabilities do not always have a deficiency in mathematics. Some children struggle with math due to an inability to grasp spatial relationships, an inability to estimate quantity, poor memory skills or poor cognitive abilities. Many children, however, have difficulties with mathematics due to their language dysfunction. So, at ACCESS®, we treat their difficulty in math as a manifestation of their language-based disability.

The Language of Math
Math has its own language and a whole new set of vocabulary that children must learn in order to understand mathematics. Students with poor decoding (sounding out words) skills have a language-based disorder. That means they will also have some difficulties with receptive (understanding what you hear) and expressive (what you say) language. This makes lecture-based or text-based instruction extremely difficult for these students. If they are limited to this type of instruction in addition to their poor understanding of math concepts, the result is dismal.

Important Facts on the Ability to Master Mathematics

- Learning Facts - Early stages of math place a heavy emphasis on memorizing simple math facts. This is vital so students can recall them precisely on demand as they increasingly add complexity to this task. We want them to recall math facts automatically. We place heavy emphasis on this skill.
- Details - Students must understand and identify the smallest details to master all levels of math. They have to have attention to detail, such as identifying operational signs or symbols (+, -) and knowing where the decimal point is located, and they must be able to check their work for errors. Children with ADHD may appear to understand math facts, but because of their lack of attention to detail, they may have poor overall performance.
- Mastering Procedures - Children with sequencing difficulties have a significant difficulty in applying mathematical algorithms (specific procedures needed to understand multiplication, division, reducing fractions and regrouping). This requires a good understanding of the underlying logic required.
- Accumulating Abilities - Mathematics is cumulative. It requires an ability to learning a hierarchical fashion. Information learned in lower grades must be retained for future use. Some students have problems across many subjects with this skill (science, foreign language).
- Conceptualizing and Linking - Understanding concepts is the basis of mathematical problems. Children with poor conceptualization abilities frequency have difficulty in middle school mathematics because they cannot link concepts. They may be able to master computations but may not be able to use them in application.
- Using Manipulations - Students must be able to manipulate facts, details and procedures to solve more complex problems. This requires a substantial amount of "thinking space," or working memory. Students have to be able to remember numbers and use them later and also understand why they are using the numbers and then use them. They also have to be able to manipulate task subcomponents. Students with limited active-working memory experience considerable difficulty using manipulations.
- Systematic Approach - Problem solving skills are complex and require a systematic approach, entailing the following steps: (1) identify the question; (2) discard irrelevant information; (3) devise a possible strategy; (4) choose the best strategy; (5) try that strategy; (6) use alternative strategies, if required; (6) monitor the entire process. Impulsive students fail to use a systematic approach and do not self- monitor throughout the entire process. They are unlikely to use a coordinated, executive functioning manner to solve the problem.

Teaching Math to Students with Learning Difficulties
Therefore, what we do at ACCESS® is teach the language of math. We use manipulative objects in all instruction. We also teach things in a slightly different order or manner. We concentrate heavily on the "meaning" and application of everything we teach.

- Calendar Skills - Learn to estimate, recognize patterns, learn vocabulary, rote math facts, counting by 1"s, 5"s, 10"s and counting forward and backward. Using the calendar functionally. We also discuss "time" by using the calendar and discussing the seasons. We learn about the months and seasons with a monthly calendar story.
- Focus on Fundamentals - By focusing on language needed for math and applying calculations to real-life situations, we make math skills functional. By focusing attention on money, time and basic calculations, we focus heavy attention on the basic foundation for math. Mastery at this level is essential.
- Simple Math Vocabulary - We teach math facts as sentences. The fact 2 + 2 = 4 is a sentence! It read two plus two equals four. Moreover, it means: Two balls and two balls are four balls. By making this into a meaningful circumstance and using words students already know, we introduce the concept in a more concrete manner.
- Relating to Increasingly Difficult Vocabulary - The mastery of mathematics requires acquisition of a new vocabulary as suggested above with math facts. It continues as students learn words like denominator, numerator, isosceles and equilateral. Most of this vocabulary is not part of everyday life and must be learned without the assistance of contextual clues. Children who have slow processing skills or who are weak in language semantics (vocabulary) often have huge difficulty as math becomes more complex.
- Applying Knowledge - The symbols (+, -, =) of math have meanings that have to be specifically taught. In the everyday world we do not even use these words when we want to solve a math problem. Children must be able to realize the relevance of mathematics to use in day-to-day life. We use story problems and practical situations to do this. We start this at the very beginning as students are learning how to use the "language" of math.

Science

The science curriculum focuses on the presentation of thematic units representing the domains of science (physical science, life science, earth and process) utilizing language-based approaches. Instruction highlights developing an interpretation of science as a problem solving and discovery tool available for everyday use as well as for technical application in the real world.

The steps of the scientific method (problem, hypothesis, experiment and conclusion) are used as a problem-solving tool for exploring specific units of study. Topics related to science, technology, human affairs and current events are presented and integrated with mathematics, language arts and social studies. Topics of study are determined by reading level, comprehension skills, prior knowledge and age.

In addition to the content information presented in science classes, much emphasis is placed on developing study skills. The skills presented are modified for the student's levels. These include organization of subject notebooks, class materials, pre-reading, using a textbook or teacher-prepared text materials, discerning main ideas and relevant details, note taking (when appropriate), summarizing, paraphrasing, researching and writing reports, and test-taking.

Social Studies

Students engage the social studies curriculum by focusing on four major branches of the human experience: history, geography, economics and government. These skills are taught within the core classroom and often associated with the classroom literacy selections and current events. Themes for class content are selected with strict attention to the most recent state curriculum frameworks and adapted for use with graphic organizers and templates to structure written expression.

Organizational and Study Skills

Students in early classes begin to focus on organizational and study skills by working on memorization, keeping track of their personal materials and assignments, learning to use a calendar, and test taking skills.

Our therapy and teaching staff employ tactics and lessons to specially address the following types of organization skills:

- Temporal – Keeping track of assignments, estimating and using time, telling time and understanding time concepts
- Spatial – Having an organized work space, lining up math problems or words on a page and using them while reading
- Categorical – Using graphic organizers to make connections between concepts, color coding information to help with learning, using social stories to stay on topic, and using an organized notebook system and a filing system for keeping up with papers (for older students)
- Attention – Using color coding to call attention to key concepts, using pictures with directions, listening to calming or alerting music, and taking short, frequent breaks
- Prioritization – Using a homework sheet, breaking assignments into segments, listing our routines, working on steps to a problem and teaching students to use a "to do" list
- Sequential – Visually supported "recipes" to complete a task, visual directions with pictures, breaking assignments into logical steps and using a rubrics or graphic organizer to display the sequential organization of a task or assignment

Students identify their individual learning styles and their own strengths and weaknesses and learn to better utilize their strengths. Students will learn to use strategies to help with organization abilities and study skills.

Study skills for each student are based on the age and academic ability level of each student. The literature curriculum incorporates oral language skills, literature (described above) and study skills. Themes related to the literature are explored, providing a pathway for learning study skills. Organization of time and materials is emphasized.

Basic facts and essential ideas are identified from written sources, and summarizing, paraphrasing and note taking are practiced. Students will use study guides, graphic organizers and other materials prepared by the teacher and/or students to review classroom material to prepare for tests. Test-taking techniques and strategies for remembering material are addressed.
Note: Teachers will report students"classroom study behaviors at each parent teacher conference.

Classroom Technology

Technology is an integral part of our educational program and is used to both support and enhance the learning experience. All classrooms are wired for high-speed Internet access and have an interactive SMART board. Students have the opportunity to utilize computers and iPads as appropriate, throughout the curriculum. All students have access to technology. Most of the classrooms provide 1:1 technology with laptops or iPads.

Classroom instruction incorporates a wide variety of technological resources such as online resources, video, word processing software, graphic organization software for writing and text-to-speech software. Additionally, teachers create study guides for students and multimedia projects to assist with presentation of thoughts and ideas. Electronic books and presentations are also used and presented with SMART boards.

Assistive software provides individualized support for students when needed. Students have the opportunity to learn and practice keyboarding to enhance their typing proficiency and written work output. Older students are taught to use multimedia tools to develop presentations and enhance their work.

