PREMIER KIDS ACADEMY

Employee Handbook

“The World is Our Stage”

Revised July 2026 | Includes New Ohio Child Care Rule Updates | All Prior Versions Superseded

5171 Mayfield Road • Lyndhurst, OH 44124

Phone: 440-209-2296 • Fax: 440-683-4227

premierkidsacademy.org

IMPORTANT NOTICE

THE LANGUAGE OF THIS HANDBOOK AND THE RULES AND POLICIES STATED WITHIN ARE NOT INTENDED TO CREATE, NOR DO THEY CONSTITUTE, A CONTRACT IMPLIED OR EXPRESS BETWEEN THE CENTER AND ANY OF ITS EMPLOYEES. THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ARE NOT UNCHANGEABLE. IF CIRCUMSTANCES ARISE THAT WARRANT CONSIDERATION OF A CHANGE IN POLICIES OR PROCEDURES, EMPLOYEES SHOULD BRING SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES TO THE ATTENTION OF MANAGEMENT. THIS HANDBOOK AND THE RULES AND POLICIES CONTAINED IN IT ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT ANY TIME WITHIN THE SOLE DISCRETION OF MANAGEMENT.

EMPLOYMENT AT THE CENTER IS ON AN "AT WILL" BASIS AND MAY BE TERMINATED BY THE CENTER OR THE EMPLOYEE AT ANY TIME FOR ANY REASON. ANY CHANGE TO THIS AT-WILL EMPLOYMENT STATUS MAY BE GRANTED ONLY WITH THE SPECIFIC PRIOR WRITTEN APPROVAL OF THE OWNER OF THE CENTER.

Please read this handbook carefully. When you have completed your review, sign the Statement of Understanding at the end and return it to the director before your first shift. You will not be placed on the schedule until it is received.

I. Welcome to Premier Kids Academy

Welcome to Premier Kids Academy. We are glad you are joining our team. You are key to providing the quality care and enriching environment our families have come to expect. This handbook outlines what we expect of every employee, what you can expect from us, and the standards that protect both our staff and the children we serve.

We invest in our staff. We pay competitively. We provide paid training, paid holidays, childcare discounts, and opportunities for advancement. In return, we expect professionalism, accountability, consistency, and genuine commitment to the children and families we serve. This is not a casual job — the safety and development of children depends on the people we hire.

1.1 Center Policy and Purpose

Premier Kids Academy, LLC is a privately owned and operated licensed childcare center designed to provide quality programming in a safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment. Our goals are:

- Provide consistently high-quality care in a safe and enriching environment
- Provide friendly and courteous service to our clients and business associates
- Provide all employees with equal opportunity for advancement and fair compensation
- Maintain a professional work culture that puts children and families first
- Comply fully with all ODJFS licensing standards and applicable laws
- Produce a sustainable operation for the Center’s future growth

Premier Kids Academy recognizes the uniqueness of each child and provides a developmentally appropriate, child-directed learning environment using Creative Curriculum. Children are encouraged to be autonomous to the degree developmentally appropriate, to solve problems, to construct their own knowledge through teacher-guided exploration, and to develop socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively. The climate in every classroom is one of mutual respect, with teachers serving as facilitators of learning.

1.2 Purpose of This Handbook

This handbook contains the policies of the Center relating to hours, wages, benefits, conditions of employment, and behavioral expectations. It is a reference manual that must be followed by all employees. Management will administer these policies fairly and without discrimination. Employees who have questions about any policy should bring them to their supervisor or the center director. No employee will be penalized for asking questions.

II. Child Care Licensing Standards

All staff are expected to be knowledgeable in ODJFS Rules and Regulations for Child Care and are required to follow all procedures outlined in those rules. A copy of the current ODJFS licensing standards is available in the director's office and must be reviewed by all new staff during onboarding. Failure to follow licensing regulations may result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination.

2.1 Training Requirements

All staff are required to complete and maintain all mandatory training and continuing education hours required by ODJFS and Medicaid. Required training includes, but is not limited to:

- CPR — infant, child, and adult (American Red Cross, AHA, or ODJFS-approved equivalent)
- First Aid — infant, child, and adult (nationally recognized curriculum)
- Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter Training (Ohio)
- Universal Precautions / Blood-Borne Pathogens
- Consumer Rights and Confidentiality (Medicaid)
- Individual Consumer Support Needs (Medicaid, where applicable)
- All center-directed trainings assigned during onboarding and ongoing employment

Complete training timelines and contact hour requirements are detailed in Appendix A. Failure to complete mandatory training will result in removal from the schedule until all requirements are met. You will not be paid for time removed from the schedule due to incomplete training.

Training is paid. All required and center-directed training time is compensated at your regular hourly rate. If a training is scheduled on a holiday, attendance is mandatory as a condition of eligibility for holiday pay — see Section IV.14.

All new staff must complete New Staff Orientation self-study modules within the first 30 days of employment. Each module must be submitted to the director after completion.

2.2 CDA Credential Requirement

If you do not hold a degree in early childhood education or a related field, you are required to obtain your Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. If Premier Kids Academy pays for your CDA credential, you are required to remain employed with the center for a minimum of one (1) year following completion. Leaving before that year is complete may result in repayment of CDA-related costs at the center's discretion.

III. Care and Supervision of Children

Your primary responsibility is the safety and well-being of the children in your care. You are expected to know this handbook, all applicable ODJFS rules, and to act accordingly on every shift. “I didn’t know” is not an acceptable defense for a child safety failure.

3.1 Supervision and Staff Ratios

Constant supervision by staff is required at all times — in the classroom, on the playground, during transitions, meals, nap time, and every other moment of the day. Supervision means active, engaged, visual monitoring of all children in your care. It does not mean being in the same room while using your phone or having a side conversation with another adult.

Required ODJFS staff-to-child ratios must be maintained at all times, including during breaks, meals, and outdoor time. Ratios may only be reduced during nap time as permitted by ODJFS and only in full compliance with applicable conditions. See Appendix B for the full staffing requirements.

Required Staff-to-Child Ratios (ODJFS):

Age of Children	Staff-to-Child Ratio
2 weeks – 2 years	1:4
2 years	1:6
3 years	1:8
4 years	1:12
5 – 10 years	1:15
10 years and older	1:20
Medicaid Waiver Services	1:6

If a staff member must leave the classroom or playground for any reason, adequate coverage must be in place before leaving. You may never leave children unsupervised, even briefly.

Cell phones and personal electronic devices are not permitted in classrooms or on the playground. ODJFS does not count an employee distracted by a personal device toward required caregiver ratios. Using a personal device while supervising children is a serious policy violation subject to immediate disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Phones must be kept in your car or locker. Phones may only be carried on off-site trips for emergency contact purposes.

Supervision — Situational Awareness

◆ Updated July 2026: Ohio’s new supervision rule. Supervision now means situational awareness — not simply being present in the room.

In addition to the requirements above, every staff member must meet the situational-awareness standard:

- Leave no child unsupervised.
- Know each child’s physical, developmental, and behavioral needs, and parent preferences.
- Maintain situational awareness at all times.
- Be aware of what each child is doing.

- Be near enough to protect children, meet basic needs, and respond to emergencies.
- Be near enough to observe, respond to, and anticipate foreseeable hazards.
- Be able to summon another adult in an emergency.

Technology such as mirrors or digital tools may supplement direct observation, but it may never be the only method of observation.

> *"Supervision means I know where each child is, what each child is doing, what risks are present, and I am close enough to respond immediately."*

3.2 Creative Curriculum — Required Implementation

Premier Kids Academy uses Creative Curriculum as our primary educational framework. Every teacher is required to learn, implement, and consistently apply Creative Curriculum in their classroom. This is not optional. Creative Curriculum training is provided during onboarding and reinforced through ongoing professional development. You are expected to implement the curriculum in your daily planning and practice from the start. Directors, program supervisors, and licensing inspectors observe classroom implementation. Failure to implement Creative Curriculum is a performance issue addressed through progressive discipline.

