



Elevate Your Christian Early Education Program!

We are thrilled to announce that applications are now open for the ACSI Florida Approval Program (FAP) Gold Seal Quality Designation. This prestigious designation is available to schools accredited by ACSI and participating in the ACSI Florida Approval Program.

Why Join the ACSI Florida Approval Gold Seal Program?

Competitive Advantage: Elevate your practices to the research proven best practices in Christian early education.

Higher Subsidies: Receive higher school readiness subsidy/reimbursement payments.

VPK Program Eligibility: Participate in the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program.

Tax Exemptions: Benefit from sales tax exemptions for educational materials and property tax exemptions.

Program Highlights:

Christian Early Education: Schools provide education sponsored by a local church, with employees signing a statement of faith and moral integrity.

Qualified Educators: Students are taught by credentialed Christian early educators in classrooms that meet national health and safety standards, exceeding Florida DCF licensing regulations for class ratios.

Networking Opportunities: The monthly virtual Florida Approval Program Leader Connect meeting provides support and engaging professional development that promotes flourishing, the 3rd Thursday of each month, 1:00 PM ET.

Leadership Development: FAP Program Coordinator Monday power-up exhortation email fosters leadership competencies.

Monthly Minute: The FAP Coordinator provides guidance and clarification of one FAP standard each month.

Online Community: Share ideas with other leaders and educators; Enhance your skills with our pre-recorded training sessions available in our online community. www.community.acsi.org

Early Education Publications: Subscribe to our monthly newsletter and gain access to publications produced by the n team of Christian early education experts (e.g., the Early Education Director's Manual and position statements on drug free schools, social emotional learning, and navigating gender issues). www.acsi.org/subscribe

Career Center: Post up to 5 job listings and find the perfect candidates for your school. www.acsi.org/careers

Legal & Legislative Updates: Stay informed about the latest legal and legislative developments affecting Christian early education. www.acsi.org/public-policy-legal-affairs

GRAACE Initiatives: Engage with initiatives focused on inclusive growth, resilience, and academic excellence for students with disabilities. www.acsi.org/acsi/spiritual-formation/grace-initiatives

EE Webinars: Participate in our educational webinars to stay updated on best practices and new trends.

www.acsi.org/academic-programs/early-education/early-education-webinars

Professional Development: Participate in our workshops, conferences, and leader summits to anchor your leadership and instructional skills in Biblical truth. www.acsi.org/academic-programs/early-education

Next Steps to Apply:

Obtain ACSI Membership: Complete the online application and submit the membership fee. www.acsi.org/membership

Find out more by registering for the FAP Leader Connect meeting.

Download the ACSI Inspire™ Accreditation Standards Manual: Get an overview of the standards.

www.acsi.org/accreditation-certification/

Complete the Accreditation Inquiry Document: Begin the application process.

Consult with Coordinators regarding accreditation: Contact Lynn Harding lynn-harding@acsi.org Accreditation Coordinator or Dr. Cindy Barnum, Eastern Division EE Senior Coordinator cindy-barnum@acsi.org for accreditation support.

Prepare for INSPIRE On-Site Visit: Utilize ACSI's training videos, self-study tools, and Standards and Indicators Checklist.

Review FAP Standards and Manual. Pay special attention to the Gold Seal Standards on pp. 56-70. Set up administrative system, student records, and learning environment according to the FAP Gold Seal Standards (download the manual at www.acsi.org/academic-programs/early-education) and National Health and Safety Performance Standards (www.nrckids.org)

Submit the FAP Online Application: Indicate accreditation and desire for Gold Seal Quality recognition. Contact Tammy Hicks, FAP Coordinator at tammy-hicks@acsi.org regarding FAP pre-visit.

Complete FAP Program Inspection: Receive FAP and Gold Seal certification.

We look forward to partnering with you to advance Christian early education and achieve the highest standards of quality and excellence. ...*do it all for the glory of God.*" - 1 Corinthians 10:31b



ACSI Florida Approval Program Gold Seal Quality Designation: Program Distinctions

Staff Qualifications

- **Ongoing Professional Development:**

- All teaching staff evaluate and improve their performance based on ongoing reflection and feedback from supervisors, peers, and families.
- Develop an annual individualized professional development plan with their supervisor to inform continuous professional development.

- **Director and Staff Qualifications:**

- Directors and staff must meet specific qualifications, including educational and professional standards.
- Staff must undergo a sexual predator check in addition to a criminal background check.

Classroom and Curriculum Standards

- **Class Ratios:** Maintain lower student-to-teacher ratios than required by Florida DCF licensing regulations.
- **Learning Centers:** Minimum of six learning centers with materials accessible to students.
- **Lesson Plans and Daily Schedules:** Biblically integrated lesson plans and daily schedules must be posted and accessible.
- **Special Needs Care Plans:** Care plans for students with special needs (medical, learning, and behavioral) must be provided by a pediatrician.

