

# EPIPHANY ACADEMY

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*For Exceptional Individuals*

## 2024 Handbook

### History

Epiphany Academy is a private home-based micro-school with two locations. Our students range in age from birth through 12th grade. We strive to accommodate families to ensure the quality of care their child deserves. I have been caring for children for over 30 years. Our family has always been child-oriented, we believe that a child's needs come before all else. I have always been driven to care for children and have raised over half of my 13 children to adulthood using a caring approach that respects children for the people that they are.

### Mission Statement

At Epiphany Academy, we believe in the value and uniqueness of each student we serve. Our experience is designed to promote each student's own individual social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. As caregivers and educators, our mission is to provide a safe and developmentally appropriate self-paced learning environment, that fosters a child's natural instinct to explore, discover, create, and become a lifelong learner and global citizen.

### Philosophy

We believe that in the right environment, a child's natural curiosity and creativity will lead to endless opportunities to grow in knowledge and develop a lifelong love of learning. We provide that environment by ensuring a safe and nurturing atmosphere where your child will be encouraged to learn, explore, and create their way to exciting discoveries about the world around them. Each day with us will be a chance for your child to grow socially, cognitively, emotionally, and physically. As early as infancy, your child will be provided with natural learning opportunities appropriate for his or her age, developmental stage, and learning style. Flexible year-round education makes it possible for us to provide your child with the care and education that will help them become happy, healthy lifelong learners while meeting their needs and the needs of their families.

## Meals and Snacks

<b>Meal</b>	<b>Starts</b>	<b>Ends</b>	
Breakfast	6:30 A.M.	9:30 A.M.	
Morning Snack	10:00 A.M.	10:30 A.M.	
Lunch	11:00 A.M.	1:30 P.M.	
Afternoon Snack	2:00 P.M.	3:00 P.M.	
Late Afternoon Snack	4:00 P.M.	4:30 P.M.	
Supper	5:00 P.M.	6:30 P.M.	
Evening Snack	7:00 P.M.	7:30 P.M.	

## Weather Related Closings

We will close when it has been deemed that the weather itself or traveling in said weather presents a danger to staff and students. We will monitor the weather and local news stations to determine when it is appropriate to end the day early or cancel care for the following day. In the event that we close early or cancel care for the following day, parents will be contacted via text. We will not transport students in inclement weather, and to protect the safety of all students and staff school is automatically canceled in the event of a no-travel or extreme weather advisory, for Minnehaha County or Valley Springs.

## Enrollment Records

Annually Epiphany Academy completes an audit of enrollment records. At the conclusion of this audit, families will be notified if anything needs to be updated. Some forms must be updated every year, including the Emergency Contact and Medical Consent form.

Other records must be updated throughout the year, such as physicals and immunization records. When visiting your child's physician for a yearly "well-child" appointment, please request a copy of your child's physical and most recent immunization record. You may bring these items in yourself.

In addition, any time a family's information changes such as address, place of employment, or health insurance provider, a new Emergency Contact and Medical Consent form must be completed.

Enrollment Procedures:

<b>Item Checklist Needed Before Care Begins</b>
*Signed contract
*Signed Handbook Agreement
Signed Scholarship Application
*Child Information Card
*Health check & Immunization Record
Food Policy Agreement (for children requiring formula, milk, or baby food)
Food Program Application
Copy of Birth Certificate
Registry Clearance (for participation in field trips)
*Non-Refundable Deposit (one week of care)

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a top priority for Epiphany Academy. Personal information of families and staff will not be shared for any reason without the individual's prior written consent. We do not have cameras in the school or provide any type of video surveillance. When discussing a child's activities and friends in the classroom, only first names will be used. In situations regarding behavior problems and/or Incident/Accident Reports, the names of children involved will never be given to families.

## Safety

For the safety of our students all staff including but not limited to educators, volunteers, helpers, and any adult will be thoroughly vetted before any admittance to the school.

# Tuition

## Financial Agreements

Upon enrollment and any changes to tuition, families are provided a Financial Contract. This contract should be carefully reviewed and checked for errors. The contract states the days and hours your child is scheduled to be at Epiphany Academy, as well as the amount due after any financial assistance has been applied. This contract is binding and can only be changed with approval and signatures from parents and the appropriate Epiphany Academy staff.