3.3 Brightwheel — Required Communication Platform

All parent and guardian communication is conducted through Brightwheel, our center management platform. You are required to use Brightwheel to log attendance, meals, nap times, diaper changes, activities, and all notable daily events for every child in your care. Do not communicate center-related matters to families through personal text, email, or any social media platform. Brightwheel is the only authorized communication channel for center business with families.

For all children under age two, a complete daily written record must be entered into Brightwheel before you clock out, covering: sleep periods, food consumed and times, elimination patterns and irregularities, general disposition, and activity summary. A verbal report must also be given to parents or guardians at pickup.

Brightwheel training is provided during onboarding. You are expected to use it correctly from your first week. Difficulty with the platform is not an excuse for failing to document required information.

3.4 Discipline

Corporal punishment of any kind is strictly prohibited. This includes spanking, pushing, pulling, shaking, grabbing, or threatening children. Children may never be punished for toileting accidents, not eating, or not sleeping during nap. Derogatory, harsh, or demeaning language toward children is prohibited. Staff who use inappropriate discipline are subject to immediate disciplinary action up to and including termination and reporting to ODJFS.

Our approach is positive guidance — redirection, brief time-outs (one minute per year of age, not used for children under age two), logical consequences, and behavior-specific directives. See Appendix C for ODJFS discipline rules and Appendix D for positive guidance techniques. Staff must maintain composure at all times. If you feel you are losing patience, ask a coworker for temporary coverage rather than risking improper conduct.

Prohibited Techniques (Appendix A)

◆ Updated July 2026: The following may NOT be used by any staff member to control or discipline children.

- **1.** Abuse, endanger, or neglect children, including shaking a baby.
- **2.** Use cruel, harsh, unusual, or extreme techniques.
- **3.** Use corporal punishment.

- **4.** Delegate children to manage or discipline other children.
- **5.** Use physical restraints.
- **6.** Restrain a child, except for a short protective hold used to help the child regain control.
- **7.** Use prone restraint.
- **8.** Place children in a locked room or enclosed area.
- **9.** Confine children to equipment such as cribs or high chairs.
- **10.** Humiliate, threaten, or frighten children.
- **11.** Use profane language or verbal abuse.
- **12.** Make derogatory or sarcastic remarks about children or families.
- **13.** Punish children for failure to eat, failure to sleep, or for toileting accidents.
- **14.** Withhold food, snacks, treats, beverages, water, rest, or toilet use.
- **15.** Punish an entire group for the behavior of one or a few children.
- **16.** Isolate or restrict children from activities for an extended period of time.

Violation of any item above is grounds for immediate disciplinary action, up to and including termination, and will be reported as required by law.

3.5 Biting

Biting among infants and toddlers is common. When biting occurs, staff must remain calm, focus immediate care on the child who was bitten, complete an incident report, notify both families personally and privately the same day, and follow all procedures in Appendix E. Names of children involved are kept confidential and not shared between families.

3.6 Child Abuse — Mandatory Reporting

YOU ARE A MANDATORY REPORTER UNDER OHIO LAW. THIS OBLIGATION IS NON-NEGOTIABLE.

If you observe or reasonably suspect any form of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, or denial of critical care involving any child in the center — by a parent, guardian, coworker, or any other person — you must:

1. Report to the center director immediately.
2. Report to ODJFS within 24 hours of becoming aware of the suspected abuse. Ohio Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-422-4453 (24 hours/day).
3. If the child is in immediate danger, contact law enforcement first, before any other step.
4. Complete all required follow-up written reports within required timeframes per Appendix F.

Do not investigate on your own. Do not consult other staff before reporting. Do not wait to see if it happens again. Report immediately.

Failure to report is a criminal offense. A mandatory reporter who knowingly and willfully fails to report is guilty of a simple misdemeanor and may be civilly liable for resulting damages. Good-faith reporters have immunity from civil and criminal liability under Ohio law. The center director is also legally obligated to act on reports regardless of whether the reporter or victim requests action.

3.7 Communicating With Parents and Guardians

Good communication with families is essential. Staff are responsible for:

- Greeting children and families warmly at drop-off and assessing for signs of illness, injury, or unusual behavior
- Logging all required daily information in Brightwheel during the shift

- Providing a verbal and/or written report to parents at pickup regarding their child's day
- Obtaining required parent signatures on incident reports and other documents at pickup
- Keeping family information strictly confidential

Work-related grievances, concerns about other children, and negative commentary about the center are never to be discussed with parents or in front of children. If a significant concern requires a family discussion, schedule a private conference with the director present.

3.8 Privacy and Confidentiality

All information about children in our care, their families, and their records is confidential and protected under HIPAA and applicable Ohio privacy laws. All employees must abide by these laws and the center's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy (Appendix H). You may not disclose protected information to anyone except authorized parents or guardians, unless a signed release has been obtained. Children may not be photographed for personal use or posted to social media without written consent from the director and each applicable parent. Violations may result in immediate termination and civil and criminal legal penalties.

Your NDA applies to all center business information. This includes enrollment, finances, family situations, staff matters, internal operations, and all other confidential data. This obligation survives the end of your employment.

3.9 Health and Safety

Handwashing

All staff must wash hands immediately upon arriving in the classroom and throughout the day per ODJFS standards, including: before and after handling food, after diapering or toileting, after contact with bodily fluids, after wearing gloves, and after contact with animals. Staff must supervise children's handwashing to ensure proper technique.

Daily Health Checks

Staff must perform a daily health check on each child at drop-off and document any observed injuries, rashes, or signs of illness in Brightwheel immediately. Parents must sign any injury or illness report at drop-off. Admission and exclusion policy for illness is in Appendix I.

Classroom Safety

All staff must conduct a safety check of their assigned classroom at the beginning of every shift, including a child's-eye-level assessment of all occupied areas. Hazards must be corrected or removed immediately. Broken items are removed and given to the director. Report any safety concern you cannot resolve immediately to your supervisor.

Cleaning and Sanitation

All staff are responsible for routine cleaning and sanitation of their assigned classroom per Appendix K. Lead teachers ensure all duties are assigned and completed. Cleaning uses soap and water; sanitation uses a 1:10 bleach-water solution. No vacuuming, mopping, or carpet shampooing while children are present.

Emergency Drills

Emergency drills are conducted monthly. All staff on property must participate, including staff on break. In the event of evacuation, children go first to the rear playground, then to Lander Elementary School (next door), then to the Mayfield Heights Fire Dept., or the nearest Red Cross Emergency Shelter if all are affected. All staff must attend annual emergency preparedness training and be able to recite emergency procedures to inspectors and clients. Fire and Evacuation Procedures are detailed in Appendix CC.

3.10 Medications

Premier Kids Academy does not administer any medication to children, and staff are not trained or authorized to do so. Staff must never administer medication of any kind, including emergency or rescue medication. Any medication a child may need is the parent's responsibility: the parent must keep it with them and remain on standby, or come to the center to administer it. The only exception is a school-age child who has a written care plan on file and can independently self-administer their own medication (such as an inhaler); staff supervise but do not administer. If a child experiences a medical episode, contact the parent immediately and escort the child to the urgent care next door. In any life-threatening emergency, call 911/EMS immediately, remain with the child, and notify the parent. Document every incident on DCY 01299 the same day. See Section VII, Policy C, for the full policy.

◆ Updated July 2026: The center administers no medication of any kind. This replaces any prior practice of administering medication with authorization forms.

3.11 Feeding

Premier Kids Academy follows CACFP guidelines for all meals and snacks. Menus are planned at least one week in advance and available to parents. Staff sit with children during meals, model appropriate table manners, encourage healthy eating, and maintain continuous supervision to prevent choking. Personal snacks and beverages may not be consumed by staff in child care areas while children are present. This is a fish, peanut, and tree-nut free facility. Check all food brought from home for nut content. Staff must review all food allergies before every meal service. See Appendix S for infant feeding policy and Appendix R for food safety.

