

2017-2018

Family Handbook

Abiding Word Lutheran
Early Childhood Education
17123 Red Oak Drive
Houston, Texas 77090
(281) 444-4426



We at Abiding Word Lutheran Early Childhood Education (AWECE) would like to help you bring your little ones to Jesus. AWECE was founded in 1994 to provide a nurturing, creative, and safe environment where young children can develop a love for learning about their Savior, themselves, and the world around them. It is a place where little ones can gently be shown their responsibility to God, their parents, teachers, classmates, and themselves (Proverbs 22:6).

MISSON

Abiding Word Lutheran Early Childhood Education exists, as an arm of Abiding Word Lutheran Church, to teach little children about Jesus and his world, leading them to grow in mind, body, and soul.

VISION

Abiding Word will offer a well-rounded program of Early Childhood Education. God's Word will be taught through weekly Bible stories and chapel services. God-pleasing character will be motivated by the Gospel and practiced daily through interactions with Christian teachers and students. We will provide a complete curriculum that offers balance between structured lessons and directed play. Early Childhood Education at Abiding Word will prepare children well for the future challenges of elementary school.

PROGRAM

Abiding Word offers a full service early education program for children ages 12 months (who are walking independently) to 5 years old, Monday through Friday 7:00 am -6:00. The dates and closures can be found on the calendar included in your Registration folder or online.

FACILITIES

Our building is secured with keypad entry and we have two outdoor playgrounds available. We have five classrooms each furnished with child-focused centers for learning and play. Chapel is held weekly in the beautiful church sanctuary.

PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITY

This program and its directors are supervised by the Board of Christian Education of Abiding Word Lutheran Church. This board is made up of five elected members of our congregation, under whom AWECE's Director is responsible for the planning and implementation of the program and is the supervising authority of all teachers.

CURRICULUM

Our teachers adapt A Beka's reading, writing, vocabulary, and pre-math curriculum with HighScope's Key Developmental indicators to blend rigorous academic learning with activities that foster a child's natural curiosity and social/emotional growth. Both are necessary components of Kindergarten readiness.

At Abiding Word Early Childhood, however, we are even more passionate about a child's spiritual development. Our daily Bible lessons are taken from Christ Light's preschool curriculum, and each story is repeated for an entire week so that teachers and students can approach the lesson from multiple angles and really commit all God's works and promises to memory.

ENROLLMENT and ELIGIBILITY

1. The director or assistant director will meet with the family, introduce them to staff, give a tour of the facility, and discuss possible enrollment. In our attempt to accommodate the needs of all our students, parents are asked to openly discuss any concerns regarding their child.
2. Children must have the enrollment packet turned in at least two weekdays prior to acceptance into our program, and payment for the **registration fee, curriculum fee, and first month's tuition is due by the first day of enrollment**. Within one week of admission each child must also have a health statement with immunization records attached as well as a copy of their birth certificate, social security card, and insurance card. Forms and information must be kept up-to-date in order to continue in the program.
3. To be admitted into the Young Toddler Program the child must be able to walk independently. They are allowed to have comfort items such as a bottle, or pacifier with the goal of weaning them before they can move up to the Older toddler class. Potty training for children in Younger toddler class will be at teacher discretion and based on the child's readiness.
4. In the Older toddler room teachers will ask parents to take the lead on potty training when their child starts showing signs of readiness. (See separate potty training policy) Children are not allowed to have comfort items at school.
5. For admission to the PreK 3 or PreK 4 classes, a child must be potty trained completely, except where medical reasons exist that the Director feels can be accommodated in the best interest of the child and the rest of the class. Children wearing pull-ups are not considered potty trained. Children must also be able to independently use the restroom. (See separate potty training policy)
6. Children are enrolled on a trial basis for the first month. Most children adjust to preschool within a few weeks of starting. If after a month, a child is still having a hard time adjusting, the structured school atmosphere of AWECE might not be the right fit for them. The director will contact the parents to discuss other possible educational options in the area. At the time of dismissal, all unused tuition payments will be refunded.
7. We pride ourselves in low teacher to child ratios and enroll children throughout the year on a space-available basis. We follow the most stringent of regulations for teacher-to-student ratios based on the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Only in the event of an emergency will we deviate from these ratios, never exceeding the State of Texas' Minimum Standard Regulations.