## Payment Schedule

Tuition is due before the 1st day of attendance and is then to be paid on a pre-paid basis. Weekly payments are due by 5 P.M. on Friday for the following week. Monthly payments are due by 5 P.M. on the Friday before the 1st. Students who have a balance due will not be able to attend until all arrearages are cleared.

## Late Pick-Up Fee

Epiphany Academy's full-time tuition only covers up to 210 hours per month. If you need more care than this you need to arrange for the extra hours ahead of time. We need to ensure that we have the proper staffing to meet your student's needs. We will warn you mid-month as well as in the 3rd week of the month if it looks like you may go over hours. The 1st occurrence of going over 210 hours will be billed at \$25 an hour or the current state of federal minimum wage whichever is greater. The second occurrence of going over 210 hours without approval will be billed at \$30 per hour or 2x's the current minimum wage whichever is greater. The 3rd and any subsequent occurrences of going over 210 hours per month without approval will be billed at \$50 per hour or 3x's the minimum wage whichever is greater. These additional amounts will be due on your tuition due date.

If parents are not available to receive their student or fail to pick up their student by 30 minutes past their normal pick-up time, staff members will first try to contact the parents using all phone numbers provided on the Emergency Contact and Medical Consent form. If parents are unable to be reached after 30 minutes, staff members will try to contact all emergency contact persons. If staff members are unable to contact emergency contact persons, then they will then notify the Department of Human Services and/or the Police Department.

## Insufficient Funds

All payments rejected due to insufficient funds will be charged a \$60 penalty. Missed payments and late fees must be paid within 1 week unless other arrangements have been made.

# Holidays and Vacation

## Closures

Epiphany Academy is closed for the following dates in 2024, if you require assistance finding back-up care please reach out as soon as possible.

1/1, 1/15, 2/19, 3/21, 4/1, 5/27-5/31 6/3,(summer program activities begin) 7/4 & 7/5, 8/30, 9/2, 10/14, 11/11, 11/28 & 11/29, 12/23-1/3/2025 (winter break)

## Extended Absence

We currently only accept 22 students, therefore full tuition is due regardless of attendance.

# Curriculum

We use age and developmentally appropriate interest and competency based differentiated learning methods to ensure every student learns in the way that is best for them.

## Daily Schedule and Activities

Each student's program is tailored to their needs, interests, and abilities.

## Free Choice

"Free-play" (also called child-initiated activities, free choice, self-selection) activities are incorporated into the children's schedules. Free play is another opportunity for a child to grow socially and cognitively through the development of relationships.

## Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is incorporated into the daily schedule. Staff members actively engage in activities when prompted by the children. Outdoor play is an opportunity for children to run, jump, climb, and use their bodies in ways that would otherwise be unsafe indoors. In addition, a large amount of social interaction takes place when children play outdoors. Because they are engaged in fewer teacher-directed activities and more child-directed play, children are able to choose their friends and who to interact with.

Children will go outside year-round, including winter. Only during extreme weather conditions will the children remain indoors.

We do our best to determine if the weather is appropriate for the students to go outdoors. It is important for parents to send their children in appropriate clothing and outerwear for the weather conditions (e.g., coats, snow pants, boots, gloves, etc.). Please clearly label all articles of clothing with your child's name. Epiphany Academy has a few extra hats and mittens, but not enough for every child. If a child is not dressed appropriately for the weather, we will contact parents to provide the appropriate attire. Please ask your child's teacher if you have any questions about weather-appropriate clothing. Children without proper attire will not be able to participate in outdoor activities.

### Nap/Rest time

All children will be provided a regularly scheduled nap or resting time, that is age-appropriate. Children will not be forced to sleep but may be encouraged to work, read, or lie quietly for a period of time. The length of time a child should have to remain resting varies by child. There is no hard and fast rule regarding the maximum amount of time a child should have to remain resting. Children will be provided alternative quiet activities if unable to rest. We will not prevent a fatigued student from resting at any time.

