



**Parent/Guardian Guidelines
2023-2024**



Early Learning Coalition of Orange County
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Goals of the Early Learning VPK program at Oakland Avenue Charter School

- Build a strong foundation for our early learners, ensuring their future success as they demonstrate continuous social, emotional, and cognitive growth along standards-based learning progressions, K – 12.
- Build a strong foundation for our early learning teachers, ensuring ongoing professional growth through learning and collaboration for continuous growth along the continuum for implementation of a standards-based, developmentally appropriate curriculum.
- Build a strong foundation by partnering with families of our early learners, ensuring they have access to resources; information, and guidance that will enable them to support and enhance their child’s approaches to learning (foster curiosity, encourage persistence, express creativity, and provide opportunities for planning and reflection through play).
- Build a strong foundation for early learning in our community, ensuring the needs of our early learners are addressed both inside and outside of the school day.

Our Philosophy

We believe that all children are intelligent, creative, and resourceful and that they communicate their individual gifts in many different “languages” including the arts, literacy, math, science, social/emotional, and physical languages.

We respect all families as essential collaborators who contribute distinct experiences and knowledge we value as an integral part of our early learning program.

We create learning communities of children, families, and educators whose work depends upon listening and responding to each other’s needs.

We provide opportunities for children to take the initiative in their own learning as they make sense of the world.

VPK Program

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) is a program that is funded by the Office of Early Learning at the Florida Department of Education. The Early Learning Coalition of Orange County (ELCOC) offers the VPK program free of charge to families as a 540-instructional hour school year. All children who reside in Florida, turning four by September 1st of the school year, are eligible to participate in a VPK program. Children with VPK delayed enrollment certificates are not eligible for placement in a school district VPK program. To participate in the free 3 hours of VPK instruction, parents must obtain a VPK Certificate of Eligibility (COE) from the Early Learning Coalition of Orange County. To apply for the certificate, a parent/guardian must submit verification of the child's age and proof of residency.

Attendance

Although it is voluntary for your child to enroll in a VPK program, it is NOT voluntary for your child to attend. It is expected that your child will be on time and in school every day unless there is an excused absence. It is the parent's responsibility to advise the student's teacher if a child will be absent or tardy. If your child has more than three unexcused absences and/or tardiness per month, your child may be removed from the program. All absences must be documented. Parents are required to sign and date a monthly attendance certification form and teachers are required to maintain them for auditing purposes. Late Pick-Up Fees: It is expected that your child will be picked up promptly at the end of the instructional day. If a parent is tardy in picking up his/her child after dismissal time, a late pick-up fee will be charged. Parents will be assessed a \$15 late fee for every 15 minutes past the end of the day. A student may be withdrawn from the program if there are repetitive late pick-ups.

Student Behavior and VPK Discipline Policy

VPK teachers design classroom environments that support healthy social, emotional, and cognitive development. The Early Learning Department collaborates with teachers and paraprofessionals to support student behavior that advances this important area of development with attention to self-regulation, appropriate emotional expression, relationship development, and developing independence. In partnership with parents, we value modeling and reinforcing behaviors that are safe and appropriate in a variety of situations. Our program embraces a foundational framework for behavioral support and social-emotional development prioritizing students' safety and security within stimulating learning environments. Teachers recognize that relationships are essential for learning, and they intentionally design environments and foster interactions so that students are in healthy connected relationships with adults and peers. With the essential foundation of routines, rituals, and structures in place, VPK students thrive.

In some cases, a student may continue to display disruptive or unsafe behaviors even with these foundational components in place. For those students, VPK teachers implement the following progressive discipline plan to intensify support and/or reconsider placement:

Step One: Implement routines, rituals, and structures based on for all students that create a safe and connected classroom environment for learning and problem-solving. If behavior continues or escalates.

Step Two: Notify the parents and school personnel about the behaviors and develop a plan for intensifying behavioral support including documentation of behaviors and identifying support strategies. If behavior continues or escalates.

Step Three: The teacher and/or parent recommend the child for screening and evaluations. The evaluations will determine the process for further assessments or actions from school personnel. *Important Note: At any point in this process, if a child's behavior excessively disrupts the learning of other students, causes damage to school property, and/or is unsafe to self or others, the child's placement may be reconsidered. This includes shortening the child's daily schedule or withdrawing the child from the VPK Program.

Students are expected to behave during the time they are at school, and at school activities. Students may be disciplined for any infraction including but not limited to:

- Harassment to others
- Engaging in injurious behavior
- Damaging property
- Disrupting class or school activities
- Dishonesty

Transportation

Transportation is not provided for students in the VPK program. Parents must make arrangements to bring their children to school and pick them up on a timely basis.

Dress Code

Schools adhere to dress code policies as outlined in the Oakland Avenue Charter School website, (<https://oaklandfl.gov/230/Oakland-Avenue-Charter-School>), as well as will be sent home in a hard copy. Our curriculum encourages active learning. Children will work with paint, sand, water and many other types of materials. Children will also play outside daily and should wear clothing that is comfortable, along with closed-toe shoes.

Personal Care and Toileting Issues

Children who are enrolled in the VPK program are expected to be toilet trained. Please contact the school if there are medical issues that require attention. VPK teachers and paraprofessionals will assist with guiding toileting, but staff will not be able to assist with the wiping of children.

Important Classroom Information

Bloomz, email, or phone call is required for communication with VPK teachers. Bloomz is the strongest form of communication. Snacks and water bottles are to be provided each day by daily. If your child is in wraparound care an additional snack is required daily.

Outdoor Explore

Children are provided daily time to run, play, and explore outside. Outdoor play opportunities are essential to growth, development, and learning. Our program offers unstructured play opportunities as well as outdoor explore stations which are specifically designed to provoke children's curiosity about a curriculum topic they are currently investigating in their classroom.

Children choose which activities to engage in during outdoor exploration. Teachers play with children to encourage physical, social, and cognitive development and assess students' growth in these areas.

Staff will monitor the need to shift gross motor activities indoors due to poor weather conditions including excessive heat.

Quiet Time

Oakland Avenue Charter School guidelines regarding nap time or quiet time in our VPK program is aligned with the latest research in this area. All students in our VPK wraparound care program are offered a time during the day that allows them to rest or relax. Children are not required to nap during quiet time, but we ask them to be respectful to those who still need their quiet time. This allows all children time for unstructured rest but does not require children to sleep if they are not tired. We request the quiet time blanket be as big as what can fit in your child's backpack.