



Berea Early Learning Academy
16779 Lucas Ferry Rd
Athens, AL 35611
mybela.org

BEREA EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY

Parent Handbook 2026-2027

Hours of Operation: Monday - Friday 7:55 – 3:30
Extended Hours of Operation- Monday-Friday 7:15-4:00

16779 Lucas Ferry Rd
Athens, AL 35611

Ph: 256-771-6843
Website: mybela.org



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Mission of Berea Early Learning Academy

Berea Early Learning Academy (BELA) is a Christian based preschool focused on providing children opportunities to succeed. Our mission is to develop young leaders with a Christ-centered education at an early age. We believe that providing a stimulating and happy environment will allow for every child to develop the skills needed to be successful in school and into their adult years. Every child has a special place in God's plan and our students will learn that God loves and cares for them while learning to think critically and explore their interest in a nurturing environment.

We understand that there are many childcare options in the area, and we are truly grateful that you've chosen BELA for your child's early learning journey. While there are many wonderful facilities nearby, we want to gently remind families that BELA is a *preschool*, not a daycare.

This distinction is important: as a preschool, our days are thoughtfully structured around a curriculum designed to support your child's growth in areas such as early literacy, math, social-emotional development, and more. Our teachers dedicate a significant amount of time and planning to create engaging, educational experiences that lay the foundation for future learning.

We appreciate your support and partnership in making BELA a place where children can thrive, explore, and prepare for kindergarten and beyond.

Non-Discrimination Policy

BELA does not screen applicants (students or staff) based on any creed or color requirements. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality, ethnic origin, gender or religion in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, and other school-administered programs.



Child Abuse Reporting Policy

BELA believes that all children, regardless of age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, or religious beliefs have the right to protection from abuse. The staff and volunteers of BELA are required to report any suspicion of child abuse, including but not limited to, physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, or mental. The staff and volunteers will report any suspicion or allegations of child abuse to the Director and all suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

The staff and/or volunteers, at all times, will be aware of the safety, dignity and well-being of the child and will not act in an accusatory manner toward any persons who may be involved. Should a child be in immediate danger, it will be reported to the local police department and the Department of Human Services.

At BELA, the safety and well-being of every child in our care is our top priority. For this reason, **we will not release a child to any parent or authorized individual who appears to be under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or any substance that impairs their ability to safely care for a child.**

If a staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a parent or guardian is impaired, we will:

1. **Keep the child safely in our care** while attempting to address the situation with the individual.
2. **Call another authorized emergency contact** listed on the child's file to come pick up the child.
3. If the individual insists on taking the child or becomes aggressive, **law enforcement may be contacted** to ensure the safety of everyone involved.



We understand that this may be a sensitive issue, but our responsibility is to protect each child in our care from potential harm. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation with this policy.

BELA Oversight

BELA is a non-profit organization whose operation is governed by a Board of Directors. The Board of Directors act in the best interest of BELA by: enforcing existing policies, establishing new policies when needed, decide payroll changes based on employee evaluations/performance, oversee any grievances not resolved by the Program Director, conduct annual evaluations of the school administration and staff. Additionally, the BELA board maintains oversight of BELA's finances, school policies, and staff.

BELA staff and parents/guardians of students are invited to address the board with advance notice.

In the state of Alabama, preschool programs are required to either be licensed by the Department of Human Resources (DHR) or operate as license-exempt if they are affiliated with a local church ministry. Because **Berea Early Learning Academy (BELA)** is a ministry of **Berea Baptist Church**, our program is in the process of becoming **license-exempt** under state law.

While we are not licensed by DHR, BELA is committed to maintaining high standards for safety, learning, and care in a Christ-centered environment. We follow best practices for early childhood education and continuously strive to meet the needs of our children and families with excellence.



School Communication

Parent/Teacher Communication

In accordance with BELA policy, teachers should only be contacted through the approved communication channels listed below.

- Contact the office at 256-771-6843 and leave a message for your child's teacher.
 - Teachers will respond to all calls in a timely manner not to exceed 24 hours from the date called.
- Send your child's teacher a message through ProCare.