### Multimedia

The use of multimedia in our program is an extension of the teaching and learning that takes place in our program. Educators may select movie, television, and computer game titles based on the student's current interests. Children are not required to view part or all of a video or television show, or to play computer games. Instead, the activity is offered as one of several options. All multimedia must have an age-appropriate for example a rating of "PG" or "E" for elementary students.

### Bullying

Bullying is not considered acceptable behavior; all efforts will be made to guide children in finding appropriate ways to interact with others. Students who cannot be guided into treating others with love and respect will be permanently disenrolled.

## **Pets & Visiting Animals**

We keep pets and at this time Epiphany Academy is not a good fit for a child with a pet allergy. No animal may be brought into Epiphany Academy without first notifying and receiving permission from us. Once approved by the school, pets and visiting animals must have documentation from a licensed veterinarian or animal shelter to show that the animal(s) is fully immunized and that the animal is suitable for contact with children.

## **Assessments & Computer-based Learning**

Epiphany Academy uses IXL, CK-12, Prodigy as well as other programs as needed to assess students' levels and enrich their learning.

## **Field Trips**

Epiphany Academy offers a variety of experiences both at and away from the school. Field trips where students will be transported will require a "Field Trip Permission Form." Instead of completing multiple permission slips, we keep on file a "Permission to Transport Child" form on hand.

As a participant in our program, your child may participate in short, unannounced field trips, or take classes within the community, these include but are not limited to: walks as a class around the perimeter of the building and/or nearby neighborhoods; trips to local playgrounds; and trips to local businesses. Including but not limited to the Zoo, The Butterfly House, The Washington Pavillion, The Museum of Visual Materials, and local restaurants.

Teacher-child ratios are maintained at all times.

A "Permission to Transport Child" form must be completed at the time of enrollment.

Epiphany Academy uses volunteer vans, cars, trucks, etc. for away field trips. Head counts shall be taken before leaving the school after entering the vehicle, during a field trip, after taking children to the restroom, after returning to the vehicle, and upon returning to the school. When children leave the vehicle, the vehicle shall be inspected to ensure no children are left in the vehicle.

## Food Service Policy

At Epiphany Academy, children are provided nutritious meals and snacks. Children will be encouraged to sample all foods that are offered, but will never be forced to eat.

Please inform us if your child cannot eat a certain food or has different dietary needs (e.g. vegetarian, vegan, lactose intolerant) so a substitution can be made. For certain dietary restrictions, you may be asked to provide food from home for your child.

## Food From Home

Children are welcome to bring in treats to celebrate a birthday or holiday. Due to various food allergies and dietary restrictions, we recommend supplying store-bought snacks still in the original packaging. Please check with us before bringing any homemade snacks.

### Food Allergies/ Action Plans

If your child has a food allergy, please complete a Food Allergy Action Plan form. This form will be posted in your child's room, as well as in food preparation areas. If medication for an allergic reaction is provided, please have your physician sign the Food Allergy Action Plan as well.

## Infant, Toddler, and Two-Year-Old Students

The following information is specific to the infant, toddler, and two-year-old students: Parents must supply diapers, wipes, diaper creams, bottles, formula, baby food, extra clothing, pacifiers, blankets, and stuffed toys for rest time. Please label all items with the child's name. Children may use pacifiers during rest time. To reduce the likelihood of spreading illness, pacifiers must be kept in a child's cubby or diaper bag during all other times of the day. If you are breastfeeding, please discuss with your child's teacher when your child should be fed breast

milk, and if you desire to come onsite to breastfeed you will need to complete appropriate background checks.

Breast milk must be brought in ready-to-use containers. For health reasons, we are not able to store bags of frozen milk for extended periods of time.

We recommend when possible that all new foods be tried at home first since a child could have an allergic reaction to foods they have not had before. Please inform your child's teacher of any new foods your child has tried.

## SIDS

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the unexpected, sudden death of a child under age 1 for which a cause of death cannot be identified. It is not known what causes SIDS; however, several sleeping practices have been linked to an increased risk for SIDS. Therefore, Epiphany Academy has a strict policy for infant sleep placement.

All infants less than one year will be placed on their backs to sleep. Infants shall not be allowed to sleep in a car seat or swing at Epiphany Academy.