Nutrition and Food Safety

- The program creates daily, weekly, or monthly menus showcasing daily meals and snacks at regular times, with meals and snacks at least two hours apart and no more than three hours apart.
- Mealtime is relaxed and pleasant for children. Staff sit and eat with the children while modeling appropriate behavior and using mealtime as a learning experience.
- Staff and families ensure food and beverages brought from home meet USDA's CACFP guidelines.
- Program staff identify choking hazards and remove them from the proximity and reach of children.
- Before walking on surfaces that infants use specifically for play, adults and children remove, replace, or cover with clean foot coverings any shoes they have worn outside that play area. If children or staff are barefoot in such areas, their feet are visibly clean.
- Teaching staff who are familiar with the infant feed him or her whenever the infant seems hungry. Feeding is not used in lieu of other forms of comfort.
- At least once daily, in a program where children older than one year receive two or more meals, teaching staff provide an opportunity for tooth brushing and gum-cleaning to remove food and plaque. (The use of toothpaste is not required.)

Personal Hygiene and Safety Practices

- **Toilets and Hand-Washing Facilities:**

- Toilets, drinking water, and hand-washing facilities are accessible within 40 feet of children's use areas, with hand-washing sinks accessible for staff and children.
- Sinks used for food preparation may not be used for handwashing or any other purpose.
- Cribs are inspected to ensure security. Drop-side cribs are not used. Cots, mats, cribs, sheets, and blankets are marked with individual children's names and washed at least once a week or more often if soiled or dirty. Linens used by more than one child must be washed in between usage.
- Non-absorbent paper liners are used on changing tables, must be large enough to cover the changing surface.
- Bathrooms have barriers to prevent entry by unattended infants and toddlers to 2 years old.
- Written procedures address all aspects of the arrival, departure, and transportation of children, including specific procedures for children with disabilities.

Family and Community Engagement

- **Family Needs Assessment:** Conduct student family needs assessments (surveys) and transition plans that accompany the child to the next school.
- Procedures for transitioning children to another program or elementary school include reviewing children's specific needs, a family needs assessment, and a mechanism to share summary information with informed consent from parents.
- **Parent Engagement and Networking:** Share information with families (in their primary language) about classroom rules, expectations, routines, program curriculum, and policy or regulatory changes.
- Provide parents with information regarding social services within the community, including health care services, assistance with basic and emergency family needs, and tuition payment alternatives.
- Establish intentional practices to foster strong reciprocal relationships with families from the first contact and maintain them over time.

- Use a variety of formal and informal methods to communicate with families about the program philosophy and curriculum objectives, including educational goals and effective strategies that can be used by families to promote their children's learning. This includes a parent bulletin board with program description, policy statements, philosophy, schedules, and menus.
- Facilitate opportunities for families to meet with one another on a formal and informal basis, work together on projects to support the program, and learn from and provide support for each other.
- **Community Involvement:** Inform families about community events sponsored by local organizations, such as museum exhibits, concerts, storytelling, and theater intended for children.
- Invite members of the performing and visual arts community to share their interests and talents with the children.
- Engage with other community organizations and groups to cosponsor or participate in cultural events to enrich the experience of children and families in the program.
- Encourage staff to participate in local, state, or national early childhood education organizations and public-awareness activities.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for staff to participate in community or statewide interagency councils or service integration efforts.

Cultural Responsiveness

- **Understanding Cultural Backgrounds:** Participate in community cultural events, concerts, storytelling activities, or other events and performances designed for children and their families.
- Use a variety of formal and informal strategies to become acquainted with and learn from families about their family structure, preferred child-rearing practices, and information families wish to share about their socioeconomic, linguistic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds.
- Actively use information about families to adapt the program environment, curriculum, and teaching methods to the families they serve.

Program Operations

- **Written Policies and Procedures:** Updated at least annually and available in languages that families use and understand.
- Include parent conflict resolution procedures and details on program operations such as tuition and fee schedules, payment and refunds, and attendance and vacation.
- **Financial Policies are Consistency with Program Vision:** Financial policies and procedures are consistent with the program's vision, philosophy, mission, goals, and expected child outcomes.
- Include the person directly responsible for program implementation in long-range fiscal planning and budget preparation.
- Include a yearly audit and maintain fiscal records as evidence of sound financial management.
- **Facility Access:** Families may visit any area of the facility at any time during regular hours of operation.
- Nursing mothers have a place to breast-feed their children that meets their needs for comfort and privacy.

“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.” - Colossians 3:23

We are excited to support your journey towards achieving the Gold Seal Quality Designation and advancing Christian early education with excellence and integrity. If you have any further questions or need additional information, please feel free to reach out to our Early Education team:

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Dr. Cindy Barnum, Eastern Division EE Senior Coordinator cindy_barnum@acsi.org

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We're here to support you!