In the event of an emergency, please ensure that the office is contacted. The following items are considered emergency situations which require front desk notification.

- Early or delayed pickup of your child.
- Notification that a family member, or your student, has been diagnosed with a communicable illness or other contagion such as strep, COVID-19, or lice.

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that BELA is updated with parental contact information. In the event of changes to telephone numbers and/or custody arrangements, BELA should be updated immediately. Failure to maintain updated contact numbers may result in missed calls from the school which directly impact your child.

School Closings

A list of scheduled closures for the school is available on the BELA website (mybela.org) and as an attachment to the student handbook.



In the event of inclement weather, the safety of our children, families, and staff is our top priority.

Families will be notified of any closures or delays through the following channels:

- Your child's classroom group chat
- ProCare app notifications
- Our school's official Facebook page

We will follow the lead of **ACS (Athens City Schools)** regarding unscheduled school closings due to weather conditions. If ACS is closed, delayed, or dismisses early due to inclement weather, we will do the same.

School Policies

Confidentiality and Privacy

All BELA medical, behavioral, or financial records will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and privacy. Access to these records will be limited to authorized personnel only, and they will be stored in compliance with applicable privacy laws.

If you have any concerns about any of these matters, please contact the BELA director for a confidential conversation.

Damage to School Property

Destruction of school property is taken very seriously. While accidents may happen, the intentional destruction, damage, or loss of BELA property will be charged to the responsible parent for compensation.



Tobacco / Vaping Policy

BELA is a smoke-free/tobacco-free facility. Smoking, vaping or any form of tobacco use is prohibited, at all times, anywhere on the campus.

Safety Drills and Evacuation Plan

In order to ensure the safety of all children in the event of an emergency, fire, tornado and other safety concerns, drills will be conducted at regular intervals set by the BELA director.

Uniforms, Dress Code and Personal Items

K1- Transition Students

At BELA our K1 and Transition classes are **not required to wear uniforms**. However, we kindly ask that you **dress your child in clothing that is practical and easy for diaper changes**.

Specifically, please **avoid sending your child in skinny jeans, tight pants, or outfits that must be completely removed in order to change a diaper**. While these outfits may look adorable, they can make diaper changes much more time-consuming and challenging—especially when teachers are caring for multiple children.

We recommend comfortable, loose-fitting clothing with elastic waistbands for ease and comfort throughout the day.

K2-K4 Students



Uniforms are required for all students. The BELA uniforms consist of a uniform top paired with navy or grey bottoms or a uniform dress. Additionally, for colder weather, uniform sweatshirts and/or cardigans are also available. The BELA Director will have a list of approved locations for purchasing uniform clothing and embroidery.

Please see the uniform dress code table below for any questions.

Approved Tops: all require the embroidered school crest or logo on the left chest		
Girls	Boys/Unisex	Colors
Polo dress		navy, grey, powder blue
Peter Pan Blouse		white, powder blue
Polo Shirt	Polo Shirt (Short/long sleeve)	navy, grey, white, powder blue
	Cardigan	navy, grey
	Sweater/Sweatshirt	navy, grey

Approved Bottoms		
Girls	Boys	Color
Pants	Pants (plain, pleat)	navy, grey
Shorts	Shorts (plain, pleat)	navy, grey
Skirt/Skorts		navy, grey, plaid
Jumper		navy, grey, plaid

School appropriate clothing should be worn at all times. This consists of rubber soled closed-toed shoes. Children should be able to put on, fasten, and take off shoes by themselves or with minimal help.



Footwear Policy

For the safety and comfort of all students, children must wear closed-toe, secure athletic or tennis shoes each day.

The following footwear is **not permitted**:

- Crocs
- Sandals
- Swim shoes
- Wellington boots (rain boots)/Cowboy boots
- Hey Dudes (Too slippy in gym)

All shoes must be worn with socks.

All personal items brought to school should be clearly labeled with the student's first and last name to ensure any items lost or misplaced can be returned. In the event of lost or misplaced items that do not have a label, the teacher will do their best to reunite the items with the proper child.