Once a child has been placed in his or her crib for nap, if the infant rolls from back to front - and is also able to roll from front to back - it is acceptable to leave the infant sleeping on his or her stomach. NO heavy blankets, stuffed toys or pillows should ever be placed in a crib. A request for alternative sleeping positions must be accompanied by a signed and dated physician's note stating the reason for the request.

## What to Provide

### Clothing and Items from Home

Extra clothes, water bottle, sunscreen, small blanket for rest, travel size pillow, weather appropriate clothes.

### Play Clothes

Please send your child to Epiphany Academy in comfortable play clothes and shoes that are in good repair. Play is usually active and often messy; comfortable, washable clothes are important if your child is to participate fully in the program. Outdoor play is scheduled every day as an essential part of our planned curriculum.

Children should be dressed appropriately for both indoor and outdoor activities. All children occasionally get their clothes wet and have toileting accidents. Whenever this occurs, it is best to change the child into an extra set of clothing provided by the family. Your child's teacher will request that you bring a complete change of clothing, including underwear, to be kept at school and replenished as needed. Please be sure to clearly label all items of clothing. Let the teacher know whenever your child's clothing or other items cannot be located.



### Items from Home

We ask that you notify the driver of any items brought from home.. Please clearly label all belongings brought from home. It is required that items of value, such as iPods or handheld gaming systems be left at home, due to the risk of damage or loss, Epiphany Academy is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items.

## Arrival and Departure

### Arrival

Parents are required to accompany their child for pick up and be present at drop off. Parents should also speak with staff and volunteers, only briefly at these times. We encourage parents to communicate with staff and volunteers about their child's temperament that particular day, how he/she slept the night before, whether he/she has eaten that morning, etc. Most children go through periods of difficulty with separating from their parent(s).

This is common and developmentally appropriate.

Try these tips for a successful drop-off:

- Establish a regular, predictable routine. Whether you have a kiss and a hug, do it the same way every day. What often makes separating stressful for children is the uncertainty. If your child can predict what will happen, the separation won't be as difficult.
- Separate once. If you come back to the vehicle again and again, it will increase your child's stress. Remember the moment of separation is the worst part for your child, so doing it more than once makes it more stressful for your child
- Be reliable. Be present when promised. Children who are picked up by someone other than expected may have more difficulties separating. Phrase time in terms your child will understand. For example, you will be back after snack time or before nap time.

## Attendance

Regular attendance is strongly encouraged for the benefit of the child as well as the classroom as a whole. If your child will be absent, please call or text so your child's driver and teacher may make accommodations..

If your child will be absent for an extended period of time, please let the school know as soon as possible.

## Health and Safety Policies

### Illness

Our first priority at Epiphany Academy is providing a healthy, safe learning environment for all children. A child will be sent home as soon as possible if any of the following is experienced: an illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities (as determined by the staff);

an illness results in a greater need for care than the staff can reasonably provide without compromising the health or safety of other children in the classroom; or a child is experiencing any of the following conditions:

- Fever of 101 (under the arm) or greater, until 24 hours symptom-free without fever-reducing medication
- Signs/symptoms of severe illness, including: lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, inexplicable irritability or persistent crying, difficulty breathing, and/or wheezing
- Diarrhea (not associated with diet changes or medications) (Two instances) until diarrhea stops for 48 hours.
- Blood in stools not explainable by dietary change, medication, or hard stools
- Vomiting (One instance) the child can return after vomiting has been resolved for 48 hours.
- Persistent abdominal pain (continues more than 2 hours) or intermittent pain associated with fever or other signs/symptoms of illness
- Mouth sores with drooling, unless a health care provider determines the sores are not contagious
- Rash until a physician determines that these symptoms do not indicate a communicable disease
- Pink eye (conjunctivitis) until after treatment has been initiated for 24 hours
- Scabies, until after treatment has been completed
- Tuberculosis, until a health care provider states that the child is on appropriate therapy and can attend child care
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment and cessation of fever
- Chickenpox, until all sores have dried and crusted (usually 6 days)
- Hand Foot and Mouth sores have dried and crusted and no fever
- Pertussis, until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment has been completed
- Mumps, until 9 days after onset of symptoms
- Hepatitis A virus, until 1 week after onset of illness
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash
- Rubella, until 6 days after onset of rash
- Unspecified respiratory tract illness accompanied by another illness which requires exclusion
- Herpes simplex, with uncontrollable drooling

A child who becomes ill while at Epiphany Academy will be isolated in order to limit exposure of other children to communicable disease. An ill child will be isolated to wait for his/her parent to arrive, or be available for drop off. For this reason, we ask families to make every effort to pick up a sick child or be available for drop-off as soon as possible.

