

# RIO Christian Academy

## Early Learning Student Handbook



RIO Christian Academy

370 S Long Hollow Rd

Maryville, TN 37801

Office Phone - 865-210-8022

*Info@riochristianacademy.org*

## **About Us**

RIO Christian Academy (“RCA” or the “school”) was founded in 2022 as a Christian School. It operates as a private, non-profit, non-denominational Christian School. RIO Christian Academy operates solely on the authority of the Board of Directors that governs the policies and procedures of the school.

The mission of RIO Christian Academy is to provide a rich academic culture where students are encouraged to perform at their personal best academic level each day, while participating in a culture that is rich in Christian Principles in all aspects of the operation of the school.

RIO Christian Academy has a strong worldview on the importance of a personal relationship with God. This personal relationship causes the employees, parents, and most importantly the students to be able to openly discuss God in all areas. In addition to the openness about the Lord and His ability to help us in all things, academics will be rigorous to the extent that each student will be able to grow and learn at a pace that it is challenging and sustainable.

RCA will also individualize learning on a daily basis. This will make learning personal and intentional for each child. Students will be met where they are in the educational process and steps will be put in place to help them grow from one year to the next. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to be an active part in the learning process and to do whatever they can within their reach to help their child get the most out of each academic school year.

## **Mission Statement**

*To provide a concise academic path where all students can excel, both academically and spiritually.*

### ***Jeremiah 29:11***

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

### ***James 3:17***

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

## **Student Value System**

- E** - Excelling in all areas of life
- A** - Academic excellence in every situation
- G** - Godliness in all decision making
- L** - Lifestyle of integrity at all times
- E** - Encouraging those around you at all times
- S** - Systematically following the academic standards

## **Statement of Faith**

We believe that all scripture is God breathed and is useful for daily application in our lives today. We believe that the Bible is the final authority in life.

We believe in one true God and that He exists in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We believe that man was created in God's image and that God distinctly created both male and female. We believe that they both have an unique and unified purpose. We also recognize that Adam's fall created a need for a Savior. Therefore, Jesus Christ came to the earth, fully God and fully man to die for all, so we can be saved from our sin through faith, by grace as we accept the work on the cross as a personal gift of mercy on our behalf.

## **Admission**

### ***Enrollment Process***

As of June 2023, RCA- Early Learning (EL) will accept children 1 year old - 5 years old. Parents who have enrolled their infant prior to June, will still be served in our Early Learning program. Students applying for pre-k must be 4 years old by August 15 of the current school year. An application and a Tennessee Child Health Record showing date of last physical and current vaccinations must be completed and returned to the EL Director with a non-refundable enrollment fee of \$50. There is a required pre-enrollment interview between the parent and the EL Director, as well as an assessment visit with the child before the child's first day. Noncustodial adults will not be a part of the interview process. Extended family members will be welcome at school-related events throughout the year. If the administration believes that the school would be unable to service the child's needs, they have the right to decline enrollment.

Part-time enrollment may be available depending upon the days available in each classroom. All part-time days will be established upon enrollment. Part-time is a minimum of 3 days per week.

## **Hours of Operation**

RCA - Early Learning (EL) is open Monday - Friday from 7:30AM - 5:30PM.

No children will be admitted before the scheduled opening time. Our cut off time for dropping off is 10AM unless your child has a doctor's appointment or an emergency. Any child remaining after 5:30PM will be charged \$1 per minute per child. Any child left for more than 30 minutes after closing will be reported to the Department of Child and Family services and your child released to the local authorities.

If you are picking up your child before 3PM, you will need to pick them up in the office instead of their classrooms.

RCA - Early Learning will close in observance of the following holidays with no reduction of tuition.

- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Labor Day
- The day before Thanksgiving
- Thanksgiving Day
- Friday following Thanksgiving
- New Year's Day

RCA - Early Learning will be closed the following weeks: December 22, 2023 - January 1, 2024. The center will reopen on January 2, 2024. Our summer closing will be July 1 - 5, 2024. No tuition will be charged for these weeks.

Parents will be notified in advance of closings by at least one hour for inclement weather via School Cues. We will do our best to stay open if at all possible as long as we can provide adequate staff. School Cues is also available as an after hours emergency contact.