3.12 Nap and Rest Times

All children below school age are required to have a rest period each day per ODJFS guidelines. Children must rest on cots or mats. Children who do not sleep after 30 minutes of quiet resting may engage in a quiet activity. No child may be forced to remain on a cot if they do not nap — this constitutes prohibited punishment. Infants must sleep in cribs, on their backs, in cribs free of toys, pillows, bumpers, and bottles, unless a physician order states otherwise. Sleeping infants must be monitored continuously. See Appendix Q for infant safe sleep policy.

3.13 Medicaid Consumer Rights

Children receiving Medicaid Waiver services and their families have defined rights under the Ohio Department of Human Services. All staff receive annual training on consumer rights and must uphold the dignity, autonomy, and rights of all children, including rights to privacy, family connections, participation in community life, and development of personal goals.

3.14 Non-Discrimination Policy

Premier Kids Academy serves all children and families regardless of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, ethnic background, religion, national origin, or family composition. Our classrooms, curriculum, and interactions actively reflect diverse representations and do not reinforce stereotypes. See Appendix EE for our full Gender, Equality, and Diversity Policy.

3.15 Documentation

Required documentation must be completed at the time care is provided or as soon as possible thereafter. All documentation must be completed before you clock out. If documentation cannot be completed before your shift ends, report this to your supervisor before leaving. Failure to complete required documentation can result in non-payment from funding programs, licensing violations, and disciplinary action.

◆ Updated July 2026: Incidents are documented on the new state incident report, DCY 01299 — now the only incident report we use. Destroy old versions. Complete it the same day and provide a copy to the parent.

IV. What You Can Expect From the Center

4.1 Center Policies

Labor Policy

Each employee has the right to deal directly with management regarding all working conditions without requiring a third-party representative. Management does not discriminate based on membership or non-membership in any organization. Every employee may bring any problem directly to their supervisor or to management.

Changes in Policy

This handbook supersedes all prior employee manuals and memos on subjects covered herein. The Center reserves the right to interpret, change, suspend, cancel, or dispute any part of its policies, procedures, and benefits at any time. Employees will be notified of changes, which become effective on the date determined by the Center.

4.2 Employment Applications

We rely on the accuracy of information in employment applications and all data presented throughout the hiring process. Any misrepresentation, falsification, or material omission may result in exclusion from consideration or, if already hired, immediate termination.

4.3 Hiring Policy

A. Equal Employment Opportunity

Premier Kids Academy is an equal opportunity employer. We grant employment opportunities to qualified persons without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, age, military status, or non-job physical or mental disability, except where a bona fide occupational requirement exists.

B. Conflict of Interest

All employees owe a duty of fidelity to the Center. No employee may place themselves in a position where personal self-interest conflicts with this duty. Any breach is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

C. Non-Competition

While employed, you may not sell any product or service that competes with the Center without written permission from the director. This includes in-home childcare, early childhood trainings, books, products, and freelance childcare work. Discuss any potential conflict with your director before proceeding.

D. Anti-Nepotism

Whenever possible, the Center avoids having employees supervise a relative, work in the same classroom as a relative, or exert influence over a relative's hiring, salary, or promotion. "Relative" includes all immediate family members and in-laws. Complaints about nepotism may be submitted in writing to the director.

E. Moonlighting

Other employment is permitted provided it does not interfere with your duties here. You must advise your supervisor in writing before accepting or maintaining outside employment. Prior director approval is required.

F. Introductory Period

The first six (6) months of employment are an introductory period. During this period you will receive paid training time but will not be eligible for sick days, paid holidays, the childcare discount, or other benefits. This period verifies your skills, capabilities, and suitability.

Background Check and Training Recovery: If you leave or are terminated before completing six (6) months of continuous employment, the cost of your pre-employment BCI and FBI background checks AND the value of all paid training time provided during the introductory period will be deducted from your final paycheck. By accepting employment, you authorize this deduction. This provision does not apply if your employment ends due to a Center-initiated layoff for non-disciplinary reasons.

Employment is at-will during the introductory period and at all times thereafter. The Center may terminate employment at any time, with or without cause, with or without notice.

G. Standards of Conduct

Employees are expected to report to work punctually as scheduled, perform assignments in a timely and professional manner, and follow all Center policies and procedures. Professional conduct includes all discussions held with or in the presence of clients, children, visitors, and other employees. Personal matters and work grievances must not be discussed with clients or while children are present. Greet every child, parent, and visitor entering your classroom or work area and provide positive information about classroom events. Parents must feel confident their children are thriving at the center.

H. Employee Background Check

Ohio law requires the Center to perform background investigations on all prospective employees, including BCI and FBI fingerprint checks. Processing takes approximately 6-8 weeks. If a completed check reveals a disqualifying criminal history involving children, employment will be terminated immediately. All prospective employees must sign a statement disclosing any prior founded child abuse findings and any criminal convictions in any state.

I. Health Examinations

ODJFS requires periodic physical exams and TB tests. The cost is the employee's responsibility. Hepatitis B vaccines are available at no cost through the appropriate county public health department — contact the director for details. Submit a copy of your immunization record to the director for your file.

J. Proprietary Information and NDA

All employees are automatically subject to the Center's Non-Disclosure Agreement upon hire. Confidential information includes compensation data, financial information, marketing strategies, pending projects, personnel and payroll records, enrollment information, family information, and all conversations between persons associated with the center. Employees who improperly use or disclose confidential information are subject to termination and legal action. This obligation survives the end of your employment.

K. Code of Conduct

All employees are required to sign a Code of Conduct before their first shift. The Code of Conduct is a condition of employment and covers professional behavior, interactions with children and families, use of center systems, and expectations for representing Premier Kids Academy in all settings.

L. Immigration Law Compliance

All new employees must complete Form I-9 and present documentation establishing identity and employment eligibility, as required by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

4.4 Orientation

All new employees are oriented to Premier Kids Academy's policies, procedures, and curriculum expectations during their first 30 days. Each staff member is assigned a mentor. The 90-day review evaluates performance against all expectations covered during orientation. It is each employee's responsibility to ask questions during orientation. "I wasn't told" is not acceptable for non-compliance with policies covered during onboarding.

4.5 Coaching and Progressive Discipline

When an employee needs guidance or correction, the Center uses a progressive discipline process including: oral coaching or warning, written warning, written improvement plan, administrative leave with or without pay, and termination. Nothing in this process limits the center's right to terminate employment immediately for serious violations. See Sections V.18 and V.19 for grounds for discipline and gross misconduct.

4.6 Harassment-Free Workplace

Purpose

The Center is committed to a work environment free from harassment of any kind. Any type of harassment is a violation of this policy and may be illegal.

Definition

Harassment may include words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation, physical contact, or violence. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when it creates an intimidating environment, prevents job performance, or is made a condition of employment or compensation, explicitly or implicitly. Whether harassment has occurred is determined by whether the behavior is welcome to the receiver, not by the offender's intent.

Responsibility

All covered persons are responsible for maintaining a harassment-free environment. If you witness or become aware of harassment, you must report it to the director immediately. The Center is legally obligated to take prompt action on harassment reports regardless of whether the victim requests action.

Confidentiality and Non-Retaliation

Harassment complaints are kept confidential to the maximum extent possible. Retaliation against any victim or witness who reports a policy violation is prohibited and will be treated as a separate disciplinary matter.

4.7 Hours and Payroll Practices

Employee Classification

Regular full-time employees are scheduled for 40 hours per week and are eligible for all benefits per this handbook. Regular part-time employees are scheduled for fewer than 35 hours per week and are not eligible for center benefits except as expressly stated herein. Temporary employees are not eligible for any benefits except those required by law.

Payroll

Paydays are the 15th and the last day of each month by check or direct deposit. If payday falls on a holiday, employees are paid on the next business day. All employees must clock in and out accurately every shift. You may not clock in or out for another employee. Repeated failure to accurately log hours is grounds for disciplinary action. If you fail to submit a time log as required, your pay may be delayed.