Epiphany Academy reserves the right to make the final determination of exclusion due to illness. Any exceptions to our illness policy will require a written note from a licensed healthcare professional stating that the child is not contagious and must be approved by the administration.

\*Parents will be notified by telephone and text. Please contact Epiphany Academy via phone or text whenever your child is ill.

### Notice of Exposure & Reporting Disease

If your child is exposed to a communicable disease, a notice will be shared by text or email. If your child or anyone in your household becomes ill with a communicable disease, please notify the Epiphany Academy immediately.

In the event a child is reported to have a communicable disease, the Epiphany Academy will notify the health department.

### Hand Washing

Frequent hand washing with soap and warm, running water is the most effective way to reduce and prevent the spread of illnesses commonly found in schools such as the flu, diarrhea, and pink eye. Parents are encouraged to assist their children in the hand-washing process at home.

Other times your child (and staff members) will be expected to wash their hands:

- Upon arriving at the center or when changing classrooms
- After each diaper change or using the toilet
- Before and after meal times
- Before and after administering medication
- After handling bodily fluids (mucus, blood vomit)
- Before and after using the sensory table
- After coming indoors from the playground
- After handling pets and other animals
- After cleaning or handling garbage

Warm, running water (no colder than 60 degrees F) and soap must be used. Hands must be rubbed vigorously for at least 20 seconds, including the backs of hands, between fingers, under nails, and under any jewelry. A disposable paper towel should be used to dry hands and turn off the faucet. Help reinforce the importance of hand washing by encouraging frequent hand washing at home as well.

### Medications

Prescription and over-the-counter medications must be given to a staff member in the original container, clearly labeled with the child's full name and birth date. Epiphany Academy staff will not administer any medication without a signed Medication Authorization Form. Forms can be obtained from your child's teacher or from the Director.

Epiphany Academy will not administer Tylenol for Fever. To administer Tylenol to a child under 2 years old Epiphany Academy will need a doctor's note with dosage and times.

Medications are stored in a locked box (refrigerated medications) or in a high cabinet (non-refrigerated medications) while in use at Epiphany Academy. The Medication Authorization Form must remain with the medication at all times. Unused medications must be immediately returned to the family and will not be stored at Epiphany Academy.

Medications are administered only by Staff. When a medication is given, the teacher will document the type of medication administered, the dosage, and the time it was given.

#### Physicals and Immunizations

Each child must have a current physical and immunization record on file at Epiphany Academy to attend. The physical on file must be updated at least annually; immunization records must be updated whenever a new immunization is received.

#### Documentation of Accidents/Incidents

Staff members shall document accidents and incidents that occur at Epiphany Academy using an Accident/ Incident Report and Incident report on Brightwheel. The parent shall sign the report the same day as the incident. A copy may be given to the parent. All Accident/Incident Reports must be given to the Director to be placed in the child's permanent file.

#### Documents of Allergies

A child with allergies must have an Allergy Action Plan posted in a visible location. If the allergy is food-related, an Allergy Action Plan must also be posted in the kitchen area. All staff working with a child with allergies must review the Allergy Action Plan to ensure an understanding of emergency procedures should the child have an allergic reaction. All allergic reactions must be documented with a Health Incident Form.

#### Documents of Special Health Care Needs

An Emergency Care Plan will be on file for any child with special health care needs (seizures, etc). A copy of the Emergency Care Plan must be kept in the student emergency binder. All staff must familiarize themselves with this plan, should an emergency arise. If necessary, staff will receive training regarding a child's specific healthcare needs.