## School Fees

### Tuition

#### *Infant Room*

- \$215 Full Time

#### *1 and 2 Year Old Class*

- \$210 Full Time and 4 days/wk
- \$160 3 days/wk

#### *3 Year Old Class (Pre-school)*

- \$225 Full Time (not potty trained)
- \$195 Full Time (potty trained)
- \$220 4 days/wk
- \$175 3 days/wk

#### *Pre-K*

- \$195 Full Time
- \$190 4 days/wk
- \$145 3 days/wk

Tuition is drafted on Monday's of each week for the upcoming week. First week's tuition is paid in advance at the time of enrollment. Payments will be set up through Tuition Express. Parents have the option of automatic credit card (CC) or ACH drafts. Parents will be responsible for the credit card fees, and the school will be responsible for the ACH fees. There will be a \$35 fee if CC or ACH payments are declined.

If a parent chooses to withdraw their child, tuition will stop being charged the week the parent gives notice the child will no longer be attending. Any student with an outstanding account balance will not be permitted into care until the balance is paid. Parents/guardians are responsible for any legal fees that would accrue in the event that weekly tuition and/or late fees are not paid. For children who are no longer enrolled, parents will be charged an additional 25% of the unpaid balance. If balance is not paid within 3 months, RCA has the right to pursue legal action.

## Other Fees

Curriculum fees are due the first week of August each year. The EL Director will notify parents of those prices. An annual fee of \$35 will be due January 15th for all ages.

## Vacation Policy

Each child will receive one vacation week per calendar year. You must have attended the center at least 3 months and maintain a zero balance to be eligible for free vacation week. Students must not be in care at any time during that week in order to take advantage of the reduction in rate. Vacation weeks do not accrue, and will start new each January.

Any child that will be taking the summer off but will be returning in the fall will be charged a \$300 holding fee. This fee is due before the first day of summer break.

## **Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures**

Your child must be signed in/out on the teacher's role sheet. No one is allowed to pick up your child that is not on your list. A driver's license is required to verify the name of the individual picking up your child. A person authorized to pick up a child that is suspected of being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs will be asked to make alternative arrangements for transportation. Should he or she refuse, this facility will notify the proper authorities. We are very concerned about the safety of the children in our care, and we will go above and beyond to make sure our children remain safe. Children are required to be in a car seat that has not expired.

For safety concerns while you are on school property, your child must be with an adult at all times. This includes pick up and drop off. By law, a child cannot be left alone in a car even if the air conditioner or heat is on.

## **Physical Activity and Dress Code**

Children will have outdoor play for a minimum of 30 minutes per day twice a day unless it is raining or the temperature is below 32 degrees or above 95 degrees. If the children are not able to go outside due to weather conditions, they will participate in gross motor activities inside.

Please dress your child in seasonally- appropriate clothing. This allows your child to enjoy outside play. Tennis shoes and socks are recommended for outdoor play. Children may not wear clothing with offensive or inappropriate language, wording or logos.

The following is a list of items that are required for your child on a daily basis. RCA reserves the right to refuse care if these items are not at the school at all times.

- Clean extra change of clothes appropriate for the season (include underpants and shoes)
- Diapers if needed
- Baby food and bottles/cups labeled with child's name (Infant room only)
- Blanket and fitted sheet for mats (crib sheet size)

\*Bottles can be used in the infant room only\*

Due to state regulations and risk of SIDS, the following items are not allowed in the infant room:

- Pacifier clips
- Wubbanubs
- Amber Teething Beads
- No blankets are allowed in cribs but parents may provide a Halo Sleepsack

Please label your child's cups, lunchboxes, coats, blankets, book bags, extra clothing, etc. Sheets and blankets are washed weekly. RCA will not be responsible for lost items of clothing, including jackets and coats. Please do not bring toys from home. RCA is not responsible for the loss or damage of personal toys brought from home.

## **Food**

Breakfast will only be served at regularly scheduled times each day. Afternoon snacks will be served as well. RCA strives to follow USDA meal guidelines. Parents are asked to provide USDA approved packed lunches. All meals and snacks should be nutritionally sound. If you need suggestions on lunch options, please visit [www.myplate.gov](http://www.myplate.gov).

Menus will be posted each week for parents to view. Please notify the EL Director in writing of any food allergies along with a previous effect of allergen. Please provide alternative snacks if needed.