Overtime

Overtime may be required to maintain required ratios and meet licensing requirements. Your supervisor will provide as much advance notice as possible. If a parent is late picking up a child or relief staff does not arrive at shift end, you may not leave until adequate staffing is in place. Abandoning children in your care is grounds for immediate termination and possible child endangerment charges.

4.8 Wage Structure and Performance Reviews

Premier Kids Academy offers competitive wages based on position, experience, education, certifications, attendance, performance, and length of service. All employees receive a formal performance evaluation at 90 days, at one year, and periodically thereafter. Evaluations determine merit pay increases and promotions.

Current Wage Structure (Effective: _____):

Position	Starting Wage	90-Day Eval	1-Year / Advanced
Program Supervisor	$17.00/hr	$18.00/hr	$20.00/hr
Lead Teacher	$15.00/hr	$16.00/hr	$18.00 — up to $20.00/hr
Assistant Teacher	$14.00/hr	$15.00/hr	$17.00 — up to $19.00/hr
Float Teacher	$14.00/hr	$15.00/hr	$16.00 — up to $18.00/hr

Additional Wage Increases

Employees may qualify for additional raises above the base structure based on any of the following:

- Perfect attendance record
- Completion of CDA credential
- Associate’s degree in Early Childhood Education or related field
- Bachelor’s degree in Education or related field
- Outstanding performance evaluations
- Assumption of leadership responsibilities
- Length of continuous employment
- Taking on additional center responsibilities as assigned

Bonus Opportunities

Premier Kids Academy may provide, at management’s sole discretion and based on the financial health of the center: performance bonuses, referral bonuses, retention bonuses, holiday appreciation bonuses, and special achievement incentives. No employee is guaranteed a bonus.

All wage increases are at the sole discretion of management based on the financial health and operational needs of the center.

4.9 Promotion

The Center promotes from within whenever possible. Factors include knowledge, training, skill, efficiency, compatibility, performance, and length of continuous service. The director makes all final promotion decisions. Classroom teachers may recommend candidates; the director weighs those recommendations alongside other qualifications.

4.10 Layoff

In the event a workforce reduction is necessary, the Center will retain employees who, in management's judgment, have demonstrated the greatest ability for available roles. In cases of equal ability, length of continuous service governs retention. Layoffs are non-disciplinary and exempt from the background check and training recovery provision of Section IV.3.F.

4.11 Benefits

Benefits are not available until after six (6) months of continuous employment. Benefits are a privilege of continued employment. There are no exceptions to the six-month waiting period.

1. Workers' Compensation Insurance

The Center provides Workers' Compensation Insurance per state and federal requirements.

2. Group Health and Life Insurance

The Center does not currently offer group health or life insurance benefits.

3. Paid Training Time

All required and center-directed training time is paid at your regular rate. Internet and self-study classes are not paid unless completed at the center and pre-approved by the director. Certificates of attendance are required. Tuition reimbursement does not include drive time, mileage, or fees for books or materials.

4. Sick Days

Five (5) paid sick days per year, available only after completing the 6-month introductory period. The following rules apply with no exceptions:

- Sick days do not roll over. Unused sick days are forfeited at the end of each employment anniversary year.
- Unused sick days are not paid out upon resignation, termination, or layoff under any circumstances.
- No sick day benefits are available during the introductory period.
- Sick days may only be used for your own documented illness.
- A physician's note may be required at the director's discretion.

5. Childcare Discount

Full-time employees who have completed the 6-month introductory period are eligible for a childcare discount of $150.00 per week, per child enrolled at the center, after completing the introductory period. Part-time employees receive a $75.00 per week, per child discount after the introductory period. Availability is subject to enrollment space. Sibling discounts may not be combined with the employee discount.

6. Leave of Absence

Personal Leave: Up to 10 days, for unusual or extenuating personal or family reasons. Written request with reasons required and must be approved before leave begins.

Medical Leave: Up to 20 days, for medical disability. A physician's statement with nature of disability and expected return date is required.

Military Leave: Per applicable federal law.

FMLA: Leave qualifying under the Family and Medical Leave Act will be designated accordingly. Contact the director for eligibility requirements.

7. Funeral Leave

Regular full-time employees are eligible for funeral leave without pay beginning their first full day of employment.

8. Jury Duty

Any employee summoned for jury service will be given the required time off.

9. Important: No Benefit Rollover or Payout at Separation

All unused benefits are forfeited upon separation. Unused sick days, vacation days, holiday time, childcare discounts, and all other unused benefits are forfeited if not used within the applicable benefit period. No benefits of any kind are paid out upon resignation, termination, or layoff. There are no exceptions.

4.12 Rest and Lunch Periods

Non-exempt employees receive one 10-minute paid rest period per 4-hour work period. Breaks must be taken in the middle of the 4-hour period when possible. Employees may not take breaks until replacement staff is available to maintain required ratios. Non-exempt employees scheduled for more than 5 hours receive a 30-minute unpaid, duty-free meal break scheduled by the director. Staff must submit a request to the director at the beginning of each shift if they wish to leave the building during a break.

4.13 Smoking

Ohio's Smoke-Free Workplace Law (2006) prohibits smoking in all childcare facilities. Smoking is prohibited in all center buildings, grounds, parking lots, playgrounds, and any outdoor area under the center's control, as well as inside any vehicle on center property. If you choose to smoke in your personal vehicle, it must be moved off center property. Wear a smock or jacket when smoking; leave it in your vehicle or the staff break room. Do not bring smoking apparel into classrooms. Please be considerate of neighboring properties.

4.14 Holidays

Paid holidays are available to eligible full-time employees who have completed the 6-month introductory period. Recognized paid holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day (or one designated alternate December holiday)

Holiday pay is conditional on BOTH of the following requirements:

5. All of your required training must be current and up to date as of the holiday date.
6. If a center training is scheduled on or around a holiday, attendance is mandatory. You must attend to be eligible for holiday pay that day.

If your required training is not current, you are not eligible for paid holiday. Holiday time does not roll over and is not paid out upon separation.

4.15 Vacation

Full-time employees are eligible for the following vacation benefits after the 6-month introductory period:

- After 6 months through 1 year: 1 vacation day per completed month worked, not exceeding 5 days total
- 1 through 5 years of employment: 5 vacation days per year
- 6 through 10 years of employment: 10 vacation days per year
- 11 or more years of employment: 15 vacation days per year

All unused vacation is forfeited if not used within the applicable benefit year. Vacation is never paid out upon resignation, termination, or layoff. Requests must be submitted in writing a minimum of 20 business days in advance and are subject to director approval. Vacation must be taken in half-day or larger units.

4.16 Suggestions and Complaints

The Center maintains an open-door policy. Any employee may bring problems, suggestions, or policy questions to their supervisor or the center director at any time.

V. What the Center Expects of You

5.1 Employee Records

ODJFS requires the following records to be maintained in each employee's file:

- Professional Growth and Development Record
- Employee/Volunteer/Substitute Statement
- BCI and FBI background check results
- Current CPR certification
- Current First Aid certification
- Universal Precautions training certificate
- Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter Training certificate
- Annual physical examination documentation
- All required training certificates
- New Staff Orientation completion
- Staff Emergency Plan Annual Training acknowledgment

It is your responsibility to submit certificates promptly to the director after completing any training. Missing records may result in removal from the schedule.

5.2 Change of Address

Notify the director in writing immediately upon any change of address or telephone number. Accurate contact information is required for scheduling, emergencies, payroll, and tax records.

5.3 Absence

Regular attendance is a condition of employment. Your absence directly affects licensing compliance and the ability to safely care for children. If you will be absent, notify your supervisor as early as possible and no later than one (1) hour before your scheduled shift. A physician's release is required to return after five (5) or more consecutive days absent due to illness. Failing to call in for three (3) or more consecutive days constitutes a voluntary resignation. Repeated one-day absences are grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination.