8. AWECE admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students in the program. It does not discriminate on the basis of race or origin in administration of its educational policies or admission policies. “God our Savior...wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Students qualified for admission to AWECE are admitted on a first-come, first-serve basis, as enrollment permits. However, if all other considerations are equal, preference will be given to children of members of Abiding Word Lutheran Church and its sister congregations in that order.
9. Parents who are not members of Abiding Word Lutheran Church are asked to read carefully through the statement of “What We Believe” on the back inside cover of the handbook. We expect parents to agree with and support the educational philosophy of AWECE and our church.

LEARNING OR PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

AWECE cannot meet the needs of all children, especially those with severe disabilities. We are a small preschool and often times do not have the resources to meet the needs of a child with severe disabilities. If the staff cannot adequately meet a child’s special need, we will suggest agencies through which parents can find a program better qualified to meet their needs.

We will allow speech therapists to come to the preschool to provide services to a child who is in care. Parents must coordinate and pay for all such speech services.

FEES AND TUITION

The Registration fee and Curriculum fee are due upon enrollment of your child. Monthly tuition when paying by check or money order is due on the first of each month (or the first day of attendance). After the 5th a \$35 late fee will be added to next month’s bill. If tuition remains unpaid by the 10th, your child will be asked not to return until the tuition and fees are paid in full and you will be required to re-register into the program. ***(Teachers cannot accept payments. All payments must be dropped in the locked tuition box located in the foyer outside of the front office.)***

Make checks payable to Abiding Word ECE or AWECE.

Monthly rates are calculated based on a 4 week month. We will not charge more or less for months over or under 4 weeks. The extra days in each month will cover Thanksgiving and Christmas break. *The fees for the various programs offered can be found on the Financial Agreement found in the Enrollment Packet.*

Should a child be withdrawn during the school year for a short time, tuition must be kept current, and the child's intent to return **must** be submitted in writing in order to retain the child's place in his/her classroom. If not, re-registration will be required in order to return to school and will be subject to space availability.

Parents may choose to pay by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) from a banking account with the option to withdraw monthly on the 1st or semi-monthly on the 1st and 15th of the month. There is an annual \$10 fee for this service. The \$35 late fee will accrue to any payment received 5 calendar days after its due date and will be added to next month's bill.

AWECE requires that when paying tuition by personal check or electronic funds transfer, a copy of the Driver's License of the person whose name appears on the check is to be kept on file.

AWECE **will not** accept cash for any payment over \$20.00. When cash is accepted for any type of payment, a receipt can be issued upon request.

Drop-in days are offered for emergency only and require approval from the Director at least one business day in advance. Cost is \$50 per day and is due at drop-off.

Any program changes must be submitted with a change form before the first of the month. There is a \$50 fee for each change.

The fee for late pick-up is \$5.00 for the first ten minutes and \$1.00 every minute per child thereafter. The fee is to be paid at time of pick up or it will be added to the next month's bill.

We require a two week written notice when withdrawing a child from AWECE. If notice is not given, two weeks of tuition will be charged. Please fill out a withdrawal form or email the director . Please note that tuition is not prorated if you choose to withdraw your child mid-month.

Tuition will not be modified for absences due to short-term illnesses, vacations, etc.

If a family has two or more children in the preschool, they will receive a 7% discount on the youngest child's monthly tuition.

PROCEDURES & POLICY CHANGES

Parents will be notified in the form of a letter or the school newsletter at least two weeks prior to any change in policy or procedure affecting parents and children. If at any point a parent wishes to discuss any questions or concerns about policies and procedures at AWECE , parents need to schedule an appointment with the director.

CHAPEL AND WORSHIP PARTICIPATION

Weekly chapel services are held once a week in the church sanctuary. This is an opportunity for the children, faculty, and parents to gather together for worship, singing, and prayer.

Chapel offerings are used to support mission projects in the United States and around the world. You are under no obligation to send an offering with your child, but may do so as your heart desires (2 Corinthians 9:7).

AWECE PreK 3 and PreK 4 students are given the opportunity to sing in our Sunday morning church services at Christmas time each year. We devote much instruction time to these songs in music practice, so attendance is highly encouraged. We love it when parents can join us in worship! We also offer a Thanksgiving program each year in the church sanctuary.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

All children have a formal music class once a week where they learn Bible songs and fun silly songs. It is an educational and exciting time for the children.

A weekly Physical Education class is included in each program. We also offer optional soccer fundamentals through Soccer Shots to enhance our large motor skills curriculum. This is billed separately through Soccer Shots.