#### Emergency Medical/Dental Procedure

It is important that parents complete and update, as needed, an Emergency Contact and Parental Consent Form. This form contains contact information for both the parents as well as the individuals authorized to pick up the child in the event of illness or emergency. In addition, the form allows Epiphany Academy staff members to seek emergency medical or dental care from authorized care providers in the event of serious injury. It is the responsibility of the parent to complete this form and to make corrections to this information when necessary.

- If a child becomes ill or injured after arriving at the center, the Director will attempt to contact the parent(s) at all available telephone numbers. If a parent cannot be reached, the individuals listed as emergency contacts/authorized pick-up persons on the Emergency Contact & Parental Consent form will be called.

- Children who are ill or seriously injured will remain under the supervision of the appropriate staff until a parent arrives.
- If the child requires immediate medical attention: The staff member who witnessed the emergency situation will remain with the injured child and instruct someone else to call 911. If no one is available, first ensure the child is stable and if possible, bring the child with you to call 911.
- A staff member who witnessed the emergency situation will accompany the child to the hospital, bringing the child's physical exam, immunization records, and Emergency Contact & Parental Consent Form.
- The Director will contact the parent(s).

#### Sunscreen & Insect Repellent

All students will be supplied with a non-toxic sunscreen of SPF 50 or greater and insect repellent when appropriate.

#### Mandatory Child Abuse Reporters

As childcare professionals who interact with children on a daily basis, each staff member of Epiphany Academy is a mandatory child abuse and neglect reporter and must contact the South Dakota Department of Human Services whenever abuse or neglect is suspected.

#### Tobacco Use

Cigarettes/ Vapes and smokeless tobacco products are prohibited on premises, including parking lots and outdoor play areas.

#### Access Policy

Any person present within the school will be required to have had a record check and approval to be present in the school and in the presence of students. Parents or guardians of potential students wishing to tour may do so outside of school hours or at a time when students are not present in the school.

Agents of outside agencies such as Birth-3, or DSS will be under the direct supervision and monitoring of a staff member at all times and will not be allowed to assume any childcare responsibilities. The primary responsibility of the supervision and monitoring will be assumed by the student's educator unless he/she delegates it to another staff or volunteer for the best interests of the students. Buildings are locked at all times and only staff may open doors for visitors. If staff doesn't know the visitor they shall ask for ID and get authorization from the Director. If at any time staff observe anyone who is on the property of the school without their knowledge they will notify the director and a call to the local law enforcement may be placed. It may be treated as a dangerous adult situation, staff will follow the "Dangerous Adult" procedure. Non-agency persons who are on the property for other reasons such as maintenance, repairs, etc., will be monitored by a paid staff member and will not be allowed to interact with children on the premises.

An individual who has been convicted of abuse, neglect, or a sex offense against a minor (even if the sex offender is the parent, guardian, or custodian) who is required to register with the sex offender, or child abuse registry:

- Shall not be employed by, act as a contractor or volunteer at, or be allowed admittance to the school.
- Shall not be on the property of the school while students are present, except for the time reasonably necessary to transport the offender's own minor child to and from the school. The offender may not enter the building at any time and the student will be escorted to and from the offender.

### Affidavit Policy

At times families may be dealing with difficult situations at home. When legal matters are present in the home, families may need to collect affidavits for their legal team. Due to the nature of the relationship between caregiver and child, families may choose to ask an Epiphany Academy staff member to provide such a statement. Our program's priority is providing the best possible care when children are away from home and our focus will remain on the child, making sure all their needs are met during what could be a difficult time at home. Epiphany Academy can only provide affidavits concerning what individual employees, volunteers, and legal-age helpers have witnessed themselves as individuals. The school itself cannot give an opinion.

## Guidance Strategies

### Reasons for Misbehavior

Every adult who cares for children has a responsibility to guide, correct, and socialize children toward appropriate behaviors. These adult actions often are called child guidance and redirection. Positive guidance and redirection are crucial because they promote children's self-control, teach children responsibility, and help children make thoughtful choices. The more effective caregivers are at encouraging appropriate child behavior, the less time and effort adults will spend correcting children's misbehavior.