Finally, specific software and apps are used within content areas to apply and practice specific skills in the areas of reading, writing, math, social studies and science. Students use the technology each week to engage in digital literacy and to use the technology as a tool for multisensory learning.

Computer activities have included:
- Using Microsoft Word and PowerPoint to prepare projects.
- Using a web browser and a Google Image search to find source images for projects.
- Exploring iPhoto and iMovie – to create multimedia projects.

Classroom Projects

Students participate in a variety of means to demonstrate what they have learned by completing a written report, developing a multimedia project, offering an oral report or participating in a skit.

Classroom projects and supplemental summer activities have involved literature and art projects, as well as group discussion on a variety of historical, cross-cultural and personal themes. Students may participate in a group or work individually to research a topic and communicate findings in a creative, meaningful manner.

Specific class projects may include:
- Learning about our state and country, natural resources, national landmarks and developing a PowerPoint presentation or movie
- Exploration of other countries by dressing up and serving a meal depicting the cuisine of the specific country
- Collaborative reading or play developed from a selection of literature
- Learning about ways to save the environment and developing posters to illustrate to others what they have learned

Discussions and studies may result in developing creative student projects such as portfolios, student-developed movies or books, PowerPoint presentations, posters, newsletters and/or oral reports.

Each classroom will invite parents to view class projects at least one time per year to celebrate the accomplishments of their children.

Social Skills

Our students are bright, intellectually curious learners. Many of them, however, experience challenges communicating and socializing with their peers. Large group settings can be a particularly difficult setting to apply social skills. These challenges can impact a student's academic success in the classroom and their social success in the larger community. We rely on input and curriculum development from our speech-language pathology team, along with positive, research-based practices, to develop each student's full potential for social growth. Areas of emphasis include self-awareness, self-advocacy, flexible thinking, understanding others, peer relations, responsibility and problem resolution. The fundamental features of our social skills program include:

Social Growth Curriculum
We follow a structured, systematic and thoughtful curriculum that carefully sequences and orders a progression of social skills. We are committed to identifying and creating research-based "best practices" for helping our students learn to successfully interact and communicate with others and think flexibly.

Individual and Group Instruction

We set aside time each week to teach specific social skills using a variety of individual and group strategies. Key skills are broken down into more basic components. All students participate in social skills exercises coordinated by professional staff and teachers. Students learn how to cooperate and work successfully as group members in a variety of projects and activities. Role-playing, drama, art and other forms of creative expression are used to facilitate student learning and to practice successful social skills strategies.

Opportunities for Practice

We believe one of the best ways to develop social growth is by coaching students through the "teachable moments" that occur naturally each day. Whether in the classroom, during group activities, at lunch or on the playground, all of our staff are continually working with students to practice skills they are learning. Successful experiences are reinforced, and we help students learn how to "repair" an unsuccessful experience by trying a different approach to produce the desired outcome. Parents and family members are also included as we extend learning into the home environment.

Generalization in the Community

Because our students often struggle to apply skills they acquire in new environments, we provide them with opportunities to practice their social skills in the community. We want our students to develop fluency in their social interactions as they eat out, go to the park, take a field trip or enjoy extracurricular activities with friends. We teach our students how to navigate the unstated rules of society that can be difficult for them to understand.

A Strong School Community

We maintain very active communication with our families and are committed to working collaboratively with you. Continuity and good communication between school and home leads to optimal success for students. We facilitate positive relationships among our students and families through teen and youth nights out and parent workshops. We inform parents of budding relationships and shared interests among students, so parents can take an active role in nurturing them outside of the classroom.

A Nurturing Environment

We support our students as they take risks, make mistakes and master new skills. Organizationally and individually, we are optimistic, positive and supportive in our work. Our school building is a peaceful and calm learning environment. We are surrounded by beautiful gardens that are conducive to learning through multiple sensory experiences. We strive to employ green practices in order to instill in our students an appreciation and respect for the environment and the community around them.

ACCESS® offers pragmatic groups as a supplemental after school program for students interested in a more intensive social skills program. See page 25 for more details.

Vocational Education and Life Skills

Life Skills
Parents and educators are most worried about academics, speech and social skills. Parents tend to be less worried about life skills and vocational skills because their children are so behind academically and they have a lifetime to learn life skills. In addition, these skills are often a low priority because parents are struggling with whether or not their children will be able to pick up these skills on their own, not knowing if their children are more high-functioning or low-functioning.

The nature of education in our society in general is that most children are ranked by their academic skills, but life skills are just as important. There are jobs you cannot attain if you cannot read or write and some if you cannot talk. There are also jobs you can't keep if you yell and scream when you don't get what you expect or if you cannot arrive on time with the proper attire, no matter your verbal or written skills.

For every day and long-term outcomes, life skills such as domestic tasks, good manners, hygiene and knowing how to be polite are extremely important. Many high- functioning students struggle as much with learning these skills as they do the more advanced academic ones. ACCESS staff members teach life skills by creating natural settings and situations to teach specific life skills in therapy and the classroom. Students with more extensive challenges in this area will have goals and objectives. All students, however, will have experiences developing these skills through the classroom, because success comes from acquiring life skills.

Vocational Education
The processes of learning about and exploring different vocations should begin in elementary school. Elementary school teachers and administrators planning career education must be careful to develop sequential objectives that are achievable, challenging and tailored to students' interests. Elementary-level career education may emphasize separate units of study or be integrated into ongoing units of study and should continue throughout education with incrementally increasing emphasis.

Objectives of elementary and intermediate-level career education help students achieve the following goals: become responsible, caring individuals; develop habits of cleanliness; develop good human relations skills; learn to balance personal and societal needs; and learn to think effectively and make decisions. Because they may well become vital in students' career education, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, health, music and art must all be integrated with career education. Elementary-age students also need ample opportunities to experience vital careers in

separate and/or integrated units of study, including the following activities: (1) listening to community members discuss their careers; (2) developing scrapbooks illustrating different careers in the societal arena; (3) participating in role-playing activities; (4) developing collages and murals showing salient careers; (5) researching careers of interest at their individual development level; (6) taking excursions to observe significant careers firsthand; and (7) learning to complete chores or school jobs in a timely, efficient manner. A sample work experience for a younger student might include cleaning chalkboards, gathering student papers or running an errand for the teacher.

The objectives of career education as students age, mature and grow in ability include self-evaluation, interest and student work experiences. By adding more emphasis on this area, students begin to apply academic material and independent skills to the world of work. Areas of emphasis include participating in school jobs, cooking, keeping and following a schedule, analyzing work tasks and analyzing personal skill inventories.

Vocational education for older students is designed around careers of interest and within the ability level of the ACCESS student body. Lectures, textbooks and a lab experience are combined to teach specific skills needed across these and other industries. Common vocational skills include customer service, inventory, following oral and written directions, making change, working with coworkers, following a work schedule, adhering to work policies, etc…. Additional skills related to specific industries are also a component of these courses. ACCESS® houses several businesses within our campus, including ACCESS Gardens, ACCESS Ceramics and the ACCESS School Store. Through these businesses, students learn more about retail and the basics of horticulture and painting. Vocational instructors with real-world experience in horticulture and art join our staff to teach these industry skills.

Work experiences for older students increase in intensity, skill and responsibility and might include working in the school store, leadership roles in student council or assisting with the school sales.

Movement and Health
The overall objectives of a healthy lifestyle encompass three main areas: physical education skills, health education and self-confidence. Health education includes material on fitness and health, body awareness, first aid and safety, and related vocabulary. The curriculum strives to build confidence and trust in every unit. Related skills include communication and following directions, problem-solving, teamwork and support. Expectations underlying all activities in movement include sportsmanship, attentiveness, following class routine, participation, positive peer interactions and effort, regardless of ability level.

Fine Arts

The ACCESS fine arts program features music and art, integrated into the curriculum through specific activities. ACCESS® employs a combination of staff and volunteers to lead these programs.

Art

All classrooms participate in weekly art classes. Art is important for children especially during their early development. Research shows that art activities develop brain capacity in early childhood; in other words, art is good brain food! Art engages children's senses in open-ended play and develops cognitive, social-emotional and multisensory skills. As children progress into elementary school and beyond, art continues to provide opportunities for brain development, mastery, self-esteem and creativity.