Late/Tardy Policy

In order to prepare your child for kindergarten, timeliness is vital. Carline ends promptly at 8:15 AM. Students should be picked up, for full-time by 3:30 PM and part time by 12:30 PM.

At BELA, we value punctuality as it helps maintain a smooth daily routine and ensures that every child gets the most out of their day. Carline ends promptly at 8:15 AM.

Carline Times:

- Morning: 7:55-8:15 AM
- Half-Day: 12:15-12:30 PM
- Full-Day: 3:15-3:30 PM



Arrival Time:

Please arrive by 8:15 AM so your child can fully participate in morning activities.

Late Arrival:

If your child arrives after the designated start time please see the section on Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures. Frequent late arrivals can disrupt the classroom routine and impact your child's learning experience.

If You Expect to Be Late:

Please notify us as soon as possible by calling the office or sending a message through ProCare.

Persistent Lateness:

If your child is consistently late, we may reach out to discuss any challenges and work together to find a solution.

Thank you for your cooperation in helping us create a positive and organized environment for all our students!

It is understood that sometimes circumstances happen; however, consistent tardiness to school or late pick up will not be tolerated. If you are late picking up your child from school, there will be a \$25 late fee, per child. Late fees are required to be paid by the next business day.

Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures

In order to maintain safety and efficiency, drop-off and pick up procedures must be followed. Children should be dropped off and picked up at the assigned door. Parents are not permitted to enter the building unless absolutely necessary. Children will be escorted to their classroom by a teacher.



Our morning routine between **8:15 AM and 8:30 AM** is a busy time as staff assist students with restroom visits, putting away book bags, and preparing for assembly.

Carline Window:

We ask that if you arrive at school before 7:55 AM to park in the parking lot until carline begins. The carline area needs to be kept open for early drop off.

Please arrive **between 7:55 AM and 8:15 AM** to use carline.

If you arrive after 8:15 AM:

- **Do not enter the carline.**
- Instead, please walk your child to the **BELA door (located beside the playground)** no earlier than **8:30 AM**, where a staff member will meet you and help your child get settled.

This procedure helps us ensure all children arrive safely and have a smooth start to their day.

Student pick up times are as follows. For full-time students, between 3:15 pm and 3:30 pm. Arriving after 3:30 pm will result in a late charge. For part-time students pickup is between 12:15 pm and 12:30 pm. Arrival after 12:30 pm will result in a late charge. If you need to pick up early, please call the office and contact your child's teacher in advance to let them know.

For the safety of the children, only persons listed on the authorized persons form will be permitted to pick up. Any person other than a known parent will be asked to provide identification before a child is released to their custody. Any changes or updates to the authorized persons list must be completed in person, changes will not be allowed over the telephone.



At the request of our Board and in accordance with our safety and liability procedures, **all children—including siblings—must remain properly restrained in their car seats or seat belts until a staff member is present to assist them from the vehicle.** This policy is in place for the safety of all children and to ensure compliance with our insurance and risk management requirements.

Families who choose to park and walk their child to the building are welcome to do so; however, we respectfully ask for your patience. During morning arrival, our staff is assigned to safely unload vehicles in the car line before assisting families who walk up. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation as we follow these procedures to provide a safe and orderly arrival for all students.

Late Arrival Policy + Early Check Out Policy

To minimize disruptions to the classroom routine and instructional time, children may not be dropped off after **10:30 AM** unless it is absolutely necessary and has been approved by the school office in advance.

We kindly ask that you do not check out your child between **2:45 PM and 3:00 PM**. During this time, teachers are waking children from nap, putting away nap mats, assisting with restroom breaks, and preparing students for dismissal. Avoiding check-outs during this time helps us maintain a smooth and safe transition for all children.

Tuition and fees

RATES: 1's

Time	Days	Weekly Fee
8:00 AM - 12:30 PM	M - F	\$190.00
8:00 AM - 3:30 PM	M - F	\$225.00



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Extra Care

+\$25

Extra Care: Designed for non-walking children and/or receiving up to two bottles per day. Children requiring more than two bottles or additional care needs will be subject to additional fees.