LICENSURE

AWECE is licensed through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Our most recent inspection report is on a bulletin board in our side hallway, along with our license. The local licensing office number is (713) 940-3009. The website is www.dfps.state.tx.us The local Child Abuse Hotline number is (800) 252-5400.

To accommodate breastfeeding children, Abiding Word will provide a comfortable place inside the church with a seat enabling a mother to breastfeed her child.

GENERAL STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

AWECE teachers were hired based upon their understanding of and ability to demonstrate the timeless biblical truths that are taught in the classroom. All lead teachers are members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), or non-members approved by our Pastors. All teachers and assistants model Christian morals, values, and ethics in their interaction with the children.

All teachers and assistants have work experience or they are gaining experience by co-teaching with someone who has. All teachers and assistants are CPR and first aid certified and participate in a minimum of 24 hours of training per year as required by

the State of Texas.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

After 10:00 am a child will be considered absent unless they are late due to a routine doctor's appointment accompanied with a doctor's note. Please inform the front office of the reason a child is absent by 10:00am either by phone or email.

Children **must** be brought into AWECE by an adult and checked in on the computer keypad located near the entrance. Children may not be dropped off and allowed to sign themselves in. An authorized adult needs to bring him/her into the classroom and notify the teachers of his/her arrival.

The teachers are not able to discuss problems with you while they are responsible for children in their classroom. Please call the office or email the teacher to schedule an appointment/conference time.

Anyone who picks up your child must also sign out on the computer keypad. **Signing in and out is very important for your child's safety and is required by the state.**

All children are asked to wash their hands upon entering the building to help with the spread of illness.

It is vital that the school be informed of the individuals authorized to pick up each child. Parents must provide the name and driver's license number of local contacts who can pick up and care for your child in case of emergency, illness or lateness.

PARKING LOT SAFETY

Student safety is always a priority at Abiding Word. Please be reminded of the following school policies:

1. State law prohibits cell phone use in school zones. Please refrain from using your cell phone in the parking lot.
2. When dropping off and picking up please park in a designated parking spot. Please do not park in fire lane (red curb), no parking zone and/or designated handicap spots. This includes in front of the ECE door, as it blocks access to the handicap ramp.
3. Any vehicles parked in the above listed areas (even for a short period of time) will be asked to be move and are subject to be towed.

Safety tips:

- Children should never be allowed to run freely in the parking lot. Please hold your child's hand at all times in the parking lot.
- Do not leave your engine running.
- Drive slowly through the parking lot.
- Make sure your child is properly restrained in their car seat before leaving your

- parking space. It is unlawful to transport a child without a safety belt or restraint.
- Do not leave any child unattended in a car. This is against the law and will be reported to proper authorities.

The above simply makes sense for the safety of our children. Please join us in doing what we can for their safety.

VISITING

Abiding Word has an open door policy for parents; we welcome and encourage you to visit your children at any time. Check in with the front office when you are staying for a visit.

Your child may celebrate his/her birthday at the school. Parents may furnish snacks and are encouraged to visit on the day of the celebration. A special celebration may be planned during the school year for children whose birthdays fall during vacation time.

FAMILY CHANGES

Please let your child's teacher know if there have been or will be any changes in your child's routine or home life. Moving, a parent traveling, grandparents visiting, illness of a parent or loved one, or a death in the family can greatly affect little ones. If we know about these things, we can give your child extra Christian love and support as he or she needs.

CUSTODY ISSUES

During registration, AWECE requires that the parents and/or legal guardians of the student be listed. If access to a child is limited, restricted, or denied due to some court ordered action, AWECE must have a copy of child custody orders, temporary or permanent, signed by the court.

NEWLETTER & NOTES

It is important for parents to check their email regularly. This is the school's primary communication system with the parents for newsletters, calendars, events, conferences, etc.

Paw Prints is our weekly newsletter sent to parents via email explaining our school programs and activities. **Please read all communications carefully.** Upcoming activities and other important items are detailed in these communications.

PARENT CONFERENCES

Parents may request a conference with the teacher and/or Director at any time by calling or sending an email with the request. A phone or after-school meeting will be arranged at the convenience of both the teachers and the parents. Out of respect for classroom time, please do not discuss your child's progress at the classroom door

during arrival or pick up.

NAP TIME

Cots will be provided. However, your child needs to bring a **small blanket and/or pillow** for nap time with his/her name clearly written on them. We ask that any “nap time friends” stay at home. It is very easy for our “friends” to become lost or accidentally be taken home by another child.

AWECE is not responsible for any lost or misplaced items.