Gardening

In an era of instant gratification and fast-moving technological innovation, there's a lot to be said for getting back to our roots, digging in the dirt, sowing a bit of seed and watching life spring out of the ground. The ACCESS Gardens are an outdoor classroom where students explore, learn and enjoy nature.

The campus gardens are complete with beautiful flowers and shrubs and beds that teach certain gardening principles. Perennial beds demonstrate the longevity of plants that can withstand the elements and thrive each year. Cut flower beds provide students with a place to learn about the artistic elements in arranging flowers using color, texture and form. ACCESS Gardens also features butterfly gardens, a weather garden, a pond and waterfall area, a bird sanctuary and woodland gardens. Students learn about recycling in the garden compost station and worm farm.

As an expansion of the horticulture program, ACCESS® now hosts a variety of fruit and vegetable gardens. Benefits of this program include increased physical activity, garden education and nutritional information to help build healthy eating habits.

Moreover, our staff members pair literature with the garden themes so that learning is extended into the classroom setting. Students journal about their gardening experiences and the produce that is grown is used for taste testing within the classroom. The ACCESS Horticulture Instructor oversees the success of this program. In addition to the garden spaces, ACCESS® has an amphitheater and an outdoor classroom area. These spaces are available not only for our gardeners but for all classrooms. Each garden has many elements that can be used in math, science and literature. Students participate in weekly gardening lessons where they learn about plant science, gardening principles, the horticulture industry and the natural world. They also participate in the ACCESS Plant Sales where they learn valuable vocational skills including customer service, money management and hard work.

Library
The school library is available for students, staff members and parents to borrow books and other materials. Students go to the library with their classmates on a regular basis. Instructional activities are offered so students know how to use a library, select a book and follow check-in/check-out procedures.

Homework Policy

Homework provides an opportunity to take skills and concepts learned in the classroom and apply them independently. Assignments are assigned to students three to four nights each week, depending on age of students. Assignments are assigned with the expectation of completion within 20 to 45 minutes, depending on age of students.

Parents receive a homework notebook that contains daily homework sheets and details assignments. Homework assignments must be completed to make the progress expected for each student.

Many of the assignments require parent interaction for their completion. Some are oral assignments that do not require writing; parents may be asked to verify completion by initialing forms. Parents are provided with homework and other training at the beginning of the academic year. This training focuses on The DuBard Association Method® and other teaching methods used.

Extra-Curricular Activities

ACCESS® sponsors special activities throughout the academic year for students, including activities such as dances, movie nights, ball games, etc… All activities have a deadline for participation signup and are chaperoned by ACCESS staff members. Activities are provided for two age groups:
- Youth Activities – Academy Students Ages 5-12
- Teen Activities – Academy Students Ages 13 and Older

There will be a fee for participating in each activity. This fee is due by the signup deadline of the activity. Fees pay for the activities and for staff supervision. Dates for activities are posted in the monthly school calendar. If your student misses school, he or she cannot attend the youth/teen activity that day, even if he or she has signed up. There are no refunds if your student misses an activity.

All fees are to be remitted to the front office. Please refrain from placing payments of any kind in your child's backpack or on their person. Teachers and therapists are not permitted to accept or receive fees and/or other payments of any kind, whether in the classrooms, treatment facilities or elsewhere.

Special Olympics, Track and Swim Teams
Students 8 years and older by Jan. 1 preceding spring sports programs and with developmental disability diagnoses have the option of participating in Special

Olympics and the ACCESS track team. Students 10 years and older by Jan. 1 have the option of participating on the swim team. Some fees are associated with sporting events, including the annual sports banquet. ACCESS® works with parents in order to determine which events would be most appropriate for their students. Additional information on sign-up for both track and swim, try-outs for swim team, meets, activities and related fundraisers are announced throughout the year.

Spirit Team
All students in the Intermediate School 1, Intermediate School 2, Upper School 1 and Upper School 2 classrooms have the opportunity to try out for the ACCESS Spirit Team.

Tryouts are held after school in August, and the date and time are announced on the monthly school calendar. Each student in this program is required to order a uniform and attend practice on a regular basis. All practices are held after school and are announced from the staff cheerleading sponsors. The ACCESS Spirit Team performs at school assemblies and other functions throughout the year.

Student Council
Elected class representatives and officers serve on the ACCESS student council. The student council assists with school activities including: elections, character assemblies, classroom Christmas gifts, field day and much more!

School Of Character
The ACCESS character education program places special emphasis on good character traits. Each month, ACCESS® highlights a virtuous trait and its meaning and rewards students that display that character trait. Character assemblies, skits, awards and student performances occur each month, and parents are invited to attend. Character words include:
- August – **Kindness**
- September – **Patience**
- October – **Politeness**
- November – **Thankfulness**
- December – **Charity**
- January – **Respect**
- February – **Honesty**
- March – **Cooperation**
- April – **Self-Control**
- May – **Perseverance**

ACCESS Adventure
The ACCESS Adventure summer program is created to provide leisure programs for students. Participating students take advantage of a number of activities Monday-Friday, 12-5:30 p.m., every weekday, June - through the first week of August.

Students get a break from the rigors of year-round academic work through opportunities that build character; encourage development of leisure

activities and independence; foster communication and social skills; and promote physical fitness. Activities include swimming, bowling, fishing, picnicking, hiking and fun field trips!

ACCESS Adventure registration takes place in March and is coordinated by the administrative office. For students who receive two therapies there is no fee. There is a fee of $250 for students who do not qualify based on therapy.

Please refrain from placing payments of any kind in your child's backpack. Teachers and therapists are not permitted to accept or receive fees and/or other payments of any kind, whether in the classrooms, treatment facilities or elsewhere.

Classroom Placement

ACCESS students are grouped primarily according to ability level and type of instruction needed, with a secondary focus on age and social maturity. Seven school-aged classrooms are organized each year according to the needs of the student body. The 2017-2018 school year presents three levels of classrooms including lower, intermediate and upper school classrooms. Each area contains two classrooms, which are organized by ages and needs of the students.

We begin organizing students into various classrooms depending on the required level of instruction for reading and written expression. Students may change classrooms for math, science or other subjects as needed to meet their individual needs.

The Lower School classrooms are composed of students ages 5-9 who learn best from small group instruction. There are two classrooms in this area. L1 is for students ages 5-7 who are at the beginning levels of instruction for reading and math. L2 is for students ages 6-9 who remain at the basic level of reading and written expression instruction using The DuBard Association Method® and who still learn best with small group instruction.

The two Intermediate School classrooms are designed for students ages 9-12. I1 is organized for those who are at the basic to intermediate levels of reading and written expression instruction using The DuBard Association Method®. The classroom curriculum is designed for those who are not yet independent and require more guidance and small group instruction.

I2 is for students at the intermediate to advanced levels of reading and written expression instruction using The DuBard Association Method® and for those students who have recently completed this method of teaching. More emphasis is placed on large group instruction, study skills, cooperative projects and classroom projects.

The Upper School classrooms are designed for students ages 13 and older. This year, most of the students in these classrooms are ages 13-19. Students in

the upper school classrooms do not use The DuBard Association Method® as the primary teaching method for reading and writing instruction.

U1 is designed to be a more academically based classroom. Students in this classroom will be working toward attaining a GED. Lessons in this classroom are taught primarily through large group instruction. Students will engage in lectures and textbooks for academic areas as well as project-based learning. These students will participate in vocational education each week.

U2 is designed to include a blended curriculum comprising academics and applied academics. Students will maintain their academic skills through regular lessons and activities. Students will also participate in project- based learning and vocational education experiences as a regular aspect of their instruction.

The placement decisions for each classroom are based on three areas:
1. Ability
2. Intellectual Ability – Full-scale IQ, memory and processing speed
3. Academic Performance – Gathered from teacher reports and the academic testing battery
4. Classroom Performance – level of instruction required for The DuBard Association Method® and reading, comprehension and written expression skills
5. Therapy Skills – language ability
6. Teaching Methods
7. Small Group vs. Large Group
8. Independent Study Skills
9. Type of Instruction Needed – The DuBard Association Method® focus or alternative teaching methods
10. Age
11. Birthday
12. Social Maturity
13. Peer Group

The placement team considers input from evaluation, teaching and therapy staff. The admission team, which includes Cheri Stevenson, Becky Terbrack and Janice Edmonson, makes the final decision.

