



FAMILY HANDBOOK

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PHILOSOPHY

We believe that children, their families and society all benefit from a high quality experience in the child's early years; and there is a critical link between their childhood experiences and later successes in life. Our teachers encourage the children to develop their individual interests and strengths through the purposeful utilization of diverse materials, experiences and environments. We strive to integrate families and the community into our activities to fully engage all facets of childhood learning.

MISSION

Children's Academy is committed to providing a safe, nurturing environment where the children's potential can be fully realized. We achieve this by fulfilling not only the child's basic needs, but also offering them the gifts of respect, acceptance and love.

GOALS

- For the children to feel safe and loved while at school
- For the parents to have full confidence in the care and education of their children
- To instill confidence in the children in order to promote their learning
- For the children to be well-prepared for later schooling
- For the children to positively contribute to their communities as youth and as adults

CURRICULUM

Children's Academy uses well-designed and goal-oriented curriculum for each age group to guide instruction and reach developmental milestones. State and curriculum standards, along with individual needs, are considered in curriculum planning. Thus, teachers can provide experiences that promote children's growth across a wide range of developmental and content areas. Having a curriculum also gives purpose to the daily schedule and includes time and materials for play, child-initiated learning, and creative expression. It also provides opportunities for children to learn individually and in groups to match their developmental needs and interests.

SCREENINGS AND ASSESSMENTS

Children's Academy uses professional resources to ensure we are meeting the children's developmental and educational needs. We conduct developmental screenings twice a year on all enrolled children utilizing the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). Additionally, we perform curriculum assessments two times per year to measure the child's learning progression. Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year to discuss the child's development following development screenings.

Parents are informed of the results of all screenings and the information may be used to plan supplemental academic support. Children whose results indicate the need for additional services will be referred for further evaluation.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Children's Academy is open year round, Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. We ask that all children arrive no later than 9:00 a.m. to get the most out of our curriculum.

It is important parents pick up children by 6:00 p.m. to allow our staff to rejoin their families at the end of the day. Late fees of \$2.00 per minute will be assessed after 6:05 p.m.

HOLIDAYS

The School is closed on, or in observance of, the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day

ENROLLMENT CRITERIA

Children's Academy admits children from the ages of six weeks to twelve years without regard to race, culture, sex, religion, national origin, ancestry, or disability. When the parent or legal guardian of a child identifies a child has special needs, the Director and the parent or legal guardian will meet to review the child's care requirements.

The Center provides for an orientation for new families, which includes an introduction to family support resources and a review of the school's policies and procedures. Prior to a child's attendance, a tour or conference with the parent or legal guardian is required to acquaint each new family with the environment, staff and schedule for the child care. It is recommended, each child spend one hour at the school to get to know their new environment, teacher and classmates before their first day.

The following forms will be completed and submitted to Children's Academy prior to the child's first day of attendance. The information in these forms will remain confidential and will be shared with other caregivers only as required to meet the needs of the child:

- 1) **Enrollment Application**
- 2) **Medical Treatment Authorization**
- 3) **Emergency Information Card**
Updated by a parent or legal guardian yearly and whenever the information changes
- 4) **Blue Immunization Certificate and Yellow Physical Summary** from child's doctor
Updated prior to expiration or every two years

Children are admitted on a space available basis. A waiting list is maintained by the Director and will be used when an opening presents itself.

It is Children's Academy policy not to interfere with the custody relationship of a child's parents. As such, we assure that both parents/guardians have rights to pick-up/drop-off, visit or request documents on a child. If that is not the case, it is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to provide court documents and/or legally binding parental agreements.

TUITION

Upon enrollment, registration, supply and/or activity fees are due. Such enrollment fees are non-refundable. Please see the Director for a detailed Fee Agreement.

Tuition is due and payable weekly on Monday of the current week. Parents wishing to pay on a bi-weekly or monthly basis should submit payments in advance of services rendered. Tuition payments may be made via check, money order, auto-debit/credit and in-office debit/credit card transactions.

For each additional child in your immediate family that enrolls, you will be entitled to a ten percent discount on the older child's tuition. The discount is applicable only to regular tuition and cannot be combined with agency co-pays.

Weekly rates are based on a cost for the school year; therefore, there will be no deductions for absences or scheduled holidays. The school offers one-week (five consecutive days) of vacation credit and the second semester period begins January 1st and end on the last day of the school year. In order to receive and become eligible for both vacation credits, your child(ren) must be enrolled at Children's Academy by September 30th AND for a minimum of 60 days. Regular tuition is waived for the week period if the Vacation Request for is completed online and submitted at least five days in advanced.

Summer camp charges are computed according to part-time and full-time attendance.

Children's Academy reserves the right to revise any fees and/or policies after proper notification to the parents.

LATE PAYMENT

A 5% late fee will be added to the account if tuition is not paid by Friday of the current week. If the account is not paid in full (two weeks of tuition and the late fee) by the following Friday, the child(ren) will be dismissed from enrollment.

We are proud of our high quality care and programs. To continue to uphold our standards, we must require full and timely payment of tuition and fees. Delinquent accounts may result in dismissal of the child. We are proud of our high quality care and programs. To continue to uphold our standards, we must require full and timely payment of tuition and fees.

For checks returned due to insufficient funds, a fee of \$25 will be assessed. Future payments must be paid via money order.

DROP OFF

Children in our infant and toddler building should be dropped off in their classroom. Security codes will be provided at enrollment. For children in the “main school,” you may park and come inside or allow the Greeter to escort your child inside.

VPK children dropped off prior to 8am should come to the main entry of the school. For drop off after 8am, please walk them to their class in the VPK building. The children will be marked in on the roll sheet by the teacher when they arrive.

Parents of school readiness funded children must sign children in and out each day. The school readiness sign in sheets are located in your child’s classroom building on a clipboard hanging by the front door.

PICK UP

Children in our infant and toddler building should be picked up from their classroom. For children in the “main school,” you may park and come inside or allow the Greeter to escort your child to your vehicle in the drive through.

VPK children picked up after 4:30pm will be released from the main entry of the school. For pick up before 4:30pm, please go to the VPK building. The children will be marked out on the roll sheet by the teacher when they depart.

Care giving adults who pick up the child from the school must be authorized by the parent or legal guardian on the enrollment information form. Any caregiver not known by the Greeter or Director, yet authorized by the parent or legal guardian, will be required to produce identification.

SAFETY

Our parking and drive through area can be a busy place at certain times of the day. Please help us in providing a safe environment by driving slowly and looking out for pedestrians.

We offer the following tips and ask for your cooperation to ensure the safety of all parents and students:

- If you will be coming inside to drop off your child, please park in a designated space and turn off your car.
- Please hold your child’s hand in the parking lot.
- The left lane of the drive through is for drive-through; right lane is for drop-off.

- For drive through service at the main building, pull up to the front door and remain in your vehicle. We will welcome or dismiss your child. Please do not get out of your car by the front door or anywhere else along the driveway.
- Pull forward and buckle your child in his/her car seat.
- If you need to get out of your car to drop off or pick up a car seat, finish packing a child's bag, etc., we ask that you park in the parking lot.

ILLNESS

The school is a place for well children. If a child becomes ill while at the school, the parents will be contacted, and requested to come for the child. If a parent cannot be contacted, the emergency contacts will be called. The child will wait to be picked up in the office away from other children. In the event the following occur at home, we ask you to keep your child at home:

- A. A temperature of 100° or higher
- B. Any fever accompanied by:
 - 1. a deep cough
 - 2. earache or draining ear
 - 3. spasms of cough
 - 4. sore throat
- C. A rash of any kind until diagnosed, treated or declared harmless by a physician
- D. Early colds (coughing and sneezing), very bad colds with purulent discharge
- E. Diarrhea or vomiting the previous evening or before morning
- F. Red, runny or matting eyes - may be pink eye (conjunctivitis) - please call your doctor
- G. Bronchitis - if your child is coughing frequently

Children should be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school. If taking an antibiotic, the children should take the prescribed dosage for 24 hours before returning to school.

Parents are also requested to share all medical condition information and non-food allergies with staff.

MEDICATIONS

Children's Academy will administer only prescription medication or medication accompanied by a doctor's note. Written approval on a Medication Authorization form is required from the parent or legal guardian for the administration of any medications. This Center will administer prescription medication in the original container only according to label specifications. All medications will be stored in a locked box, inaccessible to children.

The first dose of medication must be given at home to see if the child has any type of reaction. Parents or legal guardians may administer medication to their own child during the child care day.

Medications delivered by a device (ex: EpiPen, Inhaler, nebulizer) must be accompanied by written instructions on indications for use that include signs and symptoms that the medication is needed. This

information can be supplied by the parents or a health care professional. A health care professional or parents must demonstrate use of the device and any special care after use to all staff who will be administering the medication. Only staff trained on the use of the device may administer the medication. Staff will be trained annually on the use and care of the device or as needed with staffing or device changes.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information relating to your child is confidential and will not be released unless written authorization is provided by a parent or legal guardian. An exception will be made in the event of suspected child abuse. Any such suspicion will be reported to the Director for immediate investigation and action with the appropriate authorities.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

Children's Academy provides breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack according to state licensing standards and Child Care Food Program guidelines for all children 12 months and older. Menus are provided monthly for your convenience. Parents may provide meal substitutes if their child has a meal replacement form completed by the child's pediatrician. In such cases we encourage the meals to meet state licensing and USDA guidelines for nutrition. This includes: 2 servings of vegetable, fruit or 100% juice, 1 serving of grains (bread, rice or pasta), 1 serving of protein (beef, chicken, tofu or beans) and 1 serving of dairy (cheese, yogurt). No sugars (candy, gum) or fats (chips) may be included. Frozen packs must be included in your child's lunch container; lunches will not be refrigerated. A thermos can be used to keep items warm; lunches will not be heated up.

Children 6 weeks to 12 months we provide a milk and soy based formula, rice cereal and appropriate baby food for their chewing and digestive stage.

Parents are required to inform the school of any food allergies for their child by listing them on the enrollment form. As much as possible, we have eliminated common allergy foods in our menu. In the event, your child is allergic to the lunch served, parents should provide lunch using the guidelines above.

Since snacks and lunch are served, children should not bring food, snacks or gum unless arrangements have been made for special events or birthday parties. In such a case, food must be store-bought or prepared in a kitchen inspected by local health officials.

WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL

We ask that each child have a school bag large enough to carry school work and a change of clothes. Children may also bring a small blanket to be used at nap time. Please label all items.

Parents of **infants** (six weeks to one year) are required to provide an adequate supply of diapers. For children who are using cloth diapers, parents must provide disposable plastic bags for soiled diapers.

Bags must be removed daily and replenished the following day. Each child should have at least two changes of clothing and appropriate outdoor wear. Additional items include: personal blankets, bibs, bottles (water pre-measured, but not mixed), formula, and special feeding implements such as spoons and cups.

Parents of **toddlers** (1-2 years) must provide an adequate supply of diapers for any child not yet toilet trained. Parents should also provide two complete changes of clothing and appropriate outdoor wear. Two clean sippy cups should be provided daily with the child's full name written on the cup. They will be sent home at the end of each day.

Parents of **preschoolers** (3-5 years) should provide a change of clothing, and appropriate outdoor clothing.

Please label all of your child's clothing to avoid confusion and dress children in play clothes suitable for the weather. Recognize that when children play, they get dirty. Please provide us with one set of extra clothes in the event a change is required.

In order for children not to be disappointed with a broken or lost toy, we prefer they use the toys we provide. Please leave all toys at home. The school cannot be responsible for lost or broken toys, books, bracelets, etc.

SHOW & TELL

Show and Tell is a wonderful learning experience for all involved. This is a great opportunity for your child to get up in front of a group and talk with confidence about something he/she is comfortable.

Show and Tell is scheduled on Fridays during the school year. Please be creative in selecting items related to your child's weekly curriculum to enhance your child's learning process. These objects will be stored in the child's cubby until it is time to use them. Children are not permitted to bring in any toys associated with violence including guns, knives, or swords.

DRESS CODE

All children should wear completely washable play clothing for their comfort and your convenience.

- Children (toddlers-school age) are required to wear our Children's Academy school shirts
- All children must wear socks and close-toed shoes for safety
- Jewelry, such as bracelets, necklaces and dangling earrings should not be worn

Parents may be contacted to provide appropriate clothing as necessary.

REST TIMES

Quiet time is important for a child's health and well being. Such time also allows a child to "reenergize" and develop self-control. To that end, we employ the following "schedule":

- **Infants** (as per their requirements) will rest during the day, but not so much as to cause a disruptive night sleep cycle. All infants sleep in cribs.
- **Toddlers (1-2 years)** will nap and/or rest from approximately 11:30-1:45 p.m. each day. We encourage you to supply your child with a favorite toy or blanky for this time. It has a wonderfully comforting effect.
- **Preschoolers (3-4 years)** will nap/or rest from approximately 12:00-1:45 p.m. each day.
- **VPK (4-5 years)** will nap/or rest from approximately 1:00-2:00 p.m. each day.

The school supplies a mat and mat cover for all children. They are reserved exclusively for your child. We wash the covers weekly and disinfect the mats on a monthly basis. Parents must provide a sheet or blanket for cover which will be sent home each Friday for laundering, to be returned on Monday.

TOILET TRAINING

We are happy to partner with parents in the toilet training process. We feel there is a window of opportunity that comes at approximately 2 1/2 years of age when children can communicate their needs, exhibit self control and pull their bottoms up and down independently. We try to maximize this opportunity. Please let us know what techniques you are using at home and we will employ the same at school focusing on positive reinforcement (e.g., praise and gold stars).

INCLEMENT WEATHER

The school will follow Hillsborough County School authorities' decisions for school closings. We ask that you contact the school to ensure it is open during inclement weather/natural disaster.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The school has an emergency response plan in place with specific details defining how to respond in emergencies. This document is available for parents to review and is located in the Director's office. In all emergencies, parents will be contacted after the appropriate authorities have been summoned. Staff members are First Aid and CPR certified and prepared to handle an emergency.

DISCIPLINE

Our programs and environment are designed to keep children actively and constructively involved. Still there will be times when a child will need to be disciplined. Many times this will require redirection, a re-statement of the rules, a discussion of the situation or an appropriate time away from other children.

Discipline will never include corporal punishment or any restrictions on food and drinks. Above all, the child will not feel humiliated or lose respect and dignity as an individual.

Through clearly stated rules, a sense of fairness and respect, the child will learn to respect others as well as the environment. Our daily or weekly reports will inform parents on the child's social and emotional growth in the group, as well as individually. If the situation requires it, the parent will be contacted immediately to discuss a specific problem. This communication and cooperation between parents and school will further give the child a sense of consistency and fairness.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Children's Academy is committed to working in partnership with families. We strongly encourage them to participate in every aspect of their child's program. Parents and family members are welcome to visit the school at any time and are encouraged to contribute to or be involved in their child's classroom activities. Teachers will periodically offer special invitations to classroom activities or events, but parents and family members (including grandparents, aunts or uncles) are invited to be involved in their child's classroom routines as well (i.e. reading a story, assisting with learning center activities or art experiences). We are especially happy to welcome you on field trip adventures! Parents are also encouraged to share family interests, cultural background, hobbies, talents, etc., as this provides a valuable addition to our curriculum.

It is vitally important that you as parents/guardians communicate your needs and desires regarding your child's development openly and honestly with your child's teachers. You are encouraged to discuss any developmental milestones you have encountered and share any other information that may be appropriate.

- A. **Parent Conferences** - Parents are asked to participate in two scheduled conferences with their child's teacher per year. Information concerning this will be communicated in advance of the scheduled conference dates.
- B. **Home/School** - Parents need to communicate pertinent information with the school. This should include such things as illnesses, change in sleeping, change in eating, teething, and so forth.
- C. **Donations** - As your child develops mentally and physically, please consider whether books, toys or outgrown clothes may be appropriate for use in our school.
- D. **Parent Concerns** - If you have any problem or concern about our operation or your child's progress, please contact the Director immediately. Your concern is our concern.

FIELD TRIPS

Please review the monthly calendar for a schedule of field trips. Field trips are an important part of our program and supplement our classroom learning. Parents are welcome to join us at no cost and may be asked to help supervise some of the children. Parents wishing to bring additional children on field trips must provide their own transportation and pay applicable entrance fees.

COMMUNICATON

Children's Academy utilizes multiple avenues to communicate with families. Please take advantage of our website, monthly calendar, weekly/daily reports, bulletin board and other communication methods. These tools are designed to keep you informed and answer any questions you may have. If you still have questions or concerns, please feel free to direct them to your child's teacher or the Director. If needed, you are always welcome to speak to the Director in private. We will work with you to ensure we can appropriately resolve any concerns.

WITHDRAWAL OR DISMISSAL

Parents who choose to withdraw their child from enrollment should provide the Director two weeks notice.

In certain circumstances, it may be necessary for the Director to decide to discontinue a child's attendance. Such a decision would be based on whether it is in the best interest of that child. Every effort will be made to correct a problematic situation before a final decision is made. The school will follow non-discrimination practices when deciding to dismiss a child from enrollment. Dismissal may be the result of the following:

- Abuse of other children, staff or property
- Disruptive or dangerous behavior
- The center's inability to meet the child's needs