MEALS & SNACKS

We do not provide food at AWECE. Please pack your child food for lunch and two snacks if your child stays the entire day. Children eat around 9:30, 11:45, and 3:00. If your child arrives before 8 they may bring a breakfast item to eat.

We ask that you only send one dessert with your child. No candy, please! Your child is sweet enough already. Some healthy suggestions include yogurt, cheese sticks, fruit, vegetables, goldfish, crackers, sandwiches, and soup. Carbonated and/or caffeinated beverages are not allowed.

Please note that we are unable to warm up items from children’s lunches. If you would like your child to eat hot food for lunch, please use a thermos. Children will eat their healthiest item first each day.

CLOTHING

Children should be dressed in comfortable play clothes. They cannot engage in the many activities provided if they are worried about getting their clothing dirty. We ask that girls wear shorts under their skirts and dresses.

Painting activities are a part of the weekly schedule. Be assured that the paints and crayons are washable. We will provide paint smocks for your child; however, these do not prevent all messes.

The children spend time outdoors each day if the weather permits. Please supply your child with appropriate clothing so that he/she may join the others outside.

Each child must have a change of clothing at school. **Please provide underwear, pants, socks and a shirt.** Mark all items with your child’s name.

Closed-toe shoes with ties and/or straps and buckles are to be worn. Sandals, water shoes, and cowboy boots (hard soles with pointed toes) are dangerous for children to play in, especially on playground equipment, and are not permitted.

EMERGENCY CLOSURE

On rare occasions the Director may decide to close AWECE due to weather or some other emergency. If in doubt about closure, please call the school at (281) 895-7048 or church (281) 444-5894. In case of inclement weather such as hurricanes or the threat of ice we will follow the decision of Spring ISD regarding school closings.

EVENT OF A DISASTER

In the event of disaster (fire, etc.), my child will be taken to either Abiding Word Elementary School or Bammel Elementary School in the most expedient and safe means available. Abiding Word will make every effort to advise parents of the location as the situation allows. Any child or staff with special needs will be assisted as needed.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline is a way of correcting a behavior and achieving an expected behavior. Classrooms are set up to encourage appropriate behaviors from all children. Praise and positive reinforcement will be used to reinforce acceptable behavior. Children are given the opportunities to make choices for their own behavior. We intend to use logical and natural consequences when working with children so they can see the result of their choices.

Jesus taught, “Honor your father and mother,” and “love your neighbor as yourself.” An atmosphere of Christian love will be maintained at AWECE at all times, both in the classroom and on the playground. Children will gently be shown their responsibility to respect God, their parents, teachers, other children, and themselves.

Corporal punishment will at no time be used. Repeated negative behavior may result in a “time out.” This gives the child an opportunity to cool down and to communicate with the teacher afterwards. The child is allowed to return to activities when the behavior is under control. We teach children about Jesus’ unconditional love and forgiveness.

Parents will be contacted and consulted in the event that there are persistent problems. If the child regularly threatens his or others’ safety or exhibits uncontrollable behavior, the parents of the child will be called to pick up their child immediately.

With toddlers also comes a problem with biting. We will work with parents to help stop this behavior; however, if at any time the child’s behavior begins to endanger others or we are unable to curb this action, we will ask the child to leave. We have the responsibility to protect all children from injury. All final decisions will be made on an individual basis by the Board of Christian Education.

SUSPENSION & EXPULSION

Suspension is used as a disciplinary procedure of last resort. When the director deems an infraction or series of infractions so serious that they interfere with the orderly operation of the classroom and/or school, the following violations may be cause for suspension:

1. **Harming a member of staff or another child** (including hitting, kicking, or biting) After three offenses in a day, the child will be sent home immediately for two days. If a child intentionally harms a member of staff three more times within a six month period, the child may be suspended for one week. If there is further recurrence, the child may be expelled.
2. **Disruptive Behavior** If a child continually disrupts the classroom with his/her uncontrollable behavior, the child will be sent home for the day. If the behavior continues, the child may be suspended for one to five days at the discretion of the director. If there is further recurrence, the child may be expelled.

(If adequate progress is made, the timing of these actions may be altered on an individual basis at the discretion of the Board of Education. A child may be expelled from AWECE after repeated disciplinary actions have failed to impact a child's behavior or at the discretion of the Board of Education.)

Monthly tuition is not refundable in cases of suspension or expulsion.

SMOKING

Smoking is not allowed in the building or on the playgrounds of Abiding Word by teachers or by parents.