Behavior

The ACCESS community shows respect and dignity through the following:
- Dedication to self-discovery and growth.
- Respect for the feelings, efforts and physical well-being of others.
- Commitment to a safe, clean, congenial and productive learning and living environment.
- Honesty in academic endeavors and in all aspects of campus life.
- Value for the property and materials of all members of the ACCESS community.

Students are expected to treat other members of the school community with respect and courtesy by using appropriate language, utilizing constructive actions and observing the rights of others. Whether on or off campus, all students should live by the ideals and rules of the school. Through respect, consideration and kindness, students not only improve ACCESS® as a caring community, but themselves as contributing individuals within the community.

Behavior Management

ACCESS® is committed to providing a safe school climate that is conducive to learning. For the success of our programs, we must strive for acceptable and appropriate student behavior. We provide social skills and behavior training to help students understand their obligations to others and the role of rules at school and other settings.

Social skills and discipline are taught and directed to develop skills necessary for students to:

- Solve problems effectively
- Develop positive relationships with others
- Follow classroom and school rules
- Develop a responsibility for his/her actions
- Respect the property of others and the school
- Develop self-discipline, sensory regulation and coping mechanisms
- Find appropriate ways to express emotions
- Learn in a group setting
- Share and take turns
- Use manners and polite behavior
- Learn study skills
- Learn to work independently

Each classroom handles behavior management programs on a class-by-class basis; teachers explain the behavior management strategies if there is a specific program, to the parents and students.

If the classroom behavior management system is not effective, teachers schedule a parent meeting to discuss possible solutions to the problem. ACCESS® does not allow physical and/or verbal abuse of staff, students or families.

Many families work with an ABA specialist. ACCESS® welcomes working as a team with the ABA therapist. The only requirement is that this must be approved by Cheri Stevenson, Director of Academy and Adult Services.

Early Intervention Day Treatment (EIDT) Behavior Management Requirements:

Students that have one of the following must have a behavior management plan:
- Three or more challenging behaviors in a three-month time period
- Prescribed psychotropic drugs for behavior
- Anytime the provider believes the child's behavior warrants intervention.

For these students all behavior plans must include:
- Behaviors to be decreased;
- Behaviors to be increased;
- Identify those things in the child's environment that should be provided or avoided;
- Identify the behavior methods that will be used;
- Identify the events that trigger the behavior;
- Identify the staff that will step-in;
- Identify what the staff should do to increase or decrease behaviors;
- Involve the fewest interventions or strategies possible;
- Protection of the student's rights;
- Specify what behaviors if any require the use of restraints, the length of time the restraint is to be used, the staff person responsible for the authorization and use of the restraints, and the methods for monitoring the recipient and staff;
- Prohibit the use of medications for the sole purpose of preventing, modifying, or controlling challenging behaviors that is not associated with a diagnosed co-occurring psychiatric condition, or for the purpose of chemical restraint;
- Prohibit the use of mechanical restraints for the purpose of limiting or controlling challenging behaviors. "Mechanical restraint" means any physical apparatus or equipment that cannot be easily removed by the recipient, restricts the free movement or normal functioning of the recipient, or restricts normal access to a portion or portions of the recipient's body.

Behavior management plans must be evaluated at least quarterly:
- Behavior management plans must reevaluated more frequently if distinct behaviors occur three or more times within a three month period, which could all take place in one day.
- Each EIDT provider is responsible for maintaining written documentation sufficient to prove that any required re-evaluation was properly conducted.
- The re-evaluation must be based on data collected by the EIDT regarding the frequency of use of behavior management interventions, length of time of each use, the duration of use over

time, and the impact of the use of interventions.

- The EIDT must provide training to all staff who implement behavior management plans; and at a minimum must include an introduction to behavior management and a course on abuse and neglect of children.

Families can access services for negative behaviors from Dr. Sabine Falls, Ph.D., on-staff clinical psychologist. See page 24 for more details.

Behavior and Actions That May Lead to Dismissal

1. Withholding of any pertinent information generated prior to the application process or during the enrollment period, which might affect the student's ability to adapt to any aspect of the school's program (e.g. hospitalizations, emotional traumas, suspensions, dismissals, etc).
2. Any behavior or conduct that is deemed by the school's administration to be detrimental to ACCESS®, whether on or off campus or during any school trip or activity. This includes conduct deemed to be dangerous, harmful or threatening to others or to the ACCESS community.
3. Behavior that is disruptive and is determined as the main barrier to learning.
4. Any activity performed by any number of students under the guise of "initiation" that is threatening or harmful.
5. Any violent, unprovoked attack on others.
6. Any theft from other students, teachers or the school, both on campus and/or during any school-sponsored activity.
7. Continuous or excessive absenteeism.
8. Refusal to obey and follow teachers' instructions.
9. Vandalism.
10. Possession of any item which may be used as or deemed to be a weapon.

General Discipline Policy and Student Code of Conduct

The vast majority of parents, caregivers and others visiting our school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on the rare occasions when negative attitudes or actions towards the school are expressed, this can result in aggression either verbal and or physical, towards members of school staff and/or the wider school community.

We expect students, parents and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way towards members of school faculty and student body. This policy outlines the steps that will be taken when behavior is unacceptable.

The following types of behavior towards a staff member or student are considered serious and unacceptable and will not be tolerated:

1. Purposeful physical abuse or assault of a student or a staff member
2. Verbal abuse of a student or staff member—in person or over the phone
3. Making threats towards a student or staff member
4. Racial slurs or comments
5. Bullying
6. Fighting
7. Destruction of school property
8. Theft of school property
9. Inappropriate use of technology
10. Profane language
11. Aggressive Behavior--hitting, slapping, pushing, punching, aggressive hand gestures, kicking or spitting
12. Horseplay
13. Breaching the school's security procedures

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behavior. Any and all behaviors will fall on a continuum of severity. The level of severity and the number of occurrences of the behavior will determine the decision as to what recourse will be taken in regards to discipline of the student.

Options for Discipline:
- Time-Out--minutes per age for younger children (with no attention or talking)
- Natural Consequence--actions logically connected to the wrong
- Detention (determined by management--Held in a space outside of the classroom)
- Student Conference--held with the student and teacher and possibly a member of management
- Parent Conference with or without the student (determined by staff)
- Go Home for Day--will be determined by member of management (Academy Coordinator or Director)
- Suspension--2-3 days determined by the Director
- Expulsion--determined by Director

There will be situations that a child has a set behavior plan as determined by their ABA therapist or other behavior therapist. In these situations, the course of action will be determined by the established behavior plan. In these circumstances it is necessary that the educational team meet with the behavior therapist to learn about the behavior plan and how to implement the steps. It may or may not involve some of the behavior strategies listed above.

The governing body of ACCESS Group, Inc. expects and requires the faculty to behave professionally in these difficult situations and attempt to defuse the

situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of senior staff members and other colleagues. However, all members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse, and the right, in an extreme case, use of appropriate self-defense.

An identified staff member is "in charge" each day to handle daily operations, as well as, emergency situations. In most instances the identified person is a senior staff member; however, there may be other staff identified that can step in should all senior staff be unavailable. The senior staff member in charge for the day is posted at front desk so that staff only need to contact the front office staff and the office can easily identify the person who will handle emergency situations if they were to occur.

First and foremost, attempt to de-escalate any situation to prevent aggressive behavior. For situations that become more physically aggressive, staff will be trained in Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) techniques to assist with this process. Until all staff is trained, key staff in each building will be trained to come and assist.

As of this date, 8-2-18, the following staff is trained: Becky Terbrack, Cheri Stevenson, Janice Edmonson and Michaela Nelson. This list will be continually updated and posted with the front desk. This will allow the front desk staff to know who to get to assist with a situation. The updated list of trained people will also be available in each building. This will allow accessibility to all staff on campus.