## **Health and Illness Policy**

RCA will not accept any child into care if he/she has symptoms of illness. These symptoms include: fever 100.4 degrees under the arm, diarrhea, vomiting, earache, skin rash, conjunctivitis or any unexplained illness. Children must be symptom free for 24 hours and/or fever free for 24 hours without the aid of medication before returning to the Center. Some illnesses will require a doctor's note before the child is able to return.. These illnesses include Flu, Strep Throat, Chicken Pox, Rash, or any other illness determined by the director.

If your child begins to display any symptoms of illness, a parent will be contacted to remove the child from the facility within the hour. If your child is picked up early due to illness, your child may not return the following day. It is in the family's best interest to have an emergency care plan in place in case a situation arises where your child is sick and unable to attend. Parents will be asked to sign and discuss an emergency care plan form upon enrollment.

RCA reserves the right to close a classroom or the Center at any time due to an outbreak of a contagious disease.

Allergies or other medical problems will be posted in your child's classroom to better help your child's teacher provide the best possible care.

### *Hand, Foot, and Mouth Policy*

- 24 hour fever free without the aid of medicine
- No new blisters
- Blisters are scabbed over

### *Lice Policy*

It is our desire to prevent the outbreak of lice by performing checks on a regular basis. Children with lice will not be permitted into care. Should your child be found with lice, the staff will contact a parent to remove the child from the center within the hour. Children may return to the center when they have been treated and are nit-free.

## **Positive Covid 19 Case Policy**

If there is a positive case for COVID-19 in your home, please follow medical protocol.



## **Medication Policy**

RCA will only administer emergency medications such as inhalers, EPI pens, dietary supplements as well as physician prescribed medications. All medications must have original labels indicating the child's name, method of administration, and name of medication. A parent must complete a medication form for each medication upon arrival. This includes diaper rash creams, chapstick and sunscreen. Medications will be stored in a locked medication box in either the child's classroom, kitchen, or main office. Do not place any of the above items in the child's backpack. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ask for medications at the end of each day. All medication boxes will be cleaned out at the end of the day on Friday of each week. Only the director/authorized person designated can administer medications.

Medication forms are to be kept in the classroom or in the main office. Parents are welcome to stop by to administer medications themselves except in the case of a fever or any other illness where the child would be sent home.

## **Emergency Medical Procedures**

In the event your child needs emergency medical attention, RCA will contact the parents by phone. Parents will provide current work and cell phone numbers for each parent, and three additional phone numbers in the event both parents cannot be reached. Should we feel the emergency requires an ambulance, 911 will be called and your child transported to the appropriate hospital by an ambulance or other form of emergency transportation. RCA staff who are trained in CPR and First Aid will use their training to determine the best emergency procedure needed. Immediate attention will be given to the distressed child and the director notified immediately. The director, or designee will take responsibility for notifying both 911 and the parents or legal guardians of the child.

## **Emergency Procedures**

Students will participate in three types of drills each year: fire drills, tornado drills, and intruder drills. These drills will take place so that students know what to do in case of emergency.

If there is an actual emergency, parents will be notified ASAP through the communication platform.

If it becomes necessary to evacuate the premises, the students will be taken by cars, vans, and/or personal vehicles to RIO Advance on 610 W. Hunt Road, Alcoa 37701. Parents will be notified as soon as possible by phone or through School Cues and given instructions on how to reunite with their child.

## **Reporting Abuse**

Teachers and staff have a responsibility to report suspected abuse. The school will not contact parents before making a report to the appropriate authorities.

## **Security**

Parents are welcome to drop off their child in the center between 7:30AM-10AM and pick up from 3PM-5:30PM. All visitors will need to speak with the EL Director or person in charge before entering the building. Our facility has security measures in place to ensure that only authorized parents/guardians and individuals are granted access to the facility.

RCA has surveillance cameras that assist in monitoring daily activity. Other internal safety measures are in place to keep students safe on an ongoing basis. All staff, and contracted persons with proximity to children will complete background checks.

## **Suggestions & Concerns/Parent-Teacher Conferences**

If you wish to express suggestions or concerns, please address it to the Lead Teacher first. Scheduled parent/teacher conferences are conducted periodically throughout the year. Parent/teacher conferences can also be set up by appointment at the request of the parent, teacher, or EL Director.

## **Transition Policy for Teaching Staff Turnover**

RCA staff desires to provide your child with a constant and consistent caregiver. There may be times when your child's teacher is absent or needs to be replaced. When this occurs, the administrative staff will do their best to quickly replace your child's teacher with a highly qualified educator. New teaching staff will always be trained by a qualified peer teacher or administrator. Students will be introduced to and given the opportunity to bond with the new teacher. We always take into consideration a teacher's experience and desire to work with a certain age group. We also consider personalities and the overall dynamics of the classroom when making placement decisions.