5.4 Severe Weather and Other Emergencies

You may leave early during severe weather with supervisor approval, unless your services are essential. Non-exempt employees who leave early are not paid for lost time unless they charge it to available vacation. If the Center stays open during adverse weather and you cannot report, time is charged to available personal days. If the Center officially closes, you will not be paid for the closure.

5.5 Visitors

Personal visitors are not permitted during working hours without management permission. All visitors must enter through the front entrance and register at the director's office. The director and site supervisor are responsible for enforcing this policy.

5.6 Dress Standards and Uniform

All employees must wear a Premier Kids Academy center shirt with appropriate bottoms every scheduled shift. This is the required uniform. Appropriate bottoms are clean, professional pants, shorts, or skirts in solid, neutral, or professional colors.

All clothing must be:

- Clean, free of stains, holes, tears, fraying, and inappropriate messages or advertising
- Of appropriate fit
- Shorts: minimum 7-inch inseam
- Skirts: at or below the knee
- Shirts: must cover bra straps, cleavage, and front and back midriff at all times, including when reaching, bending, or crouching; straps minimum 1 inch wide
- Shoes: closed-toe, non-slip, clean and in good repair; no flip-flops; no heels over 1 inch
- No leggings worn as pants; no graphic tees or logos unrelated to Premier Kids Academy

Grooming Standards:

- Arrive clean and free of strong perfumes or odors
- Hair clean, neat, and tied back when near food or infants
- No artificial nails (per ODJFS Caring for Our Children Standard 3.2.3.4); if nail polish is worn, gloves must be worn during food service
- Jewelry must be minimal and not a child safety hazard; necklaces must tuck into clothing
- Ear piercings limited to three or fewer small posts or loops per ear; no facial or body piercings
- Visible tattoos must be covered during working hours

On themed classroom days, staff are expected to dress according to the theme.

5.7 Personal Mail

All personal mail should be received at home. Incoming mail addressed to employees will be delivered; all incoming business mail is opened upon receipt.

5.8 Solicitation

Persons not employed by the Center may not solicit or distribute literature on Center property at any time. Employees may not solicit during working time or distribute literature in working areas. Scheduled meal times and breaks are exceptions. Collections for any cause require prior supervisor approval.

5.9 Injuries and Illness

If you feel ill during your shift, notify your supervisor immediately. In the case of any on-the-job injury, no matter how minor, report it to your supervisor immediately. First aid supplies are available in classrooms, center vehicles, and near the playground entrance.

5.10 Personal Telephone Calls

Personal calls are not permitted during working hours except in emergencies. Notify family and friends not to call during your shift. All personal devices must be kept in your car or locker during working hours. You may use your phone during your scheduled break only. On off-site trips, a phone may be carried for emergency contact with the director or emergency services only.

5.11 Security

Classroom doors must not be propped open when unoccupied. Playground gates must be secured at all times. Clients and visitors must enter through the main entrance and register at the director’s office.

No child may be removed from the building without written parental or legal guardian consent. Non-custodial parents must have legal authority or custodial parent written permission. Door codes and building keys must not be shared with anyone, including other staff. No copies of center keys may be made.

Entry is controlled by keypad door codes: parents are issued a parent door code and staff are issued a separate staff door code. Codes are individual and must never be shared, and are deactivated when a family disenrolls or a staff member leaves. All exterior doors remain locked during operating hours; entry is only through the main entrance after staff verification. Visitors and volunteers sign in and out, wear a visitor badge, and are supervised by an approved employee at all times. Children are released only to a parent, legal guardian, or a person authorized in writing on the pickup form; photo ID is required for anyone not known to staff. See Section VII, Policy D, for the full Security Plan.

◆ Updated July 2026: Separate parent and staff door codes; written Security Plan now in effect (Section VII, Policy D).

5.12 Gratuities and Gifts

Employees may not accept gifts valued at more than $10.00 from business-related sources, including daycare clients.

5.13 Fire Prevention

All employees must be familiar with the location of all fire alarms, extinguishers, and fire exits and must participate in monthly fire drills. Proper use of center fire extinguishers is required; notify your supervisor if you need training. See Appendix CC for full fire and evacuation procedures.

5.14 Personal Safety Equipment and Health Practices

All employees providing care that may involve contact with bodily fluids must wear appropriate protective equipment, including gloves, provided at the center's expense. Hands must be washed after removing gloves, contact with bodily excretions, diapering, and toileting. Failure to properly wear safety gear or perform proper handwashing is grounds for disciplinary action.

5.15 Personal Property

Premier Kids Academy assumes no risk for loss or damage to employees' personal property at the center.

5.16 Substance Abuse

The following rules apply to all employees during working hours, on center premises, and while conducting center business anywhere:

- Manufacturing, distributing, possessing, selling, or purchasing controlled substances on center property is prohibited
- Being under the influence of illegal drugs, alcohol, or substances of abuse on center property is prohibited
- Working while under the influence of prescription drugs that impair performance is prohibited
- Possession of drug paraphernalia on center property is prohibited

Any violation is grounds for immediate termination.

5.17 Workplace Safety Rules

The following safety rules are conditions of employment:

- Work safely at all times

- Report all dangerous conditions and equipment to your supervisor immediately
- Report every on-the-job injury, however minor, to your supervisor immediately
- Do not attempt to work if you are ill
- Keep your work area neat and orderly at all times

5.18 Discharge, Discipline, and Work Rules

The following is a partial list of improper conduct that constitutes grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination:

- Violation of supervision and discipline policies
- Theft or inappropriate removal or possession of property
- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Possession, distribution, sale, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs in the workplace
- Fighting or threatening violence in the workplace
- Possession of firearms or weapons on center property
- Boisterous or disruptive activity in the workplace
- Negligence or improper conduct leading to damage of property
- Insubordination or disrespectful conduct toward management, coworkers, or families
- Violation of safety or health rules
- Smoking on center property or grounds
- Sexual or other unlawful or unwelcome harassment
- Excessive absenteeism, tardiness, or any absence without notice
- Unauthorized use of telephones, computers, or other center-owned equipment
- Using center equipment for personal purposes (personal internet use, social media, games)
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential business information
- Violation of any personnel policy
- Unsatisfactory performance or conduct
- Failure to complete mandatory training within required timeframes
- Use of personal cell phone or device in a classroom or playground during working hours
- Failure to use Brightwheel as directed or failure to complete required documentation before clocking out
- Chronic failure to implement Creative Curriculum after documented coaching and warning

5.19 Gross Misconduct — Grounds for Immediate Termination

Some offenses are so serious that they result in immediate termination without prior warning or progressive discipline. The following are grounds for immediate termination:

- Physical or sexual abuse or neglect of a child
- Withholding food, nap, or other basic comfort from a child as punishment
- Yelling at or using harsh, demeaning, or threatening language toward children
- Failure to report suspected child abuse as required by Ohio law
- Leaving a child unattended at any time, indoors or outdoors
- Allowing a child to leave the center with an unauthorized person
- Sleeping while supervising children
- Falsification of any center records, including care documentation, time records, incident reports, or employment application

- Failure to report to work for three (3) or more consecutive days without notification
- Conviction of a felony for any offense committed while employed by the center
- Receiving a DUI while authorized to transport children for Premier Kids Academy
- Gross insubordination including threatening, cursing at, or yelling at administrative staff
- Gross violation of privacy policies or HIPAA requirements
- Using information obtained during employment to harm, discredit, or retaliate against the center, its owners, staff, or families during or after employment

5.20 Termination of Employment

Premier Kids Academy is an at-will employer. Employment may be terminated by either party at any time for any lawful reason.

Voluntary Resignation

We ask for two (2) weeks' written notice. Failure to provide written notice results in ineligibility for rehire. Walking off the job or failing to report for three or more consecutive days without notification constitutes voluntary resignation. Upon resignation or termination, all files, records, keys, equipment, and other Center property must be returned immediately. No final paycheck settlement is made until all property is returned in appropriate condition. The cost of replacing non-returned items will be deducted from the final paycheck. All outstanding financial obligations to the Center will also be deducted from the final check.