Effective guidance and redirection focus on the development of the child. They also preserve the child's self-esteem and dignity. Actions that insult or belittle are likely to cause children to view their caregivers negatively, which can inhibit learning and teach the child to be unkind to others. However, actions that acknowledge the child's efforts and progress, no matter how slow or small, are likely to encourage healthy development. Teaching children self-discipline is a demanding task. It requires patience, thoughtful attention, cooperation, and a good understanding of the child. Epiphany Academy staff will use only positive guidance techniques.

When interacting with young children, staff should ask themselves the following questions: "Am I..."

- Validating feelings?
- Asking open-ended questions?
- Encouraging problem-solving?
- Respecting children's choices?

- Using praise and positive reinforcement?
- Talking with children – not at them?
- At the child's eye level?

### Understanding Misbehavior

If caregivers understand why children misbehave, they can be more successful at reducing behavior problems.

Listed here are some of the possible reasons why children misbehave:

- Test whether caregivers will enforce rules.
- They experience different sets of expectations between school and home.
- A child does not understand the rules, or are held to expectations that are beyond their developmental levels.
- They want to assert themselves and their independence.
- They feel ill, bored, hungry or sleepy.
- They lack accurate information and prior experience.
- They have been previously "rewarded" for their misbehavior with adult attention.

### Preventing Misbehavior

Intervention strategies include but are not limited to the following:

1. Ensuring a student's needs are met.
2. One-on-one relationship-building activities such as modeling and social stories.
3. Utilize mental health, social workers, and psychologists in service of the child and family. Refer to special needs programs if available.
4. Class-made books individualized for the student. Individual picture cards to support behavioral expectations.
5. Ways for the student to be of service to the school, others or his or her community.
6. Noticing and describing the child's body, face and actions, labeling of feelings, and acknowledging or true intent.
7. Assessing, teaching, or scaffolding missing executive skills.

### Biting Program

Before age three, biting is somewhat common. When a child repeatedly bites:

1. Identify stressors—not enough structure, too much structure, not enough rest, eating, bowel habits, connection, attunement, etc.
2. Start a stress reduction program at home and school.
3. Shadow the child and monitor for triggers. There is nothing you can do to help a child learn other ways of getting needs met after the bite has occurred. You must catch the child before the bite. Most bites occur during transitions and unstructured time.
4. Say, "You wanted \_\_\_\_\_(take an educated guess as to what the child wanted). Say \_\_\_\_\_ (acceptable words) or do \_\_\_\_\_(acceptable action)!"
  - Make visuals of alternatives to biting: Say, "My turn," put up a STOP hand, play with a different toy, move away, etc.

While biting is an age-appropriate behavior, it is important to remember it is also an unacceptable behavior in a childcare or school environment.

### Severe Biting Policy

The following process will be followed if a child's behavior continuously takes away from the care or safety of others.

- Meeting with parents, teachers, and administration to discuss a plan of action to increase positive behavior at school and home.
- Logs must be kept to seek out triggers and patterns for repeated undesired behavior. Upon written request, these logs will be made available to the parents and/or evaluator.
- If aggressive behavior/ biting occurs two times in the same day the child must be picked up from school immediately. The child will be removed from the classroom while waiting to be picked up. If the behavior occurs a third time in the same week, the child must be picked up immediately and take the following day off so that a preventive plan can be put in place.

## Home and School Partnership

### New Family Orientation

Each family is strongly encouraged to schedule a time with the Director to complete a "New Family Orientation." This orientation is a great time for parents to drop off routine care items (diapers, bottles, etc.) as well as an opportunity to get to know important policies and procedures that are also reviewed with the Director at this time, as well as the paperwork required for enrollment completed. Typically, "New Family Orientation" is scheduled prior to the start date.

### Daily Communication

Epiphany Academy uses text or email to communicate and share photos, notes, and incidents. We do not encourage staff to be on their phones, so only necessary updates will be issued.

### Cultural Competence

Epiphany Academy is committed to respecting each child's and family's culture and diverse needs. We recognize that culture influences every aspect of a child's development and is reflected in childrearing beliefs and practices. We believe it is important to support and preserve the child's home language usage, faith and beliefs, and cultural traditions. We recognize that children can and will acquire the use of English even when their home language is used and respected.