Should a staff member be in a situation where they are alone or somewhat isolated with a client/student that becomes aggressive or violent, ACCESS will implement the code word "STAFF" so that anyone that hears a staff member call out that word they know to immediately go and assess the situation and call the front office to locate the necessary assistance. Often times, a staff member that is handling a volatile situation simply needs eyes on the situation. At other times they will need physical assistance from another staff member. The senior staff member will determine the immediate plan of action along with any plan action that is necessary going forwards (i.e. development of a behavior plan). It is to be noted that in extreme situations law enforcement will be notified.

Parents are to be called as soon as possible, after the situation has de-escalated. In situations that cannot be well de-escalated or the student does not turn their behavior around after numerous attempts, going home for the remainder of the day may be warranted. This will be determined between the classroom teacher and the Academy Coordinator or Director.

A thorough write up of the incident on the same day that it occurred is a requirement. This is mandatory to ensure that all of the details of the event are documented accurately. The events will be documented on an incident report

with as many accompanying pages as necessary to properly document the incident. A copy of the incident report goes in the student file immediately. The original incident report will be given to the parent for signature within 2 days of the incident and kept in the student's permanent file to replace the copy upon return of the signed document.

Technology

ACCESS has an acceptable use policy and contract that students sign each year. Students are allowed to bring cellphones to school. These phones should be kept in the students' backpacks in silent mode throughout the day. If students are using their phones inappropriately during the day, the devices will be taken and returned at the end of the day. Staff reserves the right to inspect a student's personal device if there is any reason to believe that the student has violated policies, administrative procedures, school rules or has engaged in other misconduct while using their personal device.

Intermediate 2 and Upper School students are allowed to use their cellphones during aftercare, but the devices must be on the Mississippi Visitor Wi-Fi network to help monitor content. Other gaming and technological devices or gadgets should remain at home. ACCESS will not be responsible for personal technological devices. Loss of technology privileges are a natural consequence of abuse.

Meetings Regarding the Behavior Incident

Staff Meeting:
A follow-up meeting with staff to assess what could have been done differently prior to, during and after the incident will be held as soon as possible. If the student has a set behavior plan, it will be important to determine if the protocol put in place was followed. If so, any necessary modifications needed to the plan will need to be determined at this follow-up meeting. The follow-up meeting will determine the long-term results of the student's actions. In most situations, a physically aggressive episode may result in expulsion from the program, however, each situation is handled on an individual basis; however, less severe behavior situations may have a less severe outcome.

Parent Meeting:
Depending on the severity of the situation, staff may or may not attend the parent meeting. For situations that the faculty feels we can quickly or systematically modify the behavior to an acceptable outcome, staff with join the director in meeting with the family to develop a written plan including the action steps, time frame and consequences should the behavior continue or escalate.

If the behavior is severe in nature, the director of the program will have follow-up with the family in regards to the final outcome for the student.

ACCESS Therapy and ACCESS Evaluation Center

ACCESS Therapy
The ACCESS Academy model was developed by the founders so each student has every opportunity to realize his or her full academic and therapeutic potential. To provide educational and therapy services with the quality and intensity required to ensure maximum progress, all programming variables must be controlled. Therefore, ACCESS Academy requires that students receive all of their therapy services from ACCESS®.

Therapy is an important aspect of the ACCESS educational setting. It is one of the unique components of ACCESS Academy and has greatly contributed to the overall success of the education program. The academy is a setting where a team of multi-disciplinary professionals assist students in reaching their full potential. Speech, physical and occupational therapists are assigned to classrooms so teachers and students have a consistent service from professionals who are very familiar with students and with classroom goals and activities. Teachers and therapists work together to develop an atmosphere that promotes the highest level of learning for each student. Therapists are available to assist the classroom teacher in programming as an aspect of the ACCESS team approach. Teachers and therapists meet weekly to discuss classroom- and student-based issues, develop plans and share information.

Many ACCESS speech/language pathologists are trained in The DuBard Association Method® so specific skills can be addressed in therapy or used as reinforcement activities during therapy. When therapists or other staff members work with students, customized materials such as phoneme, word, picture and math fact cards, and other items are available for to use so students can work on specific skills with their teacher or therapists.

Supplemental Services
Supplemental services are available to ACCESS families and include psychological evaluations, cognitive-behavior therapy, pragmatic groups, academic therapy, technology consultations and individualized technology training sessions.

Families interested in any of these services above should contact our admissions department, at 501-217-8600 or admissions@accessgroupinc.org.

Evaluations
The ACCESS Evaluation and Resource Center is used by parents of ACCESS Academy students for new evaluations, academic therapy (specialized tutoring) and technology training.

Multiple developmental and learning disabilities are not uncommon. As students age, parents may feel the need for developmental, psychological, academic and cognitive evaluations, which can be provided by our highly

experienced staff who are already familiar with ACCESS students educational setting and therapeutic services. Benefits of using the AERC include a relatively quick turnaround time for appointments, plenty of time for sharing diagnostic impressions with parents and help navigating state and federal funding sources. A one-hour technology consultation is included with each evaluation, enabling parents/guardians to try compensatory equipment and software without purchase.

Technology Resources and Training
As a demonstration site for four national software companies, ACCESS professionals are very knowledgeable about compensatory technology for struggling students, including items such as modified textbooks and keyboards and software programs specifically designed for children and youths with learning disabilities. Parents may "try before they buy" hardware and software and may schedule customized training sessions for themselves and their children.

Academic Therapy (Specialized Tutoring)
Tutoring vs. Academic Therapy – Tutoring is often designed to assist students with a specific subject area, develop study skills or complete homework. Academic therapy is an intervention program designed for students who have a specific disability in the areas of reading, reading comprehension and/or written expression. Academic therapists are not only professionals working with children who learn differently, but are highly trained in specific approaches that are designed for children who have specific reading and writing disorders.

ACCESS students who enroll in academic therapy have the opportunity to receive even more varied and intensive strategies to assist with organization and study skills. ACCESS academic therapists serve not only ACCESS students but also students at other area schools.

Pragmatic Groups
ACCESS Therapy offers pragmatic groups consisting of five to seven students designed for students struggling with peer relationships, conversational skills or experience frustration in social situations. Social environments require social skills and etiquette that are difficult for some students to manage. This group provides training on boundaries and the appropriate use of language, nonverbal communication and social skills, and incorporating recreational activities in real- life settings. This is an additional service that is not covered by any primary or secondary insurance. There is a monthly fee for a four-month commitment. The groups are 14 weeks per semester. Limited spaces are available; contact our admissions department, at 501-217-8600 or admissions@accessgroupinc.org for more information.

Parent Involvement

ACCESS Academy requires each parent to be an active participant in his/her child's education.

1. Parents are encouraged to give staff constructive feedback at any time and to discuss any problems with teachers or program coordinators.
2. Parents are responsible for reading and signing their students" homework notebooks.
3. Parent surveys will be administered from time to time. ACCESS® encourages participation; we use parent input to improve programs and services.
4. Parent training opportunities are provided throughout the school year on topics related to children with special needs. Input from parents influences future training opportunities, so please feel free to submit workshop suggestions to our staff.
5. A small resource library is available for parents. Interested parents should contact the administration office regarding borrowing these items. Parents are welcome to contribute resources they are no longer using.
6. On-site visits are best handled by appointment. Without an appointment, staff may not be able to visit with parents. Parents are welcome to observe classrooms and therapy activities, as long as it does not interfere with programming and the ACCESS confidentiality policy is not broken; interested parents should contact their students" teachers and/or therapists to schedule an observation.
7. Educating the community about ACCESS programs and services is accomplished through sharing with friends, family, doctors and others in the community. Visitors are welcome and can be provided with organization information. (See Visitors section on page 29.)
8. Parents are encouraged to attend school assemblies. Each classroom will be assigned to a month where they will be responsible for the program at the assembly. Your classroom teacher will notify you of the month your child's classroom will organize the program.
9. Parents are welcome to eat lunch with their students. Please call the front office in advance to notify the staff of your visit. We ask that you not schedule a lunch with your child during the first two weeks of school to allow some transition time for your child's start of school.
10. Each classroom is anticipating a field day and will be asking parents to help organize the activities for that day. Teachers will share additional volunteer activities at open house.
11. If interested in volunteering at ACCESS® as a homeroom parent or in any other capacity, please contact Laura Wyerick,

Community Relations Associate at 501-217-8600
orlaurac@accessgroupinc.org

Parent Communication

Communication is a vital component of our program. Parent conferences provide information two times a year regarding programming, but these meetings are not frequent enough to be considered the sole avenue for parent- teacher communication. ACCESS® has several ways for teachers and therapists to send and receive information on a regular basis:

1. Homework Notebooks: There are comment sections on each homework sheet. Teachers and parents can communicate daily information in this section.

2. Therapy Notes: Each student has a section in his or her homework notebook that contains his or her therapy schedule, goals and notes. Therapists are asked to send an email two times each month about therapy issues and progress. Please check the your email regularly to stay abreast of therapy information. Parents may also use this system to address concerns, ask questions, etc…

3. Parents have the freedom to call a team meeting or request a meeting with their teacher or a specific therapist. Please be respectful of staff members'' time by scheduling a meeting in advance, either by emailing your child's teacher or by contacting the administrative office, instead of dropping in on your child's teacher or therapists.

4. ACCESS weekly and semiannual newsletters include helpful information about school activities. This information can also be found at AccessGroupInc.org, and, when general enough for the community at large, on the ACCESS Group, Inc. Facebook page and @accessgroupinc on Twitter.

5. We also share information related to the specific areas we will study through our thematic units.

6. All notes from teachers and the administrative staff are sent home in students'' backpacks. Parents also receive electronic newsletters on a regular basis regarding ACCESS news and correspondence.

7. ACCESS has many different events taking place each month and is continually improving ways to make parents aware of related deadlines. If you're interested in signing your child up for an event that requires a form filed by a certain deadline, please make every effort to meet the requested deadline. Many times, failure to do so results in a student missing out on an activity or parents missing out on opportunities because we cannot accommodate the necessary staffing changes, order changes, etc… Please keep a close eye on deadlines by checking your child's backpack and reading all included communications.

8. It is important to read the weekly *ACCESS Week Ahead* for important organizational information.

Staff Appreciation Day
The ACCESS teachers, therapists and administrators work hard to provide students and clients with high-quality educational experiences and therapy services. Parents host a staff appreciation day each year to recognize these professionals. If interested in helping with the festivities, please contact Laura Wyerick, Community Relations Associate, at 501-217-8600 or laurac@accessgroupinc.org.

Fundraising and Media Relations
ACCESS Academy greatly welcomes parent help with raising money, receiving in-kind donations from individuals and corporations, and raising awareness of our programs and services. With multiple special events, niche fundraisers, annual giving campaign activities, media buys and numerous media pitches throughout the year, however, there is a need to coordinate all fundraising and media relations efforts through the ACCESS staff. Ultimately, ACCESS Executive Director, Tammy Simmons, M.S., CCC-SLP, or ACCESS Development Director, Kellie Wilhite, must approve all fundraising activities, solicitation of gifts and media outreach.

Fundraising
The parent fundraising process is as follows:

1. Before approaching a business or company about a donation, parents must contact the ACCESS Director of Development.
2. Once the solicitation is approved, parents are asked to complete a donation form for any donations or gifts-in-kind accepted. One copy is given to the individual/company, and another copy is kept for ACCESS records. Please ask for any needed assistance in completing the forms.
3. Parents may feel free to write personal thank you notes to entities or individuals they have solicited. ACCESS staff will send a thank you note containing all necessary tax information for all gifts received.
4. ACCESS® reserves the discretion to refuse any gifts on the basis of space and utilization/need.
5. As a nonprofit, ACCESS® must adhere to strict guidelines in order to maintain its 501(3)c non-profit status. Please be mindful of how money is collected from our families:
a. The only time money should be collected from parents is for group gifts for the classroom staff. A specific dollar amount should not be requested from each family; leave it open for them to give what they can/want. Contributions for gifts are strictly as personal matter.
b. Parents should not be asked for money upfront to cover future

parties and gifts. The responsibility of large sums of cash puts not only the individual, but the organizations well, in a vulnerable position.

c. Homeroom Parents are not financially responsible for class parties or teacher gifts. They are encouraged to contact fellow parents for donations of juice, treats and whatever else is necessary for parties and events.

Year-Round Fundraisers

It doesn't get any easier than getting corporations to donate to ACCESS® by purchasing products you already need! The following programs benefit ACCESS® and you!

- **Kroger Cards** Register your Kroger Plus card at www.kroger.com/community and assign ACCESS® as the beneficiary! The more you use your Kroger card, the more money ACCESS® receives. You can even use your Kroger card at Kroger gas stations!
- **Office Depot** Give them the number 1104888761 when you check out and the school will receive FREE supplies!
- **Smile Amazon** at www.smile.amazon.com and designate ACCESS® as your charity. All stored Amazon and Amazon Prime information transfers to Smile Amazon.

Media Relations

Before approaching a media organization about advertising or new stories and before using the ACCESS service mark and related logos, parents should consult the ACCESS Director of Development.

Visitors

Visits to our campus by prospective ACCESS parents, residents of the community and interested educators are welcomed. To protect programs from undue disturbance, ACCESS® requires visitors to make appointments on designated visitor days. All visitors must register at the administrative office at the front entrance.

Public Tours occur on Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m. This is an excellent time to let friends and family and other interested parties know that the campus is open for a tour. The Admission Coordinator conducts these tours. It is helpful to know if someone is coming for a tour, but it is not required to schedule this tour. It is recommended that you call ahead that morning to ensure that the staff is here to conduct the tour as planned.

Policies and Procedures

School Day
ACCESS Academy runs 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Monday-Friday with a shortened school day in June and July. Students with learning differences need to attend school year-round in order to reach their full potential and not lose academic skills. ACCESS® depends on student attendance for this reason, as well as to meet required funding reimbursement from state and federal agencies. Regular attendance is crucial and enforced.

During regular school days, students may arrive as early as 7:30 a.m. Morning care is offered 7:30-8 a.m. for no additional cost.

Summer Months
The ACCESS summer schedule is Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., with morning care offered 7:30-8:00 a.m.

Extended Care
ACCESS Academy students may arrive as early as 7:30 a.m. for school. Students may stay as late as 5:30 p.m., if they are enrolled in extended care, which is available 3:00-5:30 p.m. during the regular school year for working parents. This service is not part of the ACCESS educational day. Students must be enrolled in the extended care program to participate. Enrollment in this program is based on staff availability to ensure proper staff-to-student ratios. Please see the fee schedule for the cost of the extended care program.

There is a drop-in policy for extended care in order to assist families in case of an emergency or a situation where parents need childcare on a given day. Parents must contact the front office for approval of drop-in services. Approval is based on staff availability to ensure proper staff-to-student ratios. Drop-in extended care is $20 per day.

Some students may do their homework during extended care, though ACCESS® does not have the same staff-to-student ratio as during the school day. Therefore, each student may not receive the "one-on-one time" necessary to complete their assignments. (Parents are still responsible for assisting their children with homework.)

Students must be signed out of extended care with the staff member in charge. Parents must go to the assigned aftercare room and pick up their students. The administrative office may not call students to the front lobby for extended care pick up. Students who stay for extended care must be picked up by 5:30 p.m. Parents will be billed $5 for the first minute and $1 for each additional minute if their child is picked up after 5:30 p.m. There are no exceptions to this policy. If a parent is late three afternoons, extended care privileges may be withdrawn.

See the ACCESS Adventure section on page 19 for information on the

ACCESS Adventure summer program, offered 12:00-5:30 p.m. during the summer schedule.

Car Rider
Students who are leaving at 3:00 p.m. will wait for their ride in the car rider line. Please remember that the car rider line is not the place for conversations; if you need to talk to someone, please be considerate of other driver's schedules and park.

Any student who is still in the car rider line at 3:15 p.m. is considered an extended care drop-in; subsequently, parents will be charged the $20 drop-in fee.

Financial Policies
The front office is designated to take receipt of payment of all types (cash, check or credit card) for all purposes – enrollment, tuition, treatment, activity fees, etc… An exception is made for lunch program remittances. Lunch fees should be paid as indicated in the Lunch section of this handbook.

Teachers, therapists and other non-administrative employees are not permitted to accept payments of any type for any purpose or to raise (collect) funds for other incidental purposes. Please inform the front office if uncertain as to either requests for fee payments by ACCESS employees are sanctioned by the management team.