Separation Terms

All benefits cease immediately upon separation. Unused sick days, vacation, holiday time, childcare discounts, and all other unused benefits are forfeited and will not be paid out. There are no exceptions.

Background Check and Training Recovery: If you separate before completing six (6) months of continuous employment, the cost of your BCI and FBI background checks and the value of all paid training time provided during the introductory period will be deducted from your final paycheck.

Post-Separation Conduct: Your NDA remains in full effect after separation. You may not use information obtained during your employment to harm, discredit, or retaliate against the center, its owners, staff, or families through social media, online reviews, complaints, or any other communications. Any retaliation will be addressed through legal action.

All media such as video, photos, and interviews created by or at the Center are property of Premier Kids Academy.

5.21 References and Recommendations

Employees may request that their supervisor provide a letter of recommendation to a prospective employer. Standard practice is to confirm dates of employment and job title only for reference requests. Additional information requires a signed release.

VII. July 2026 Ohio Child Care Rule Updates

◆ This section incorporates Ohio's revised child care licensing rules into your terms of employment. Supervision and discipline updates are also reflected in Sections 3.1 and 3.4. All staff are accountable for everything below.

Ohio's child care licensing rules were revised, including a new supervision rule, prohibited discipline techniques (Appendix A), and the required written policies in Appendix B to Rule 5180:2-12-07. Premier Kids Academy has adopted the policies in this section. Violations are subject to progressive discipline up to and including termination and, where required, reporting to the state.

7.1 Required Written Policies (Appendix B to Rule 5180:2-12-07)

Appendix B requires the written information given to parents and employees to include a security plan, a policy prohibiting exposure of children to inappropriate language/media/behavior, a social media policy, and (if applicable) an emergency medical device and medication policy. All four are now in effect.

Policy A — Inappropriate Language, Media, and Behavior

> *Employees, volunteers, visitors, parents, and other adults may not expose children to inappropriate language, media, conversations, conduct, images, videos, music, electronic content, or behavior. This includes profanity, threats, adult conversations, sexually explicit or violent content, discriminatory language, bullying, humiliation, or any content not appropriate for children. Employees must immediately redirect, remove, or shield children from inappropriate exposure and report concerns to the administrator.*

Policy B — Social Media

> *No employee may post, share, transmit, livestream, or publish photographs, videos, names, identifying information, classroom information, or incidents involving enrolled children on personal social media. Center-approved photos or communications may only be shared through approved center platforms, and only when parent authorization is on file. Employees may not discuss confidential child, family, employee, or center matters online.*

This policy applies on and off the clock. It works together with Sections 3.7, 3.8, and the NDA you sign at hire.

Policy C — Emergency Medical Devices and Emergency Medications

Premier Kids Academy does not stock, store, or administer any medication — including emergency or rescue medication — and staff are not trained or authorized to administer medication or operate emergency medical devices.

- **No administration by staff:** Staff never administer medication of any kind and do not keep emergency medication on site.
- **Parent responsibility:** A child who may need emergency or rescue medication (for example, for a severe allergy, asthma, or a seizure condition) must have a parent/guardian keep that medication with them and remain reachable and on standby during the child's attendance.
- **Self-administration exception:** A school-age child with a written care plan on file who can independently self-administer (such as an inhaler) may do so. Staff supervise but do not administer or assist.
- **If emergency care is needed:** Contact the parent/guardian immediately and escort the child to the adjacent urgent care facility located next door for prompt care.

- **Life-threatening emergencies:** Call 911/EMS immediately, notify the parent/guardian, and remain with the child until a parent or EMS assumes care.
- **Documentation:** Document any episode on DCY 01299 and notify the parent the same day.

Policy D — Security Plan

> *The center limits access to the building and child care areas to parents, guardians, authorized pickup persons, approved employees, approved volunteers, approved visitors, licensing representatives, emergency responders, and other persons specifically authorized by the center. Visitors must follow sign-in, identification, supervision, and access procedures. Children are released only to a parent, guardian, or a person authorized in writing by the parent or legal guardian.*

Staff responsibilities under the Security Plan:

- Keep all exterior doors locked during operating hours; admit entry only through the main entrance after verification.
- Never share your staff door code. Parents use a parent code and staff use a separate staff code.
- Require photo ID for any pickup person you do not recognize, every time.
- Release a child only to a person listed in writing on the authorized pickup form.
- Sign in, badge, and supervise every visitor and volunteer at all times.
- Challenge and redirect any unauthorized person to the office immediately.

7.2 Meals, Snacks & Milk Preference

- Offer milk based on each family's documented preference, unless another rule, a medical need, or center policy applies.
- Honor the milk-preference field on enrollment and meal forms.
- Meals include food from all five food groups; breakfast includes three of five; snacks include two of five.
- Follow all requirements for medical foods, food-group elimination, allergies, and cultural/religious diets. Physician instructions are required to eliminate a food group or administer a medical food.

7.3 Health, Forms & Operational Updates

- EPRP (Emergency Preparedness Response Plan) replaces the previous emergency plans.
- Proof of immunization is due within 30 days of a child's start date.
- Child and employee medical statements are no longer used; the TB screener is used instead.
- Handwashing before leaving the center is no longer required, but all other handwashing, supervision, and ratio requirements remain in full force.
- Background checks are not required for volunteers and visitors only when BOTH are true: they are not counted in staff-child ratio AND they are never left alone with children.
- All water bottles must be labeled with the child's name.
- Use only DCY 01299 for incident reports. DCY 01201 and DCY 01242 are retired.

7.4 What Every Staff Member Must Do

- Apply the situational-awareness supervision standard at all times (Section 3.1).
- Never use any prohibited technique (Appendix A, Section 3.4).
- Never administer medication; follow Policy C for emergencies.

- Follow the Social Media policy on and off the clock.
- Follow the Security Plan at every entry, exit, and pickup.
- Use only the new DCY 01299 incident reports and destroy old versions.

VI. Conclusion

This handbook outlines the principles and policies that guide Premier Kids Academy in its relations with employees. We have tried to be clear, direct, and complete. Specific information about any policy, benefit, or compliance matter can be obtained from the center director. If you have questions, ask. If you disagree with a policy, bring it to management through the appropriate channel. We are committed to a fair, professional, and safe workplace for our staff and the highest quality environment for the children in our care. The Center reserves the right to amend its policies at its discretion.

Statement of Understanding

I have received, read, and reviewed the Premier Kids Academy Employee Handbook, including all policies, procedures, and referenced appendices. By signing below, I acknowledge and agree:

7. I have read and understand this handbook in its entirety.
8. This handbook does not constitute a contract of employment and does not limit the Center's right to terminate my employment at any time, with or without cause or notice, within the sole discretion of Center management.
9. I am automatically subject to the Non-Disclosure Agreement and must sign the Code of Conduct before my first shift.
10. If I leave or am terminated before completing six (6) months of continuous employment, I authorize the deduction of the cost of my pre-employment BCI and FBI background checks and all paid training time provided during the introductory period from my final paycheck.
11. I understand that all unused benefits — including sick days, vacation, and holiday pay — are forfeited and will not be paid out upon separation.
12. My NDA obligations survive the end of my employment. Using information obtained during employment to retaliate against the center is prohibited and may result in legal action.
13. I am a mandatory reporter under Ohio law and understand my legal obligation to report suspected child abuse immediately.
14. I agree to abide by all policies and procedures in this handbook.

July 2026 Ohio Rule Updates: I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the July 2026 Ohio Child Care Rule Updates now incorporated into this handbook — including the situational-awareness supervision standard (3.1), the prohibited discipline techniques in Appendix A (3.4), and the Inappropriate Language/Media/Behavior, Social Media, Emergency Medical Devices & Medications, and Security Plan policies (Section VII) — and I agree to follow them.

I understand that policies may change and that updated policies supersede prior versions upon employee notification.