Epiphany Academy carries out this philosophy of cultural competence in the following ways:

- Families are treated with respect and sensitivity from our first meeting.
- Families' financial limitations are respected at all times and clear understanding of payment expectations from the time of enrollment.



- We attempt to learn accurate information about each family, their culture, faith and beliefs, and cultural traditions (we encourage each family if they feel comfortable, to share this information with us at the time of enrollment). This information is part of the child's daily plan as it relates to meals and snacks, holiday recognition, etc.
- Families are asked to inform us of the best way for them to receive communication (i.e. verbal, written, text, email, etc.)
- Families, where English is their second language, are encouraged and assisted in becoming knowledgeable about the cognitive value for children of knowing more than one language and providing them with strategies to support, maintain, and preserve their home language. Epiphany Academy will continue to acquire training annually to further our knowledge of culture, language, and diversity.

### Room Transitions

Your student may spend different parts of their day with different groups depending on their interests and abilities.

### Questions/Concerns

If you have a question or concern, do not hesitate to bring it to the attention of the teacher most directly involved.

If the concern is not resolved, the Director can be reached at 605-496-5060 or [director@epiphany-academy.org](mailto:director@epiphany-academy.org)

The Director is available to assist parents and staff in resolving concerns.

## Emergency Procedures

### Fire, Tornado, Bomb, or Other Emergency Situations

Fire regulations and tornado warning procedures are posted near the exits in each building. Fire and tornado drills are conducted every three months; all classrooms are required to participate. In the event of a fire, bomb threat, or other evacuation emergencies, the children and teachers will immediately leave the building and go to each class' designated spot.

In case of a tornado, each classroom has a designated area to seek shelter until the emergency is over. Parents will be called as soon as safely possible following an emergency situation. For the safety of children, parents, and staff, we ask that parents do not attempt to pick up their child during an emergency situation.

### Blizzard/ Severe Winter Weather

The Director will monitor the weather and local news stations throughout the day to determine when it is appropriate to close the center early or cancel care for the following day

### Missing or Abducted Child

In the event of a missing child, the staff will search for the child in the immediate area, while another staff member calls the Director to help with the search.

- If the child cannot be located in a reasonable amount of time, the Director will notify the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office and the child's parents.
- In the event of an abducted child, the staff must immediately contact the Director and the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office, and the child's parents.

### Power Failure

Staff members and children should remain in the building and if possible, proceed with activities as usual, or may go to the outdoor playground until power resumes.

- If power cannot be restored within a reasonable amount of time, the center will close and parents contacted.
- The director and staff are responsible for contacting parents to inform them of the closing and of the need to immediately make arrangements their child.
- Activities will resume if possible until parents arrive.

### Special Needs Care Policy

Epiphany Academy is committed to the principle of inclusion and complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. We are committed to every child equally, regardless of their special needs, and will commit to learning more about each child's specific needs and finding the best resources necessary to accomplish our common goal of finding the best care for each child. We believe that including children with special needs can enrich the experience of learning for all children and Epiphany Academy will make accommodations for children with special needs within the guidelines of ADA.

To assure that we are meeting the individual needs of each child enrolled with an identified special need, the following procedures and programs are followed:

- Staff receive ongoing training on inclusion and special needs as related to the specific needs of enrolled children.
- Confidentiality of children and families is respected and maintained at all times.
- Children with special needs will be included and encouraged to participate to the fullest extent of their abilities.
- Staff and families collaborate to meet the individual needs of the child.
- Communication with families is ongoing and is responsive to the needs of families.
- Physical environment is free of barriers.
- A variety of teaching strategies are used to meet the individual needs of each child.
- An individualized special needs care plan will be created with the help of the parent/guardian, doctor, and Epiphany Academy to ensure that all parties are aware of the care practices that need to be in place.
- The special needs care plan will be completed annually or more frequently at the request of the parent/guardian or child's doctor.

# Epiphany Academy Handbook Agreement

I/ We the parent(s) or guardian(s) of \_\_\_\_\_ have read and agree to adhere to the Epiphany Academy 2024 Handbook.

Parent or Guardian Signature	Date:

Parent or Guardian Signature	Date: