

**William L. Clay Early Childhood  
Development/ Parenting Education Center  
Parent Manual**

**HARRIS-STOWE**  
STATE UNIVERSITY  

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**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

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**Table of Contents**

Welcome from the Desk of the Executive Director .....	3
Program Philosophy Statement .....	4
Admissions.....	5
Attendance Policy .....	5
Child Abuse Policy .....	8
Clothing, Footwear, and Required Items .....	8
Communicating with Families .....	8
Curriculum .....	8
Daily Routine / Hours of Operation .....	8
Disaster Preparedness.....	9
Discharge Policy .....	8

Fees .....	9
Guidance Policy .....	9
Health Policy.....	11
Holidays .....	11
Inclement Weather .....	12
Injury / Accident .....	13
Meals.....	11
Medication .....	11
Negotiating Differences .....	13
Open-Door Policy & Family Engagement .....	13
Parent Visits .....	14
Parking .....	14
Pick-Up Policies.....	14
Transitions.....	14
Tuition / Billing.....	14
Vacations.....	15
Waitlist .....	15
Acknowledgement.....	16

## WELCOME FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am thrilled to welcome you to Harris-Stowe State University's William L. Clay Early Childhood Center. I am excited to embark on this journey of growth and learning with your children and your family.

At The Clay Center, We are committed to providing a nurturing and stimulating environment where each child can thrive. Our dedicated team of educators and staff members are passionate about early childhood education and are here to support your child's developmental milestones. We have a wealth of knowledge, both academic and experiential, that we will utilize to assist your children with reaching their highest potential.

The Clay Center staff believes in the importance of fostering a strong partnership with parents and guardians. We have a firm belief in the research that shows family involvement is pivotal in the success of young learners. Your involvement and support are invaluable as we work together to create the best possible experience for your child. Whether you have questions, suggestions, or simply want to check in on your child's progress, our doors are always open.

Throughout the year, we will keep you informed about your child's activities, events, and milestones through regular communications. We encourage you to participate in our center's activities and events whenever possible, as your presence enriches the experience for everyone.

Please feel free to reach out to me or any member of our team if you have any questions or concerns. We are here to ensure that your child's experience at The Clay Center is positive, enriching, and memorable.

Thank you for entrusting us with your child's early years. We look forward to getting to know your family and supporting your child's growth and development.

Warm regards,

Dr. Tonae Flemons  
Executive Director  
Harris Stowe State University-William L. Clay Early Childhood Center

## **PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT**

At the Clay Center, our mission is to enrich the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of young children, from six weeks to five years old, in a nurturing environment that encourages active parental participation. We aim to support parents in enhancing their understanding and skills in relation to their children's growth and development.

Our vision is to create a safe, healthy, creative, and caring environment. We provide diverse exploratory activities that foster curiosity and offer numerous opportunities for parental involvement.

We hold the following values at our core:

- Inclusion and respect for all children
- Warm, supportive professional staff
- Low staff-to-child ratios
- Attractive, clean, and safe indoor and outdoor environments
- Health and safety practices to protect children
- Nutritious meals and snacks
- A positive and supportive family atmosphere

We encourage children to develop a positive self-image, learn inner controls, and cooperate with peers and caregivers. Our program is rooted in educational theories and practices that emphasize social and emotional development, cognitive learning, physical growth, and cultural appreciation. We encourage children to develop a positive self-image, learn inner controls, and cooperate with peers and caregivers. Clearly defined limits help children recognize and accept their emotions, express their feelings, and feel secure in the world around them.

## **ADMISSIONS**

The following must be completed **before** a child begins attending The Clay Center:

- Fully Completed application packet with non-refundable deposit
- Schedule of hours child will attend
- Medical exam with immunization / Health history
- Signature indicating Parent Manual has been received, read, and understood
- Child & Adult Care Food Program form
- Paid Monthly Tuition or Subsidy Approval Notification

Parents of infants must provide:

- Bottles and nipples
- Formula or breast milk (up to 12 months of age)
- Baby cereal/Baby food (unopened)
- Pampers/diapers
- Wipes

Parents of all children must provide:

- Change of clothing suitable to weather conditions

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **Importance of Attendance**

This is a comprehensive child development program. Regular attendance is crucial for children's learning and social development. Families are encouraged to establish and maintain good attendance records.

### **Absences**

If your child will be absent, please notify the Center as soon as possible. We will miss your child and want to ensure continuity in their learning experience. We also want to ensure their safety and communication aides in this process.

### **Arrival Time**

Children should arrive at the Center no later than 9:00 a.m. to benefit fully from the teaching and learning activities.

### **Late Arrivals**

We understand that children may occasionally be late. Please notify the center if your child will arrive after 9:00 a.m. Failure to do so could result in your child not being accepted into care.

- Exceptions will be made with prior approval from the Executive Director for extenuating circumstances (i.e. work schedule)
- Exceptions will be made for doctor's appointments (Doctor's statements will be required)

Maintaining a consistent schedule helps children thrive and make the most of their time at the Center. Thank you for your cooperation.

## CHILD ABUSE POLICY

All staff of the Clay Center are mandated reporters and are required to report any suspected abuse, neglect, or maltreatment on the part of an employee, parent, or volunteer. The Children's Division toll free number is 1-800-392-3738. Any abuse or maltreatment of a child, either as an incident of discipline or otherwise is prohibited. Any means of corporal punishment will not be tolerated. Additionally, withholding or using food, rest or sleep as a punishment is prohibited. If any type of abuse or neglect is suspected it will be reported. All staff, students and volunteers are required to complete a background check.

### Accusations of abuse against staff:

- **Immediate Reporting:**
  - **To Campus Authorities:**
    - Report to Campus Police, Human Resources, and the Dean of the College of Education.
  - **To External Authorities:**
    - Notify the Missouri Department of Health and Social Services-Section for Childcare Regulation, the Children's Division, and the child's parents.
- **Investigation Procedure:**
  - Follow advice from the University attorney and law enforcement regarding the suspension of the accused during the investigation.

### Preventative Measures:

- **Health Checks:** Conduct daily cursory health checks and document/report any injuries or physical marks.
- **Staff Presence:** Ensure at least two staff members are always on-site.
- **Visibility:** Maintain rooms that are easily observed through windows and doors.
- **Breaks:** Provide hour-long lunch breaks daily for staff.
- **Guidelines and Training:** Implement clear discipline and guidance guidelines, and provide training on child development.
- **Screenings:** Keep complete family registry screenings on file.
- **Observations:** Perform frequent classroom observations.

## CLOTHING, FOOTWEAR, & REQUIRED ITEMS

- **Comfort and Practicality:**
  - Dress children in casual, comfortable clothing suitable for active play and messy activities.
  - Closed-toe shoes with Velcro, ties, or buckles are recommended. Avoid sandals, "crocs," cowboy boots, flip-flops, and dress shoes.
- **Extra Clothing:**

- Provide two complete sets of seasonal clothing (shirts, pants/shorts, socks, underwear) to be left at school.
- Ensure children wear appropriate outerwear for the weather, as outdoor play occurs daily unless temperatures are extreme.
- **Labeling:**
  - Label all clothing items with the child’s first and last name to prevent loss.
- **Infants and Toddlers:**
  - Supply an adequate amount of diapers and wipes
- **Personal Items:**
  - Provide necessary sunscreen, ointments, powders, or creams with appropriate labeling and a signed authorization form.
  - Special security items are acceptable, but avoid bringing toys. Classrooms will have designated “show-n-share” days.
- **Prohibited Items:**
  - Do not bring nuts, candy, gum, balloons, or other choking hazards.
- **Weather and Play:**
  - Dress children in weather-appropriate clothing, including mittens, sweaters, and hats for cold weather.
  - Keep an extra pair of indoor shoes at school, especially if children wear wet snow boots to the center. Sneakers or rubber-soled shoes are required for safe play.

By following these guidelines, we aim to ensure your child’s comfort, safety, and readiness for the various activities throughout their day.

## **COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES**

In addition to conferences and assessments, there are many ways to gain more knowledgeable about what is happening in your child’s classroom. Ways of communicating with families include:

- Newsletters
- Telephone calls
- E-mails
- Brightwheel
- Articles of interest, community resources, and relevant websites
- Annual Calendar (adjustments may have to be made to accommodate University and Center needs)

## **CURRICULUM**

The Clay Center employs the Creative Curriculum for Preschool, which is based on five fundamental principles:

1. Positive interactions and relationships with adults provide a critical foundation for successful learning.
2. Social-emotional competence is a significant factor in school success.
3. Constructive, purposeful play supports essential learning.
4. The physical environment affects the type and quality of learning interactions.
5. Teacher-family partnerships promote development and learning.

These principles guide our practice and help us intentionally set up and operate our program.

The Creative Curriculum incorporates theories and research on brain development and resiliency, with aspects of the constructivist approach integrated into daily programming. Our curriculum ensures that children are valued, feel competent, and are allowed to express their independence. Specifically, children will:

- Learn to express their feelings in appropriate ways.
- Develop trusting relationships with nurturing adults.
- Demonstrate caring and cooperation.
- Develop gross and fine motor skills.
- Develop strategies for solving problems.

As part of exploratory learning and physical development, daily outdoor play is essential for all ages. Following state licensing regulations and accreditation standards, children attending a full day must have at least one hour of outdoor play. We adhere to National Health and Safety Performance Standards regarding safe wind chill factors and heat indices. However, outdoor activities will be restricted if conditions pose a health risk, as monitored by the director, teachers, administrative assistant, and security officer.

## **DAILY ROUTINE / HOURS OF OPERATION**

The Center is open from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. A late pick-up fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for the first two (2) late pick-ups and the third late pick-up will result in a \$5.00 per minute late fee. Late charges must be paid the morning following the violation of Center hours. Chronic late pick-ups will result in termination of enrollment.

## **DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**

The Center has an Emergency Plan of Action in cases of any disaster. Evacuation plans are rehearsed and posted. Parents can assist in making occurrences less stressful by keeping emergency names and numbers updated. Monthly drills will be practiced, and at least two-days of permanent supplies (food, water, blankets, flashlights, and other first-aid supplies) will be kept on hand. In cases of an emergency or disaster, every effort will be made to contact parents as soon as possible. If we cannot reach parents, we will contact emergency contacts.

## **DISCHARGE POLICY**

Parents may withdraw from the Center by giving a thirty-day written notice to the Executive Director. Fees must be paid for the current month. Childcare services may be terminated for the following reasons:

- Withdrawal by parents/guardians
- Failure to pay fees on a timely basis
- Failure to follow the HSSU Center policies and procedures including chronic late pick-up

- Parental behaviors endangering/threatening children/staff
- A child's disruptive behavior that cannot be redirected through parent/staff intervention and/or counseling. Other documented incidents regarding a child's behavior resulting in an unsafe environment for other children
- Occasionally, we may enroll a child with certain medical problems on a trial basis and may have to discharge if it is determined that we truly cannot meet the needs of the child.

In the event it is deemed necessary to terminate a child's enrollment, the Executive Director will request an audience with the parents/guardians to discuss and remediate the concern. If the situation continues, or if there is failure to comply with any stipulations discussed, the Executive Director will provide written documentation and due process will be followed before termination actions are taken.

## **FEES**

**Application Fee:** A non-refundable application fee of \$100 per child is required. \$50 will be credited towards the child's first month of tuition. The remaining \$50 will be applied to materials and classroom equipment.

**Late Pick-Up Fee:** There is a \$1 per minute fee for any child not picked up by The Clay Center's closing time of 5:30pm. After 2 occurrences, this fee will increase to \$5 per minute. (All late fees must be paid by the following morning.)

**Tuition:** Tuition is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. It is considered late after the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month (please refer to the enrollment packet for tuition rates)

**Late Payment Fee:** There will be a \$25 late fee for tuition payments received after the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month, unless previous arrangements have been made with the Executive Director. A child may not be admitted if their tuition is not paid by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.

**Returned Check Fee:** \$45

**Multiple Child Discount:** If a family has multiple children enrolled, a 10% discount will be given to the child with the lowest tuition rate.

**Special Activity Fees:** Occasionally we will request an additional fee for a special activity. However, we will make efforts to offset such fees through fundraising.

## **GUIDANCE POLICY**

Our philosophy on guidance, or discipline, emphasizes positive reinforcement, proactive strategies, and collaboration with families to support children in developing self-control and acceptable behavior. Here's a summary of our approach:

### **Proactive Strategies and Redirection:**

- Teachers help children change unwanted behavior by reinforcing acceptable behavior.
- Actions include redirection, setting up a conducive environment, and having a child sit with the teacher for guidance.
- If a child's behavior is harmful to themselves or others, they may be removed from the room to sit with Administrators until they calm down. Parents may be contacted if behavior is harmful and/or destructive.

### **Personalized Behavior Plans:**

- If typical strategies are ineffective, teachers will collaborate with families to create a personalized behavior plan.

- If necessary, external agencies may be contacted for additional resources.

### **Prohibited Actions:**

- Staff are prohibited from using physical punishments, psychological abuse, coercion, threats, derogatory remarks, and/or withholding food as discipline.
- Each staff member, person, and child are treated with respect at all times.
- Any behavior that physically or emotionally hurts someone is not tolerated.

### **Commitment to Positive Guidance:**

- The Clay Center uses positive guidance to provide children with the necessary guidance and security for emotional and social growth.
- Teachers will never use threats or derogatory remarks and will not withhold or threaten to withhold food as discipline.

This approach ensures a respectful, supportive, and nurturing environment for all children, focusing on positive growth and development.

### **HEALTH POLICIES**

The Clay Center's sick child policy aligns with the policies of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Children will be observed for:

- Crankiness or less activity than usual
- Crying more than usual
- General discomfort or seeming unwell
- Loss of appetite

Children must be sent home for the following (may not return until 24 hours after symptoms are gone):

- A temperature over one hundred degrees Fahrenheit (100°F) by mouth or ninety-nine degrees Fahrenheit (99°F) under the arm
- Diarrhea – more than 1 abnormally loose stool
- Severe coughing – if the child gets red or blue or makes high-pitched croupy or whooping sounds
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Pinkeye
- Unusual spots or rashes
- Sore throat or trouble swallowing
- Unusually dark, tea-colored urine
- Grey or white stool
- Headache and stiff neck
- Vomiting more than once
- Severe itching of the body or scalp

The health and wellness of all the children and staff is our priority. Please keep your child home if they exhibit any of these symptoms.

## **HOLIDAYS:**

The Center will be closed on the following days due to Harris-Stowe State University's schedule:

- New Year's Day
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday
- Presidents' Day
- Friday before Easter
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day, Wednesday before and Friday following
- Winter Break (dates vary)

\*Please refer to The Clay Center annual calendar for additional closed days\*

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY**

In the event of inclement weather, the Clay Center will make every attempt to open as usual. However, to preserve the safety of our staff and children, we will close if conditions warrant such action. It is at the discretion of the University to make the decision to close earlier or open later due to weather (i.e. snow, ice, etc.) The Center will follow the schedule of the St. Louis Public Schools in case of inclement weather. Major TV networks will begin to note changes in scheduling beginning at 5:00 a.m. if announcements have not been made the night before. Please note the school closings or late start announcements and be mindful that Center staff must also take precautions getting to and from the facility. If the Center is open, but because of severe weather and/or road conditions Administration decides to close early, families will be notified by Brightwheel, phone, email (if possible), and on local network stations. We will make every effort to remain open for working parents; however, if we find it necessary to close, we will not credit or discount tuition fees.

## **INJURY/ACCIDENT**

The Clay Center provides a safe environment for all children and adults. However, the behaviors and curiosity of young children sometimes result in accidents. In case of accidents/injuries, first aid will be administered in cases of minor injuries. Parents will be notified in the event of serious injuries. At least one staff member in each classroom will be certified in First Aid and CPR. In cases of emergency, parents and first responders will be contacted. If necessary, children will be transported to the hospital. All injuries will be documented in writing and shared with parents/ guardians along with the treatment administered.

## **MEALS**

- Breakfast: 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.
- Lunch: 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
- Snack: 3:15 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Parents must inform the center of any special dietary requirements, including food allergies. Food allergies and special dietary needs will be posted. Arrangements will be made to accommodate children with special diets and other food service needs.

## **MEDICATION**

Medication will be administered to children under the following conditions:

- **Parental and Physician Authorization:**
  - Written parental authorization is required.
  - Direction from the child’s physician is necessary.
- **Medication Requirements:**
  - Must be in the original container.
  - Labeled with the child’s name, physician’s name, pharmacy, name of medication, dosage, and directions for administration.
- **Non-prescription Medication:**
  - Considered on an individual basis.
  - Must be in the original container.
  - Labeled by the parent(s) with the child’s name and instructions for administration, including times and amounts for dosages.
- **Authorization Forms:**
  - All authorization forms for medicines must be signed by enrolling parents/guardians.
- **Sunscreen and Insect Repellents:**
  - Must be accompanied by a permission slip signed by the enrolling parent if it is to be applied.
  - Must be purchased by parents and brought to the Center.
- **First-time Dose:**
  - The Center will not administer the first-time dose of any medicine to any child due to possible allergic reactions.
- **Discretionary Administration:**
  - Administration of medication is not required but may be chosen to be done at the discretion of the leadership team.
- **Storage and Disposal:**
  - Medication shall be stored out of reach of children in a locked container.
  - Medication needing refrigeration shall be kept in a separate container in the refrigerator.
  - Medication shall be returned to the parent(s) or disposed of immediately when no longer needed and/or expired.
- **Documentation:**
  - Teachers shall record the date, time, dosage, and the name of the individual giving the medication promptly after administration.
  - This information will be filed in the child’s record after the medication is no longer necessary.

## **NEGOTIATING DIFFERENCES**

At The Clay Center, we prioritize the safety and well-being of the children and staff above all else. When a parent has a concern about any aspect of our childcare program, we are committed to addressing and resolving the issue as promptly as possible. We maintain every effort to always show professionalism, and respectfully require the same from parents. We are always open to suggestions and feedback to continually improve our services for you and your family.

## **OPEN-DOOR POLICY AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AT THE CLAY CENTER**

At The Clay Center, we have an open-door policy, welcoming parents and family members at all times. We strive to build positive relationships with our families by understanding their unique characteristics, strengths, and the issues important to them.

## **Developing Partnerships**

To foster strong partnerships with families, we create a welcoming environment and provide numerous opportunities for involvement. Families are invited to participate in classroom activities and school events, and we encourage attendance at parent meetings, conferences, and family fun events.

## **Ways Families Can Get Involved**

Here are some ways families can be involved:

- **Making Things for the Program/Contributing to the Curriculum:** Help create materials or contribute ideas and resources for the curriculum.
- **Sharing Culture, Talents, or Profession:** Share your cultural background, talents, or professional expertise with the students.
- **Participating in Class Activities or School-Wide Events:** Engage in day-to-day class activities or special events held by the school.

## **Additional Involvement Opportunities**

- **Parent Advisory:** Join the parent advisory committee to provide feedback and suggestions.
- **Fundraising Committees:** Participate in fundraising efforts to support school initiatives.

**Parent-Approved Education Workshops:** Attend workshops designed to educate and empower parents in supporting their children's education.

## **PARENT CUSTODY AND AUTHORIZED CONTACT PROCEDURE**

When one parent wishes to exclude the other parent from picking up or visiting a child at the Center, the contesting parent or legal guardian must provide a legal document such as a custody ruling or restraining order with the child's name on it. This information is then placed in the child's file and documented on the pick-up list. If a parent tries to pick up a child from the center in violation of a current custody order or restraining order, a member of the Administrative Team or Public Safety Officer will tell the individual about the documented legal restriction. If the non-custodial parent refuses to leave the center, staff will call public safety, the police and notify the custodial parent.

In cases where there are no legal restrictions, staff will determine who is authorized to pick up a child based on information the parent or legal guardian provides on the most current Emergency Information form. Only persons over the age of 16 (sixteen) whom the parent has designated may pick up a child from the Center. A parent who wants someone not on the emergency form to pick up a child on a single occasion should make a written request to inform the staff (verbal requests are not valid).

Staff will request picture identification from anyone whom they don't recognize that comes to pick up a child. The name on the identification must match that on the most current Emergency Information form (allowing for misspellings) or on the parent's written request.

## **PARENT VISITS**

Custodial parents are welcome at any time and breastfeeding mothers are especially encouraged to come for feedings to enjoy that special bonding time with baby. The Center is not an appropriate place for other family and friends to visit the child. If there are problems arising from parent visits that interfere with the delivery of

quality childcare, then the parent(s) will not be permitted in the classroom. Please feel free to use the observation booths to see your child without having them see you. You are encouraged to volunteer, become involved with the program, use the Parent Resource Library, and consider serving on the Advisory Board. The Center is open to families at all times. There is no need for parents to call or make appointments to visit. We encourage family involvement and promote ongoing parent/staff interactions in the teaching/learning process and in planning and decision-making processes.

### **PARKING**

There is limited short-term parking available in the front of the center. We ask that you not leave car motors running or leave other children unattended within your car when you enter the building. We also ask that parents immediately move their vehicles once they have dropped off/picked up their child so that there is always enough room for other arriving parents. If you need to visit with the classroom teacher or the Center Director, please be sure to park your vehicle along the side or the rear of the building, leaving the front of the center available for parents who need to quickly retrieve their student(s).

### **PICK-UP POLICIES**

Because of our concerns for the children's safety, both physical and emotional, we ask that once the child has been released to your care at day's end, your child not be permitted to run in the hallways, roam unattended or enter the kitchen, offices, or other classrooms. Parents who spend a little time in their child's classroom at day's end need to also remember that while your child is in his/her classroom with you, class rules that encourage appropriate behavior still apply for your child.

### **STAFF HIRED BY PARENTS**

If you hire a Clay Center employee to care for your children outside of their normal work hours, this must be arranged away from the school. The employee is considered a private citizen in this agreement, not acting as a Clay Center employee. The school is not responsible or liable for the employee's actions or omissions when they are off school property and outside of working hours, including transportation of children.

### **TRANSITIONS**

Transitions occur at a time when children reach their birthday. Parents will be notified when transitions to a new classroom will occur.

### **TUITION / BILLING**

Our fees are based on enrollment and not attendance. Therefore, tuition must be paid even if your child does not attend to secure their enrollment spot. Fees must be paid by the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month. Failure to pay will result in a late fee on the 6<sup>th</sup> and possible termination of childcare services after the 15<sup>th</sup>. Parents will be given access to Procure, our payment system to make online payments to their accounts. Payments can also be made at the front desk with one of the Center Administrators.

As students make age transitions, the amount paid for tuition changes. For billing purposes, tuition adjustments will be made according to the child's birthday. If the child's birthday occurs prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, the monthly tuition amount will be adjusted for that month. If the child's birthday occurs following the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, adjustments will be made for the next month.

## VACATIONS

The policy on vacations at the Center respects the time families spend together, but it has some important points to keep in mind:

1. **Monthly Fees:** Fees are still applicable even when children are on vacation.
2. **Advance Notice:** Parents should inform the Center at least two weeks before the vacation.
3. **Summer Absence:** If a child is removed for the summer and there are families on the waiting list or new arrivals needing childcare, the child's spot may be reassigned unless payment is made to reserve the spot during the absence.
4. **2 Weeks without Pay:** Parents are granted 2 weeks per school year (September-August) when they do not have to pay for childcare services. Parents MUST turn in the Parent Vacation Form to Center Administration at least 2 weeks prior to vacation for approval.

This ensures that the Center can manage its capacity and resources effectively while accommodating family vacation plans.

## WAITLIST

If we do not have immediate openings, parents can request to be placed on the waitlist for enrollment. If space becomes available, parents will be contacted for immediate placement. The \$100 non-refundable deposit is required to be placed on the waitlist.



***HARRIS-STOWE STATE UNIVERSITY***

***William L. Clay, Sr.***

***Early Childhood Development/Parenting Education Center Parent Manual***

I have read and understood the statements presented in the Parent Manual. I agree to the outlined policies.

Please sign and return to the Administrative Team for filing. Thank You!

Child's Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_