Employee Printed Name: _____

Employee Signature: _____

Date: _____

Position / Job Title: _____

Director Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX

The following appendices are incorporated by reference into this handbook and are binding on all employees. Complete copies of all appendix policies are maintained in the center director's office.

Appendix A — ODJFS & Medicaid Training Requirements

During the first six months of employment, all staff must receive: (a) 2 hours of Ohio mandatory child abuse reporter training; (b) at least 1 hour of universal precautions and infectious disease control training.

Staff Working 20+ Hours Per Week

During the first year: (1) CPR certification — infant, child, and adult (ARC, AHA, or ODJFS equivalent); (2) First Aid certification from a nationally recognized curriculum; (3) Ten contact hours of training from approved topics (child development, guidance and discipline, developmentally appropriate practices, nutrition, health and safety, communication, professionalism, business practices, cross-cultural competence) — CPR, First Aid, mandatory reporting, and universal precautions do not count toward these 10 hours; (4) At least 4 of the 10 hours must be in a sponsored group setting; (5) Center directors and on-site supervisors must receive all 10 hours in a sponsored group setting.

Following the first year, all staff working 20+ hours must annually: maintain current certification for mandatory reporting, CPR, and First Aid; receive 6 contact hours from approved topics (at least 2 in a sponsored group setting). Center directors and on-site supervisors: 8 contact hours annually (at least 4 in a sponsored group setting).

Staff Working Less Than 20 Hours Per Week

During the first year: 5 contact hours from approved topics (at least 2 in a sponsored group setting). Following the first year: maintain current mandatory reporter certification and receive 4 contact hours annually from approved topics (at least 2 in a sponsored group setting).

Medicaid Requirements

All applicable staff must complete training in: consumer rights, confidentiality, provision of consumer medications, identification and reporting of child and dependent adult abuse, and individual consumer support needs.

Appendix B — ODJFS Staff Ratios and Staffing Requirements

Required ratios are displayed in Section 3.1. Additional requirements: every child-occupied room must have adult supervision at all times; during nap time, at least one staff per nap room (minimum coverage may be temporarily reduced to one staff per room for up to one hour, except in the infant room); when 7 or more children under age 3 are on licensed premises or being transported, at least 2 adult staff must be present; all children age 6+ must be secured in a safety belt during transport; children under 6 must be in appropriate federally-approved child restraint systems; children under 12 may not sit in the front seat of a vehicle; children must never be left unattended in a vehicle.

Appendix C — ODJFS Discipline Rules

Ohio law prohibits corporal punishment and verbal or physical abuse in childcare settings. Restraint and behavioral intervention may only be used as documented in an ODJFS-approved behavioral intervention program, used only for the child's benefit, never as punishment or for staff convenience, and reviewed at least quarterly. See Section III.4 of this handbook for the full discipline policy.

Appendix D — Positive Guidance Techniques

Staff are expected to consistently use: distraction and redirection (especially for under-3s); humor to defuse tension; positive reinforcement (notice and praise appropriate behavior specifically); active ignoring of minor attention-seeking behavior; active listening ("You're frustrated that it's time to clean up."); consistency (follow through every time); predictable routines (prepare children in advance for changes); structured choices ("Do you want to put blocks away first or puzzles?"); behavior-specific directives ("Please use your walking feet" not "Stop running."); and natural and logical consequences. Physical or humiliating punishment models harmful behavior and is never appropriate.

Appendix E — Biting Policy and Procedure

When biting occurs: (1) remain calm; (2) remove the child and focus care on the bitten child; (3) encourage the child who bit to help comfort the other child if appropriate; (4) briefly and simply address the child who bit about appropriate alternatives; (5) complete incident reports for both children; (6) notify both families personally and privately the same day. First Aid: wear gloves, clean the wound with soap and water, run water over it for 5 minutes, bandage as needed. If the bite breaks the skin: control bleeding, cover with sterile dressing, and encourage both families to contact their healthcare provider. Investigate biting patterns: examine context (crowding, toys, stimulation level, attention), modify the environment as needed, document observations in incident reports, and meet regularly with parents and administration to monitor action plans. If biting continues, seek additional resources.

Appendix F — Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

Ohio Revised Code 2151.421 requires every employee of a licensed childcare facility who reasonably believes a child has suffered sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect to immediately notify ODJFS. Oral report to Ohio Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-422-4453) within 24 hours; if imminent danger, contact law enforcement first. Written report to ODJFS within 48 hours of the oral report. Required report information: child's name and address; child's current location; child's age; nature and extent of injuries (including evidence of prior injuries); names, ages, and conditions of other children in the home; information helpful to identifying the cause or responsible person; and name and address of the reporter. Failure to report: simple misdemeanor and civil liability under Ohio law. Good-faith reporters have full immunity.

Appendix G — Incident Reporting

Minor incidents (first aid applied, bruising, seizure activity, injury to self/others/property, prescription medication error) must be documented on the center incident report within the required timeframe. A copy is provided to parents at pickup; a copy is kept in the child's file. Major incidents (injury requiring physician treatment or hospitalization, death, emergency mental health treatment, law enforcement involvement, child abuse report, or prescription medication error resulting in adverse outcome) must be: (1) reported to the director and child's parent immediately; (2) documented in writing by end of day; (3) reported to applicable state agencies by end of the next calendar day if required by programs the child participates in. Reports must include: member's name, date/time of incident, description, names of all staff present, actions taken, resolution/follow-up, date, and the signature of the person making the report.

Appendix H — Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

Premier Kids Academy complies with HIPAA Privacy and Security Regulations. PHI may only be shared with authorized persons or with a signed release. Exceptions: mandatory abuse reporting to ODJFS and law enforcement, and occasional posting of children's photos in center newsletters or displays with parental consent. All employees must immediately report any potential privacy violation to the director. Penalties for HIPAA violations: civil penalties of $100 per violation up to $25,000/year/person/standard (stacking for multiple standards); criminal penalties up to $250,000 and

10 years in prison for knowing improper disclosure. State law may impose additional penalties. Employment-related consequences include immediate termination.

Appendix I — Admission and Exclusion from Child Care Due to Illness

Children should be excluded when illness prevents comfortable participation, requires care beyond what caregivers can provide without endangering other children, or when any of the following are present: fever with behavior changes or signs of severe illness; two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours; persistent abdominal pain over 2 hours; mouth sores with drooling; rash with fever; diarrhea of infectious origin; bacterial meningitis; chickenpox (until all sores are crusted); and other communicable diseases per current ODJFS and AAP guidelines. Children with common respiratory illnesses, mild rashes without fever, head lice (after first treatment), and ringworm may generally attend. When in doubt, contact the director. If a child becomes ill during the day: contact parent immediately, isolate the child from others with appropriate supervision, and follow all universal precautions until pickup.

Appendix J — Access Policy

Only owners and staff, substitutes, subcontracted staff, or volunteers with completed and cleared background checks may have unrestricted access to children. Anyone without a cleared check must be under continuous, direct supervision of paid staff and may not be alone with children or assume childcare responsibilities. Staff must approach any unrecognized person on center property and verify their purpose; if uncertain, contact the director. A convicted sex offender may not operate, manage, be employed by, or volunteer at the center and may not be on center property except as specifically permitted in writing by the director (after ODJFS licensing consultant consultation), with detailed conditions documented.

Appendix K — Cleaning and Sanitation Policy

Routine cleaning: soap and water. Sanitation: 1:10 bleach-water solution. Lead teachers complete and submit the weekly Cleaning/Sanitation Checklist to the director. Required schedule: tables cleaned and sanitized before and after each meal; kitchen cleaned daily, sanitized surfaces daily, refrigerator monthly; highchairs washed and sanitized before and after each use; mouthed toys sanitized between uses; all toys washed and sanitized at least weekly; laundry washed at 165°F minimum; hard floors swept and mopped daily; bathrooms cleaned and disinfected daily; cribs and cots sanitized weekly and before use by a different child; bedding washed weekly at 165°F; door handles and faucets cleaned at least daily and more often during illness outbreaks. No vacuuming, mopping, or shampooing while children are present. Cracked or broken items that cannot be properly cleaned must be removed until repaired.