ACCESS® prefers payment in the form of check or debit/credit card. ACCESS® discourages the use of "cash" as a form of payment for enrollment, tuition, treatment or other fees. Those who choose to pay in cash will be provided a receipt for payment. Please retain all receipts received when paying in cash. ACCESS administrative employees are required to provide payers with a receipt for cash payments. ACCESS® will not permit exceptions to this rule.

Lunches
Lunchtime is divided into two groups, divided by classroom.

- The Lower School 1, Lower School 2, Lower 3 and Intermediate school 1 classrooms eat lunch 12-12:30 p.m.
- The Intermediate School 2, Upper School 1 and Upper School 2 eat lunch 12:30-1 p.m.

Lunches may be brought from home; however, they cannot be refrigerated or heated at school. Please make sure your child's is nutritional and well-balanced.

Parents also have the option to buy a school lunch. Little Bites Catering will be providing the lunch program at ACCESS. Courteous, professional staff members will prepare menu items in the ACCESS state-of-the-art kitchen to meet the

needs of our staff and families. Detailed information will be emailed to you regarding the online, user friendly system https://littlebitescatering.schoollunchchoice.com/ where you will be able to place and pay for your orders.

School Store
Upper School 2 runs a school store as a function of their classroom curricula. The store is available for students to purchase drinks (water, juice and caffeinated beverages), candy and healthy snacks. Students interested in buying items at the school store will need to bring money.

Dress Code
Students may not wear flip-flops, crocs or any other types of shoes (bulky or strappy) that make it difficult for them to walk around campus and participate in school activities. Students must have a pair of athletic shoes each day to participate in physical fitness programs and other school activities. Tennis shoes are the best choice.

Students may not wear shirts that have inappropriate characters or messages on them. It is not appropriate for undergarments to show or for students to wear extremely tight clothing. Student's shorts need to be an appropriate length offering complete coverage while students stand, walk and sit.

Attendance
School attendance is obviously vital to student progress. ACCESS staff members have gone to great measures to ensure we are available to perform therapy and classroom activities that are necessary for maximum progress. Therefore, it is very important that the administrative office is notified about a student's absence because of the level of individualized teaching/learning that is done on a daily basis. Absenteeism greatly affects therapy schedules as well. Finally, ACCESS® is required to track and report school absences as part of mandatory compliance with state truancy laws. Attendance will be documented on the report card. You may request from Cheri Stevenson a copy of your child's attendance at any time.

Knowing and following these attendance guidelines benefits your student and makes scheduling and insurance reporting easier for the ACCESS staff:
1. Poor attendance directly affects student progress and may affect continued placement at ACCESS Academy.
2. Please provide the administrative office – not teachers and therapists – with any information about absences, arriving late or leaving early.
3. Parents are required to call the office by 8 a.m. on any school day when their student is not attending. Parents may leave messages on the answering machine prior to 8 a.m. or after 5:30 p.m.
4. If you know ahead of time that your student will be absent (i.e., vacations, medical appointments, etc…), please notify the administrative office as soon as you know the dates.

5. In the event of a therapist being absent, students may not receive their designated therapy that day or a different therapist may see them.
6. ACCESS® will make every attempt to schedule make-up sessions for therapy. The therapy coordinator schedules make-up sessions, which must be done in the same week.

An ACCESS Academy student cannot miss more than 13 unexcused days during the regular academic year. A letter is sent to parents upon the sixth missed day. On the 12th missed day, parents receive another letter detailing that the next missed school day results in student probation. Excessive unexcused absences will be reported to the abuse hotline for educational neglect, as a part of compliance with state truancy laws. If this happens, the student in question may be in jeopardy of being dismissed from ACCESS®.

During the regular school year, ACCESS students are required to attend a minimum of 90 percent of schooldays and therapy sessions. When a student falls below the expected minimum of attendance, the office will contact parents. Director of Academy and Adult Services Cheri Stevenson, M.S., CCC-SLP, will contact parents of students attending therapy sessions less than 90 percent of the time in one month. Snow days or staff cancellations will not be included in the 90 percent attendance policy. The situation will be discussed and options chosen to correct the attendance problem.

It is required that during the summer months of June and July that students attend 80% of school days. This ensures that students continue with consistent programming to include classroom and therapy services.

Arrival and Dismissal
School begins at 8:00 a.m. ACCESS® requires students to be at school, in their assigned place and ready to start the day at 8 a.m. This means students must arrive prior to 8:00 a.m. so they are ready to start school at the appropriate time. ACCESS doors open at 7:30 a.m.

The school day ends at 3:00 p.m. ACCESS® requires students to be picked up in a timely manner at the completion of the school day.

When a student is tardy, he or she is required to be checked into the campus at the administrative office by a parent. Students are very distracted by late arrivals; ACCESS® cannot allow constant interruptions to classrooms by late students. When a student is tardy three times, this will count as one unexcused absence. Failure to adhere to these rules may jeopardize a student's enrollment.
   The following guidelines have been implemented to help alleviate tardy arrivals:
   - The tardy policy becomes effective one week after the start of each academic year to allow students and parents time to make needed transitions for timely arrivals. After three tardy arrivals (one

unexcused absence), parents will receive a letter from the administrative office.

- If the pattern of tardy school arrival continues, Cheri Stevenson will request a parent meeting. Tardy arrivals accumulate on a semester basis and are documented on report cards. A habitual inability to adhere to the tardy policy may place a student's enrollment in jeopardy.

Early Departure

Any student leaving early must checkout with the administrative office. A parent must come in the building and check the student out from the campus. For safety reasons, ACCESS® cannot send an unsupervised student to the parking lot at any time.

Tuition and Enrollment

Parents are charged a flat monthly tuition fee regardless of a student's attendance. Payments are due via bank draft by date selected at the time of enrollment (either the 1st or 15th of each month).

By enrolling in ACCESS Academy, parents are committing to a full year's tuition. If parents choose to discharge their student from ACCESS Academy, they will be responsible for paying the remaining tuition for that academic year or until the slot can be filled by another student. ACCESS Academy will aggressively seek payment, with legal assistance if necessary, for the balance of the unpaid tuition.

Tuition Assistance

ACCESS Academy is committed to offering tuition assistance. Our goal is to help eliminate finances as a barrier to accessing our services. Interested parents must fill out a tuition assistance application by January before the new school year. Applications can be obtained in the administrative office. Each tuition assistance application is reviewed by a committee. Grants are based on availability of funds and financial need.

All tuition assistance recipients must adhere to all school policies, including arriving to school on time, attending 90 percent of all classroom and therapy sessions, completing homework, and meeting all other financial obligations to ACCESS®. Failure to follow these and other school policies will result in termination of the tuition assistance opportunity.

Snow Day Policy

In case of inclement weather, parents of ACCESS Academy students should listen to local broadcastings for school closings, late arrival or early dismissal. The broadcasting will be listed as ACCESS®. ACCESS® will also post this information at AccessGroupInc.org; on the ACCESS® Facebook page; and @accessgroupinc on Twitter. When ACCESS Academy is closed for inclement weather, all ACCESS programs and services are canceled.

Reports/Conferences

Parents are given the opportunity to review and discuss their children's academic performance two times a year during parent-teacher conferences. There will be four report card periods with two face-to-face conferences. It is important to note that a conference can be scheduled for either one of the other report card periods upon request. Please consult your monthly school calendar for the schedule of conferences for your student's classroom.

Teachers schedule a 30-minute conference for each student. Any issues that cannot be resolved or discussed within this time frame must be held for an additional meeting. Conferences include some time for problem-solving in cases where students are not meeting expected progress levels.

Teachers and Cheri Stevenson, Director of Academy and Adult Services, Becky Terbrack, Assistant Director of Lower School and Janice Edmonson, Assistant Director of Intermediate School are available for parent conferences. Because they must attend to all client and student therapy sessions, therapists do not regularly attend these meetings. A written update of progress will be provided from each therapist, though parents may request a meeting regarding therapy at any time.

Illness

No student is to attend school if:
- Running a temperature of 100 degrees or more
- Broken out with a rash that is undiagnosed
- A contagious disease (chicken pox, impetigo, etc.)
- More than two incidences of diarrhea while in attendance
- Vomiting

A student must be free from fever for a 24-hour period of time (without the use of Tylenol or Ibuprofen) or on an antibiotic for 24 hours in order to return to the program. A student should be free of diarrhea and/or vomiting for 24 hours before returning to the program.

If your student gets sick at school the administrative office will:
- Call the family and/or emergency number to arrange for the student to be picked up immediately.
- Isolate the student until he or she can be picked up
- If your student has been absent for an extended period of time or has a contagious condition, ACCESS® requires a note from the physician clearing your student to return to school.

Medication

If a student is in need of oral medication during school hours, the ACCESS school nurse will administer the medication with written permission from parents and with a doctor's order.

All medication must be in the original bottle. If it is a prescription medicine, it must be in the original bottle with correct label. When empty, the bottle will be sent home for parents to refill.

All parents must complete and sign a medication form. A medication log containing these forms is kept in a central location to document medication administration. ACCESS staff members are unable to accept prescriptions to administer medication "as needed," with the exception of an Epi-Pen, glucose, diastat and updraft albuterol.

All information regarding medication is confidential. Medication is kept in a locked box with the individual medication reports. Parents may not have access to this area; staff members assist parents by placing student's medications in the appropriate place and documenting activity in the log. Parents may ask to see student medical reports or to receive copies of their reports at any time.

If there is a medication change for your student, and it involves being part of a controlled medical study, you must contact Cheri Stevenson, Becky Terbrack or Janice Edmonson at 501-217-8600 or cheri@accessgroupinc.org, becky.terbrack@accessgroupinc.org or janice@accessgroupinc.org.

In case of a serious medical emergency, the administrative office will contact 911 first and then parents. A copy of the medical release form and the daily medication log will be ready when emergency medical personnel arrive.

Incident/Injury Report

Incident/injury reports are completed regardless of severity levels.

Staff members are responsible for completing reports and having parents sign them for the following situations:

1. Any time a student is hurt on the ACCESS campus – before, during and after programming time period.
2. Any time student siblings or other family members are hurt while on the ACCESS campus.
3. Any time staff members or other students are hurt while interacting with your student.
4. Other incidents involving your student that warrant reporting.

The form is completed on the day of the incident or injury. ACCESS Academy teachers and coordinators initial the report, a copy is filed and a copy is given to parents.

Field Trips

In order for ACCESS® to have field trips, parent participation is needed. The law regulating car seat usage requires any child age 6 or younger or 60 pounds or less to be in a car seat.

Parents who agree to help with a field trip should plan to concentrate on their student and his or her classmates during that time to ensure their safety. Siblings are a distraction for the parent, teacher and the rest of the class. It is for this reason that siblings are not permitted to attend ACCESS field trips.

Each student must have a signed permission form from a parent before leaving the building. If a parent declines the field trip for his or her student, the student must remain at home.

The ACCESS bus and/or van will be used for field trips. Depending on available seating for students, parents may or may not be able to ride on the bus if they are attending the field trip.

Photo and Video Release
We ask all families to sign a release form allowing ACCESS® to photograph and videotape students involved in school activities on and off campus. We use this media for classroom activities and projects, teaching demonstration, marketing and other media-related activities.

For families who DO NOT sign the photo release form, your child will most likely be excluded from the activity that is occurring during the photo shoot.

Telephone Calls
Teachers are not available to take phone calls during class time. The administrative office gladly connects parents to teacher voicemail; teachers may return calls during a break time. If you have an emergency, the administrative staff will assist you in whatever way they can. Please remember your child's teacher must utilize available time before and after class for classroom preparation.

Therapists may not receive phone calls during therapy sessions. Please feel free to leave a note in the therapy notebook or on therapists" voicemail.

Client Files
Confidential student files are kept in the administrative office in a locked file cabinet.

HIPAA Statement
ACCESS® is dedicated to maintaining the privacy of your child's individual health information as protected by law, including the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). In conducting business, we create records regarding your student and the treatment and services we provide to him or her. We are required by law to maintain the confidentiality of health information that identifies your student. We also are required by law to provide you with this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices that we maintain at ACCESS® concerning your student's protected health information (PHI). By federal and state law, we must follow the terms of the notice of privacy

practices that we have in effect at the time.

Confidentiality
Confidentiality of all information found in a student's record shall be protected.

1. All information in the records is classified as confidential.
2. No information from the student's record/file is to be released except as that permitted by regulation or unless proper authorization to do so is received from a parent.
3. It is preferred that all requests be made in writing. Information from the records can be released via telephone if proper procedure is followed.
4. There will be no charge for copies of records sent to other agencies.
5. Clinical interns may use records only if there is written authorization signed by a parent.
   a. It is acknowledged that parents have a right to review the contents of student records. ACCESS® reserves the right to schedule a time for such a request.
6. All records are stored in a secure area and protected from the use of unauthorized individuals.
7. An ACCESS employee cannot release information that did not originate within our organization. (Some information from outside sources may be released to our Medicaid Quality Assurance Company, Optum, in the event of an audit.)

Release of Information
Proper authorization to release information from a student's records shall be identified as a written document containing all the following information:
- Student's name and date
- A description of the information to be released and why the recipient requires it
- A release of information form must be signed by a parent each time information is requested

Student, Parent and Guardian Rights
When parents are divorced, ACCESS® requires that a custody statement be on file in the administrative office specifying whether or not the school may release a student or release that student's information to the non-custodial parent. No student will be released to a person other than the custodial parent or legal guardian or designee of the legal guardian.

To accommodate busy staff schedules, student conferences are limited to one per set of parents or guardians. In other words, only one conference meeting per appropriate meeting period is scheduled per student, even when parents are divorced or separated.

All parents must complete a student access sheet for authorization of designees who are permitted to pick up their students. ACCESS® refers to this

document if anyone other than a parent comes to pick up a student. Designees must be prepared to show picture identification (i.e. a driver's license or state ID.)

Maltreatment Reporting

Any ACCESS employee is considered a mandated reporter of any suspected child mistreatment. Staff members who have reasonable cause to suspect a child is being abused or neglected shall immediately report this to the Child Maltreatment Hotline: 1-800-482-5964. This number is also posted in the campus entrance hallway. A written report follows a call to the hotline and is kept in a confidential file accessed by Cheri Stevenson, Director of Academy and Adult Services. These reports are not placed in a student's personal file.

The Department of Human Services requests you be notified that your child may be subject to interviews at any time by Division of Provider Services and Quality Assurance (DPSQA) or the Department of Children and Family Services, special investigations and law enforcement for investigative purposes and/or for determining compliance with licensing regulations.

Emergency Drills

ACCESS staff members and students follow monthly tornado and fire emergency drills. These emergency plans of action stay posted in the school building. The documentation of these drills are kept in a file in the administration office. Fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and emergency backup lighting are checked on a regular basis.

During the 2017-2018 school year, ACCESS began active shooter training with the staff. During the 2018-2019 school year, active shooter training will begin with the students.

Discharge

A student can be discharged from ACCESS® for any of the following reasons:

- Doctor's orders due to a health/medical condition
- Unresolved behavior that disrupts the classroom or behavior that is aggressive
- Parent or team request
- Progress or parent participation
- Failure to adhere to campus policies
- Completing assigned homework
- Attendance or tardiness

Transition

Please indicate on the Letter of Intent that goes out in December of your intent to transition or your desire to discuss the possibility of transitioning your student from ACCESS Academy. When a transition is planned, meetings with the receiving school or agency are necessary to facilitate a smooth transition.

Transition to Public School
Approximately six months before the transition date, the team begins the process by meeting to discuss recommendations for school placement. At this meeting, each member of the team gives his or her input, and parents inform team members what has been done to date. If requested, the director or one of the assistant directors can assist parents in making the necessary contacts to begin the process.

ACCESS team members attend transition conferences with parents upon request. Parents are encouraged to sign necessary releases so ACCESS® may share information with the new school. With parent permission, the receiving school's staff is invited to the transition conference.

Graduation from ACCESS Academy
We graduate students as early as age 18. If a student stays past age 18, it has to be upon recommendation by the team. Students may remain at ACCESS® until the year of their 21st birthday with a team recommendation. All students that attend receive a certificate of completion for their education. Those students that pass the GED will also receive an Arkansas High School Diploma.

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