## **Transition Policy for Children**

Classes are adjusted in May of each year and throughout the summer changes can be made. This provides consistency for the child and teachers and continuity in their learning.

## **RCA - Early Learning Program**

RCA is a smoke & vape-free/drug-free facility inside as well as outside on the premises.

We will strive to obtain and maintain the three star status for the Tennessee child care report card system. RCA is also a Gold Sneaker Participant.

Parents must give written permission for educational observation of their child(ren) to anyone who is not a RCA staff member.

Curriculum will be designed based on a cumulative effort of teachers, administrators, and parents. This center will develop lessons based on the Abeka curriculum, as well as creative and thematic learning. Bible stories and art projects correlate with the weekly theme. The Pre-K class will be more academically- focused to prepare students for Kindergarten.

Teachers will develop consistent routines and schedules. Nap times will be scheduled based on age and lunch schedules. Toddler, pre-school and pre-K children will nap between 12PM-2PM and will rest for a minimum of 1 hour. Infants will eat and sleep on demand. Behavior management will be consistent and age-appropriate. Students will be taught to take responsibility for their actions, and consequences will be relative to children's behaviors. Reflection time will be used as a last resort measure for children who cannot control their own behavior. Children, ages 3 years and up, who must be removed from play will stay one minute per year of age. Praise will be used often and positive discipline modeled in every classroom.

It is the policy of our facility to maintain a safe and healthy environment for all children and staff who attend RCA. If your child shows uncontrollable, aggressive, or destructive behavior towards others, you will be asked to make other childcare arrangements. It is the desire of the RCA staff that every child be treated as individuals. RCA has zero tolerance for any child using the words "gun" or "shoot" to threaten another child. When a child's individual needs cannot be met through positive discipline actions and the

philosophies of RCA, a conference will be necessary and a behavior plan implemented. We reserve the right to dismiss a child at any time.

In an effort to maintain the integrity of RCA, all employees will agree to not solicit child care business for personal or professional gain. Parents are not permitted to solicit RCA staff for private child care.

## **Policies and Procedures for Hearing and Reviewing Title VI Complaints**

It is the policy of RCA that no person, on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination. Anyone who believes there has been an act of discrimination based on race, color or national origin against any person or group is asked to file a complaint as follows:

Document the nature of the complaint, who was discriminated against; in what way; by whom; when the discrimination took place; who was harmed; who can be contacted for further information; the name address and telephone number of the complainants and the alleged discriminatory acts. Take the above complaints and documentation to the EL Director. If it is felt that the complaint has not received the proper attention, the complaint may then be taken to the Board of Directors who can be reached at [info@riochristianacademy.org](mailto:info@riochristianacademy.org). If needed, we will provide interpreter/translator services for clients who have limited or no English skills.

## **Gold Sneaker Initiative Policies**

RCA is a participant of the Gold Sneaker Initiative. The purpose is to protect, promote and improve the health and wellness in childcare settings.

Children attending less than a full day program shall be offered a proportional amount of physical activity time as required by TDHS licensure rules. Physical activity for children ages three years and older will have a balance of structured and unstructured play, both indoors and outdoors (weather permitting) utilizing age appropriate activities.

RCA will provide education through parent meetings, newsletter articles, etc. to families twice each year that addresses the importance of limiting screen time according to current American Academy of Pediatrics policy and the development of a Family Media Plan.

Children shall not be allowed to remain sedentary or to sit passively for more than 60 minutes continuously except scheduled rest or nap time. RCA will compare their physical activity practices to best practice standards by participating in Go NAP SACC Self Assessments (Infant and Child Safety Physical Activity & Screen Time).

RCA ensures physical activity will be a positive experience for children and it will never be used negatively or to control behavior. RCA will ensure appropriate infant and child feeding patterns, including breastfeeding. All educators shall be trained to, advocate for breastfeeding, safely prepare expressed breast milk for feeding, feed infants according to their individual need, and store expressed breast milk properly. We will publicly display our support for breastfeeding infants and mothers by posting signage or other publicly facing information (i.e. participate in Breastfeeding Welcomed here through the TN Department of Health or Team Nutrition resources for new and expectant moms about breastfeeding).

RCA will ensure appropriate infant and child feeding patterns, including adequate time for snack and meal consumption and age-appropriate portion size.

RCA shall provide education to families twice each year via parent meetings, newsletter articles, sharing of resources, etc., that addresses nutritional learning experiences with a focus on adequate time for snacks and meals and age-appropriate portion size. All eating opportunities shall consist of a respect for the child and promotion of a positive attitude towards food. We shall apply evidence-based early food preference learning strategies such as introducing healthy foods, repeatedly pairing new healthy food choices with foods children already like and modeling consumption and enjoyment of healthy foods.

RCA's designated area of the property shall be free of all tobacco and tobacco-related products, including smoking, smokeless and electronic products. It is inclusive of all outdoor spaces and indoor locations used for childcare, whether or not children are present.

Our employees and volunteers may not use tobacco or tobacco-related products while taking walks as well as all other outdoor activities. Employees who use tobacco products while off campus are required to change clothes and wash hands thoroughly proper to interacting with children.

## **Emergency Preparedness Plan**

Fire:

1. Save lives- evacuate any persons in immediate danger.
2. Teachers will take their emergency folder with parent contact numbers and emergency phone numbers. Teachers will then evacuate the children and adults out the front door. Meet as a group in front of the church building under awning. Person in charge will grab the key for the church building, get the emergency kit, and check for stragglers.

Secondary exit plan: out of designated classroom window.

3. Sound alarm- pull on any fire alarms and push Emergency buttons if you see a fire. This will notify local authorities and emergency management that we need assistance. Fire alarms are located at both outside doors.
4. Fire drills are documented monthly, alternating the time of day that they take place. During fire drills, staff evacuate all children out the closest door and meet under the church awning.

After fire evacuation:

1. When safe within the pre-designated area, all children and adults must be accounted for. Teachers will call roll and take a headcount.
2. Person in charge reassures children of their safety.
3. First Aid is administered if needed.
4. Parents will be called by the management designee from the church phone, personal cell phone, or via School Cues. Parents will be told where they can be reunited with their children upon arrival.
5. Building is not re-entered until permission is given by the officials.

Earthquake:

Teachers will direct children to move under the nearest table, away from the windows. Children will stay under the table with their heads covered. In the Infant Room, children will be placed in cribs and moved away from the windows. Staff and children will stay under tables until the Director or designated person in charge states it is safe to return to normal activities.

#### Tornado:

In the event of a Tornado: teachers will evacuate children to the downstairs hallways near the restrooms. Children will sit against the wall with their heads covered. Classes will stay downstairs until the Director or designated person in charge determines it is safe to return upstairs.

#### Chemical Spill/Natural Disaster:

Should a natural disaster or a chemical spill requiring evacuation of all children from the center, your child will be transported by available vehicles to a safe location with direction from the local authorities. Transfers will occur as follows:

LRLC will be transported to RIO Advance Church  
610 West Hunt Road  
Alcoa, TN 37701

In the event the children cannot be transported to RIO Advance Church, they will be transported to the nearest safest location as determined by the local authorities. Parents will be called and given instructions on how to reunite with their child. All parents will be notified by phone or School Cues of the evacuation. All necessary information will be transported with the children to the temporary site until parents arrive.

#### Bomb Threat:

The Director will push the panic button or call 911. All children and staff will be evacuated to RIO Advance Church or to the nearest safest location as determined by the local authorities.

#### Flood:

Children will stay in their classrooms with windows and doors closed. If evacuation is necessary, children will be transported to RIO Advance Church or to the nearest safest location.

#### Intruder/Lock Down Policy:

If a person or persons who are considered dangerous were to enter the building, Director/person designated in charge would notify staff via School Cues or cell that they are under a code black. Director or person/designated in charge will push the panic button and use whatever means necessary to keep intruder from entering building. If a staff

member is located near a panic button they are to push it. Staff is to immediately turn off all classroom lights. The staff that have bathrooms in classrooms are to take children and phones into the bathroom and lock the door keeping children as quiet as possible. Staff who teach in a classroom without a bathroom must keep children far from windows and doors. If staff are in the hall they are to take children to nearest classroom, turn out the lights, and find a secured area away from windows and doors. If staff are on the playground, they are to find the safest most discreet way to take children to the church building. Above all, staff is required to use their best judgment and save lives! Code black drills will be conducted at least every six months. In the event of an actual lockdown, parents should come to the church office for more information.