Appendix L — Sunscreen Policy

During April through October, SPF 45-50 sunscreen is applied to all children over 6 months, 30 minutes before outdoor activities. A signed parental consent form is required before applying sunscreen. Center-provided SPF 45-50 sunscreen is used unless parents supply their own in the original, labeled container with a consent form. Reapply every 2 hours. Sunscreen is not used on infants under 6 months; these infants are kept in shade and covered clothing. All applications are documented with time and date.

Appendix M — Record Retention Policy

All medical, financial, and employee records are maintained in locked files with limited access. Records are kept during the period services were provided or employment was active, plus a minimum of 5 years from the date a claim was submitted for payment; financial records for a minimum of 7 years. Social histories, psychological evaluations, legal documents, IEPs, and IFSPs are retained indefinitely. Destruction of any records is coordinated through the director. All information about employees and children is treated as confidential.

Appendix N — Diapering Procedure

Universal precautions apply to every diaper change. Wear gloves. Clean and sanitize the changing surface before and after each change. Never leave a child unattended on a changing table. Dispose of soiled diapers in a lined, covered, step-activated container. Wash hands thoroughly after every diaper change. Document in Brightwheel as required by each child's care plan.

Appendix O — Hazardous Items Storage

All hazardous items — including cleaning supplies, medications, sharp objects, and any items posing a risk to children — must be stored in locked, child-inaccessible locations in original containers with labels intact. No hazardous items may be stored in child-occupied areas or left accessible at any time.

Appendix P — Toothbrushing Policy

Toothbrushing follows ODJFS guidelines and center protocols. Toothbrushes are labeled with each child's name, stored without contact between brushes, and replaced regularly. Toothbrushing is supervised and documented as directed. Fluoride use and technique follow current AAP and ODJFS guidelines.

Appendix Q — Infant Safe Sleep Policy

All infants under one year must be placed on their backs to sleep on a firm, flat surface unless a physician order on file states otherwise. Cribs must be free of toys, bumpers, pillows, blankets, and bottles. Infants may be allowed to "cry themselves to sleep" for up to 15 minutes if they have a dry diaper, have been fed within two hours, are not in physical discomfort, and are due for a nap. Infants must be removed from the crib within 15 minutes of waking. Crying infants must be checked and comforted immediately. Sleeping infants must be monitored continuously for free breathing, correct positioning, and appropriate temperature.

Appendix R — Food Safety and Dishwashing

All food service follows CACFP guidelines. Menus are planned one week in advance and posted for parents. Staff must review all food allergies and dietary restrictions before every meal service. High-choking-risk foods must be appropriately modified before serving. All staff must know emergency procedures for allergen ingestion. Dishwashing follows ODJFS-approved sanitation procedures. All food temperatures, times, and meal counts are documented.

Appendix S — Infant Feeding Policy

Formula and breast milk are labeled with the child's name and date and stored in the refrigerator. All infant feeding is documented in Brightwheel. Staff follow each infant's individual feeding schedule provided by parents. Infants must never be propped with a bottle. Staff hold infants during bottle feeding whenever developmentally appropriate. Introduction of solid foods requires parental consent and physician guidance confirming appropriate developmental readiness.

Appendix T — Sexuality Education Policy

Questions from children about bodies or reproduction are answered in age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate, factual terms. Staff never provide graphic or inappropriate responses and involve the director if a child's questions or statements suggest a potential safety concern. Contact the director for guidance on any situation involving a child and sexuality-related topics.

Appendix U — Email Policy

Center email accounts, if provided, are the property of Premier Kids Academy and may be monitored. Center email may only be used for work-related purposes. Confidential information about children,

families, or staff may not be sent via personal email. All communications must comply with HIPAA and the center's Privacy Policy.

Appendix V — Social Media Policy

Employees may not post, share, or comment on any content related to Premier Kids Academy, its children, families, or staff on any personal or public social media platform without prior written permission from the director. Posting identifiable photos of children without explicit parental consent is a HIPAA violation. Disparaging posts about the center, its leadership, families, or coworkers are prohibited and may result in immediate termination. This policy applies during and after employment.

Appendix W — Internet Policy

Center internet and computers are for work purposes only. Personal internet use, social media, streaming, gaming, or any non-work activity on center equipment or during working hours is prohibited and grounds for disciplinary action. The center monitors use of its internet and computer systems.

Appendix X — Conflict Resolution Policy

Workplace conflicts must be addressed professionally and through the appropriate chain of command. Attempt to resolve conflicts directly, then bring to your supervisor if unresolved. If the conflict involves your supervisor, bring it to the director. Conflicts are never to be aired in front of children, families, or the public. Gossiping or recruiting others into workplace disputes is itself a conduct violation. The director has final authority on all workplace disputes.

Appendix Y — Mentoring Policy

All new staff are assigned a mentor during their first 30 days. The mentor assists with learning classroom procedures, center policies, ODJFS standards, Creative Curriculum implementation, and Brightwheel documentation. Mentors are not disciplinary supervisors. New staff are encouraged to ask questions at any time. Effective mentoring benefits both new employees and the overall quality of the program.

Appendix Z — Dressing for the Child Care Kitchen

Staff working in or assisting with food preparation must wear clean clothing, with hair tied back or covered. No artificial nails. No loose jewelry that could contaminate food. Gloves must be worn during food preparation and service if nail polish is present. No strong fragrances when working with food. Review Appendices K and R in conjunction with kitchen work.

Appendix AA — Safety Practices Policy

All employees must: conduct daily classroom safety checks; immediately remove or correct identified hazards; report concerns to the supervisor; maintain required supervision ratios at all times; use all required personal protective equipment; follow all emergency procedures; and participate in all required safety trainings and drills. Safety is not optional.

Appendix BB — Procedures for Handling Blood and Bodily Fluids

Universal precautions apply whenever there is potential for contact with blood or bodily fluids. Wear gloves. Double-bag all contaminated materials for disposal. Wash hands thoroughly after removing gloves. Clean and disinfect all affected surfaces with a 1:10 bleach solution. Complete an incident report for any staff exposure. Follow the center's Exposure Control Plan for any potential blood-borne pathogen exposure. Any employee who refuses to follow universal precautions is subject to immediate disciplinary action.

Appendix CC — Fire and Evacuation Procedures

In the event of fire or required evacuation: activate the nearest fire alarm pull station and call 911. Evacuate children immediately using posted evacuation routes to the rear playground. Bring emergency medications for children who need them when possible but do not delay evacuation. Account for all children by roster. If the rear playground is unsafe, proceed to Lander Elementary School (next door), then Mayfield Heights Fire Department on Mayfield Road, then the nearest Red Cross Emergency Shelter. All staff must participate in monthly fire drills. Annual emergency preparedness training is required for all staff.

Appendix DD — Occupational Stress Management

Working with young children is rewarding but demanding. If you are feeling overwhelmed or unable to manage your emotions in the classroom, notify your supervisor immediately for coverage. Allowing stress to affect your conduct with children is unacceptable and a disciplinary matter. Resources available include speaking with the director, taking a brief break when covered, and seeking professional support through your primary care physician.

Appendix DD — Toilet Training Policy

Toilet training requires a consistent, patient, supportive approach. Staff follow the toilet training plan developed collaboratively with the family. Children may never be punished for accidents — accidents are a normal part of the training process. Staff document toileting in Brightwheel as applicable. All required hygiene procedures must be followed at each toileting event.

Appendix EE — Gender, Equality, and Diversity Policy

Premier Kids Academy is committed to serving all children and families with dignity and equitable care regardless of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, ethnic background, religion, national origin, or family composition. Our classrooms, curriculum, and interactions actively reflect diverse representations and do not reinforce stereotypes. All staff are expected to model and reinforce inclusive, respectful language and behavior at all times. Violations of this policy are addressed as a conduct matter.