RATES: Transition's (18 – 24 months)

Time	Days	Weekly Fee
8:00 AM - 12:30 PM	M - F	\$180.00
8:00 AM - 3:30 PM	M - F	\$210.00

Sibling discounts are available only to currently enrolled BELA families and do not apply to new enrollments.

RATES: K2 / K3 / K4/ K5

Time	Days	Weekly Tuition
8:00 AM - 12:30 PM	M - F	\$175.00
8:00 AM - 3:30 PM	M - F	\$200.00

Early Drop off/Late pick up

Time	Days	Weekly Tuition
7:15 AM - 7:55 AM	M - F	\$25.00
3:30 AM - 4:00 PM	M - F	\$25.00
7:15 AM - 4:00 PM		\$45.00

BELA reserves the right to adjust tuition costs each school year.

If BELA tuition is being paid on a weekly basis, ensure that all payments are made promptly each week. Weekly payments are the amortization of the academic school year broken down into a weekly schedule. Therefore, payment is required during scheduled holidays, partial weeks and unplanned shutdown. Payment is also required regardless of attendance.



Program Withdraw

If your child leaves the program after enrollment, the parent will be required to offer a **one month notice, and be required to uphold the financial requirements during the one month period. If you leave in the middle of the month, a complete month's payment is required.**

Tuition payment/Late Fees

The preferred method of payment for tuition is by credit card, assists in avoiding late fees due to late tuition payment.

Tuition payments are to be made weekly on the predetermined payment due date. If tuition payments are not received by the specified due date, the parent will receive a written late notice on the next business day pickup. If tuition payments are not made the day after late notice is received, a late fee of \$25.00 will be charged per day. All late fees and tuition payments will be required to be made prior to drop-off on the second business day after the due date. Tuition and fees are non-refundable.

Registration and Fees

At the time of enrollment fees will be collected for curriculum, supplies, and registration. These fees are broken down in the table below. Please note, these fees are non-refundable, even in the event of expulsion, and non-transferable.

BELA reserves the right to adjust registration and fees costs per year.

Fee Name	Cost	Applicable Class
Curriculum	\$275.00	K1 through K3
Supply/ Art	\$350.00	K4 through K5



Registration	\$75.00	1K through 4K
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These fees, along with the registration fee, are non-refundable.

Classroom and Curriculum Policies

Children's Curriculum

BELA utilizes the Abeka curriculum for all classes. The Abeka curriculum has been a trusted curriculum for over forty years and features a traditional approach to teaching and learning, which includes cross-subject integration, spiral review, and plenty of hands-on activities.

Naptime Policy

Nap time is an important part of our daily schedule, not only for the children's rest but also because it allows our teachers valuable quiet time to plan and prepare for the next day's activities. We understand that not all children will nap; however, the expectation is that all children will lie quietly during the designated nap time between 1:00 PM and 2:45 PM. If a child is unable to lie quietly and consistently disturbs others during nap time, we may ask you to pick up your child early. We appreciate your understanding and support in helping us maintain a calm and restful environment during this time.

Screen Time Policy

Screen time is defined as the use of television, videos, video games, tablets and computers. Screen time at BELA is a very occasional occurrence. All screen time will be educational and will be used to enrich the theme or letter of the week. On occasion, screen time will be utilized when the weather does not permit outdoor play.



Physical Activity Policy

Every child will have an opportunity for the appropriate amount of active play each day. Active play will take place outdoors when weather and environmental conditions permit. When the weather and or environment does not permit outdoor activity, active play will take place indoors. Children who exhibit out of control behavior during active play may be given a time-out.

Party Policy

Throughout the school year, BELA will host school-sanctioned classroom parties to celebrate various holidays. Each class has a designated room mother who helps plan and organize these events.

We understand that many of our parents work full-time, and attending every party may not always be possible. To help accommodate busy schedules, we invite parents to join us for our **Christmas** and **Valentine's Day** parties, as these fall on early dismissal days.