GANG-FREE ZONE

Our preschool has been designated a gang-free zone by state legislature. This means that engaging in gang related activity within 1000 ft. of the property is a violation and will be subject to increased penalty under Texas state law.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Occasionally misunderstandings occur. In keeping with Matthew 18:15-17, the following procedure is followed at Abiding Word Lutheran Early Childhood Education:

All questions, problems or complaints should be brought promptly to the teacher involved. Please do not take this to another teacher, as our teachers have been instructed to redirect concerns to the teacher involved. If the situation cannot be resolved, the director will be asked to become involved.

ILLNESSES

In the case of illness the staff would appreciate knowing the nature of the illness, especially if it is contagious so that we can post a notice for other parents. In such cases a release form from a physician may be requested in order for a child to return to school.

A child may return to the school after an illness when the child has been **symptom free for 24 hours without medicine**. These symptoms include but are not limited to: fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or any other contagious conditions.

Parents will be advised of any communicable disease to which their children may have been exposed via a printed notice on the door/ bulletin board.

MEDICATION

If a child must take medication during the day, the school must have a formal request on file using the State required authorization sheet.

Medications are not to be kept in backpacks, and children are not permitted to take medication independently. Please give the medicine directly to the teacher in charge and sign it in on the medication sheet.

Short-term medicine (i.e. Ibuprofen and Tylenol) is to be taken home every night; we are not allowed to keep such medicine overnight.

We must also be notified in writing of any change in medication. All medication must come in the original container with instructions, doctor's name, special care needed (i.e. refrigeration), and dosage on the label. Your child's teacher will administer any medicines. The school will retain accurate records of the date, time, and dosage of medication taken.

Children suffering with severe food allergies or allergic reaction to insect bites or stings may have medication kept on site at all times for us to administer in the event of a medical emergency. The parents will be asked to obtain a letter from their child's physician outlining specific signs and symptoms that we are to observe in the child, as well as the step by step procedure we are to follow in the event of an allergic reaction.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

In an emergency a teacher will administer First Aid and call the parents of children involved. Every teacher and assistant is trained in CPR and First Aid. AWECE also conducts classes at least once a year to train all staff in emergency care.

If it is necessary, emergency personnel will be called. Parents are financially responsible for any emergency service such as ambulance and emergency room costs. We require a copy of the child's insurance card for this purpose.

CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT

We require our teachers to report all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect. All staff is trained during orientation to recognize signs of possible child abuse or neglect. The law obligates us to report such instances to the proper authorities.

HEARING AND VISION SCREENING

Abiding Word conducts a free hearing and vision screening in the fall for all children who are four years old as of September 1st. These screenings are administered by a State Registered Screener. Parents are provided with a copy of the screening results upon request.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Abiding Word Lutheran Early Childhood Education exists to glorify God by serving your children, and your family. We pray that home and school can come together to nurture the faith that God has planted in your little ones' hearts, as well as prepare them for Kindergarten. We thank you for supporting our mission to provide a Christ-centered education!

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Abiding Word Evangelical Lutheran Church is a member congregation of the South Central District of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The following is a statement of what we believe.

We believe in the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe in God the father has made all things that are both seen and unseen (Genesis 1:1-31;2:1-2).

We believe in Christ Jesus, His only son our Lord, True God who came to earth born of Mary, a virgin birth, to be our Savior. Jesus, our Savior was crucified for us and for our sins. He died and then in power rose again, ascended into heaven and reign there for us. He will come back as promised to judge the living and the dead (John 1:14; Isaiah 9:6; 1 John 1:7; Galatians 4:4-5; Mark 10:45; 2 Timothy 1:10). Jesus promised he will be with us always to the end of the world (Matthew 28:20).

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life, who builds his church of believers with power through his Word, who are the communion of saints (Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 12:3; Matthew 28:9; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 4:14).

Our teaching is based on the Bible, not human opinion or philosophy. We believe that God has given the Bible to mankind to show the way to eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, and that the Bible is God's truth in all its parts. It is the only reliable guide we have for everything we face in life and death.

A more detailed explanation of our faith is available from the church. Abiding Word Lutheran Church offers a course in Christian doctrine three times a year at no charge. We encourage you to attend one of these courses so that you can become familiar with what your child will be learning at our school.

We welcome you to our church services and adult Bible classes at any time. Your child may also enjoy attending Sunday School, which is held at 9:15 am, the same time as our Sunday Morning Adult Bible Class. Our services are at 8:00 am and 10:30 am.