Additionally, we recognize that birthdays are a special time for each child. You may bring cookies as a special treat to school for the children to have at snack time. Any treats being brought will need to be brought to morning carline. We ask that parents refrain from bringing gifts or balloons. If a parent would like to pass out invitations for a birthday party outside of school, we ask that you provide the teacher with the correct number of invitations for the whole class.

Student Behavior and Discipline

Classroom Management and Behavior Policy

BELA will handle all disciplinary actions through a loving and positive manner. In order for BELA to follow our mission, we require that students enter our school ready to learn. Students are ready to learn when they are able to listen and follow



a teachers' instructions, they are able to listen to a story, and are able to get along with the other students. We understand that children have short attention spans and are still developing social-emotional skills; however, we will work diligently to help children adapt to their classroom and learn to self-regulate.

When a behavioral issue is identified, the teacher may request a parent/teacher conference to obtain additional insight, or to work on implementing similar strategies outside the classroom. If a child is identified with a consistent behavior issue, that child may be asked to withdraw from the program. A constant behavioral disruption is problematic and can become a safety concern for all students in a class setting.

Biting Policy

In our K1 and Transition room biting is a common behavior among young children as they learn to communicate and manage their emotions. Biting will not be tolerated in our preschool classes (K2 - K4). At BELA, our goal is to keep all children safe while supporting their social and emotional development.

When biting occurs:

- The child who was bitten will be comforted and cared for immediately. Any bite marks will be cleaned and treated, and parents will be notified promptly through ProCare.
- The child who bit will be gently but firmly told that biting is not acceptable and put in time-out.
- We will work with both children to understand feelings and appropriate ways to express them.

Preventative Measures:



- Teachers will provide close supervision and proactive guidance to help children manage frustration and impulses.
- Activities and environment are arranged to reduce stress or overcrowding.

Communication with Parents:

- Parents of both children will be informed of the incident on ProCare on the same day, while respecting confidentiality.

We appreciate your support and understanding as we help children learn positive social skills in a safe and nurturing environment.

Recurring Biting Policy

Biting is a common behavior in young children, but when it happens repeatedly, it often indicates a developing habit rather than a form of communication.

- If a child bites **twice within one week**, the child will receive a **time-out**, and the parents will be notified immediately.
- Should the child bite again **after these two incidents**, they will be **suspended from the program for one week**.
- After the second suspension the family will be **asked to withdraw their child from the program** to ensure the safety and well-being of all children and staff.

We are committed to working closely with families to support positive behavior and provide a safe environment for everyone.



Potty Training and Accidents

We understand that potty training is an important milestone in a child's development, and we fully support our families through this transition. However, we want to clarify our policy regarding toilet training during school hours.

While we are happy to encourage and reinforce progress made at home, **we do not initiate or conduct potty training at school**. Children in our K3-K4 classes must be **fully potty trained** before enrolling in our preschool program. This includes being able to:

- Recognize the need to use the toilet
- Communicate that need to an adult
- Use the toilet independently (including wiping, flushing, and handwashing)

We understand that accidents may happen, and we will handle them with compassion and care. However, our staff is not equipped to provide one-on-one potty training throughout the day.

We ask that parents complete the potty training process at home before their child begins attending our preschool. We are happy to offer tips, resources, or support during this time.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation as we work together to create a positive and developmentally appropriate experience for all children in our care.

Children in the K2 class can be sent to school in fabric undergarments only when the parent is confident that the child has been successfully potty trained. If a child in the K2 class has been sent to school in fabric undergarments and had two accidents in one day, the child will be returned to disposable undergarments for the remainder of the school day. If the child has accidents for two consecutive days, the child will be required to wear disposable undergarments until potty training has been confirmed.



Accidents can occur and all children are required to have a complete change of clothes, inclusive of underwear, pants/shorts, socks and a shirt, to be kept in a gallon size Ziploc bag labeled with the child's first and last name. In the event of an accident during the school day, the child will be changed into the extra change of clothes. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that the change of clothes is the appropriate size and season. In the event that the change of clothes does not fit or are not available, a parent will be required to pick their child up.

Health and Medication Policy

Sick Policy

To maintain a healthy school environment, any child who arrives at school—or begins to show signs during the day—of a fresh cold, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or any other potentially contagious condition will be sent home immediately.

- **Fever:** Students must be fever-free for at least 24 hours *without the use of fever-reducing medication* before returning to school.
Please do not administer fever-reducing medication before school, as it can mask symptoms and contribute to the unintentional spread of illness.
- **Vomiting/Diarrhea:** Students must remain at home for a minimum of 48 hours after the last episode and be completely symptom-free.
- **Highly Contagious Conditions:** A note from a physician is required to confirm when a child is cleared to return. **Please note that our school's health and illness policies may be more restrictive than a physician's recommendation. The school reserves the right to determine when a child may safely return in accordance with our policies and to protect the health of all students and staff.**



Communicable Illnesses and Skin Conditions

- Children diagnosed with **RSV** or the **flu** may not return to school until **at least five (5) days after diagnosis**. A doctor's note is required confirming that the child is cleared to return.
- Children diagnosed with **impetigo, ringworm, scabies**, or other contagious skin conditions must provide a doctor's note before returning to school. In the case of impetigo, all lesions must be dry, and there must be clear signs that the condition is healing.
- Children with **molluscum contagiosum** may attend school as long as all affected areas are completely covered with clothing or a bandage.

We appreciate your partnership in helping keep our school community safe and healthy.

Medication Protocol

It is BELA policy not to administer medications to students. If your child needs medication, it should be given before or after school hours by the child's parent/guardian. If a child needs asthma or emergency medication (Ex: EpiPens) and it is essential that the student receive the medication during school hours, a medical authorization form will need to be completed.

Lice Policy

Please examine your child's head regularly, behind the ears and at the nape of the neck to check for crawling lice and/or nits. If lice are found, please contact the school immediately. The infected child can return to school when the child is identified with no evidence of live lice.



Should a teacher identify lice on a child, the child's parent will be called for early pickup.

COVID-19

If a staff member or student tests positive for COVID-19, we will alert all the families enrolled in the program. We will also inform the parents if the staff member or student is in the same classroom as their child.

For current information on CDC isolation guidelines, please visit:
<https://www.cdc.gov/covid/prevention/index.html>

Immunizations/Submissions

At BELA, we require that each enrolled student has up-to-date immunization records (Blue Card) on file and a Child's Medical Report must also be completed yearly. Immunization records, a Blue Card, should be kept current throughout your child's enrollment at BELA. As new immunizations become due, please promptly provide the updated blue card for our records.

BELA follows the immunization guidelines set forth by the Alabama Department of Health to ensure the protection of all children. For further information on the required or recommended immunizations, please speak with your child's pediatrician or see
<https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/immunization/index.html>

All children attending BELA must be current on all immunizations and have provided a current Blue Card to the school office before they may begin attending school.

Nutrition Policy



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BELA provides a snack daily. The parents are required to pack a lunch for their children. We cannot heat up food, so please pack lunches that do not require heating. Please pack healthy lunches that include foods such as a sandwich, fruit, and a drink such as water or 100% fruit juice. Please do not send items such as candy in your child's lunch. Our staff is required to refrigerate meat or dairy products. Keep in mind while packing school lunches that BELA is a nut free/ red dye free facility. These items will not be opened/ given at lunch time. BELA also does Pizza Fridays. This is an additional cost of \$100 (\$10 per month), per child that will be collected at the beginning of the school year.



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Preschool Handbook Guidelines Acknowledgement

I, _____, hereby acknowledge that I have received and read the Berea Early Learning Academy (BELA) Handbook, and I understand and agree to comply with all of the guidelines and policies outlined therein. I recognize that it is my responsibility to be familiar with the contents of the handbook and to ensure that my child abides by these guidelines while attending BELA. I understand that failure to comply with these guidelines may result in appropriate actions being taken by the preschool administration.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Child's Name: _____

Contact Email: _____

Contact Phone: _____

Please return this signed form to the preschool administration within the first week of the academic calendar year. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated in ensuring a safe, nurturing, and enriching environment for all children at BELA.

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