



# Parent Handbook

Policies and Procedures

02/07,03/10,02/13,06/16,02/19,03/20,08/21

## WELCOME

Welcome to First Start Learning Academy. Within this parent handbook, you will find an explanation of policies, procedures, parent responsibilities and our philosophy of meeting the needs of the children and families we serve. Our policies have been created with consideration of all children and families, regardless of race, sex, ethnic background, or religious preference.

## PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy: Training Your Child in The Way He Should Go and When They Are Old He Will Not Depart. Proverbs 22:6

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of First Start Learning Academy is to provide an educational program that enables each child to achieve full social, emotional, and academic success in a safe, nurturing

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environment. Our goal is to give each child the goals necessary to begin his/her educational journey. The center's objective is to provide each child with a plan to participate in a challenging educational environment where learning is fun. We also pray before all meals, read bible stories, sing biblical songs, and do devotions to teach the kids that God is First.

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## ADMISSION

### Admission to First Start Learning Academy

1. Hours of Operation: First Start Learning Academy is open year-round, Monday- Friday, from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm.

The center is closed for major holidays. First Start Learning Academy will reserve the right to open with the first scheduled child and close with the last scheduled child's departure. A posting will accompany opening times that differ from 6:00 am or 6:00 pm.

2. Any child six weeks through twelve years of age may enroll at First Start Learning Academy. First Start Learning Academy has a licensed capacity of 136 children.
3. All children are welcome into our program regardless of race, sex, handicap, color, national origin, or age. The child must be emotionally capable of participating in an all-day program.

Children with special physical or emotional needs will be accepted if the program is determined to be in the child's best interest, and/or if the child does not require an inordinate amount of staff time that would detract from other childcare, in accordance with Title III of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act).

Each child will be enrolled on a 30-day trial basis to assure a happy adjustment for all concerned. If the First Start Learning Academy staff and administration determine at any time that placement is inappropriate, the child will be dismissed. A child may be discharged from the center for reasons such as, but not limited to:

- Failure to pay fees on time (grounds for immediate termination, without advance notice).
- Lack of parental cooperation.
- Inability of childcare program to meet the needs of the child. Staff will consult with the parent concerning how any problems might be solved before ending the care arrangement. The parent will be referred to other community resources.
- Repeated failure to pick up the child at the scheduled time.
- Failure to complete and return required forms.
- Failure to comply with the terms of the childcare contract.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

All of the forms and information contained in your child's file, as well as other personal information about your child, whether written documents, or First Start Learning Academy employee observations and perceptions, is confidential information and will be accessible only to the parent(s), legal guardian or custodian, Administrator, child care employees (on a need to know First Start Learning Academy Parent Handbook), State Licensing Examiner, who is designated by the state licensing department (hereafter "Department") to review our records for licensing purposes, and a county department of health and family services or licensed child welfare agency. Information will not be given to others without the consent of at least one parent.

Upon request, a parent, or legal custodian has access to all records and reports maintained on his or her child and may obtain further information regarding the child's progress with an appropriate First Start Learning Academy employee in the presence of the First Start Learning Academy Director or other designated First Start Learning Academy official. Any parent, legal guardian or legal custodian or person or agency authorized in writing by the parent, requesting to review a child's file may contact the Administrator for an appointment to view the records or meet with the appropriate First Start Learning Academy employee as set forth herein. Such records and information shall be provided to the parent within a reasonable time, not to exceed three (3) working days. If First Start Learning Academy has not already confirmed the identity and status of the person requesting the information, such identification shall be presented to First Start Learning Academy prior to any records or other information being provided.

First Start Learning Academy shall permit parents, legal guardians, or legal custodians to visit and observe their child's class at any time during First Start Learning Academy hours of operation, unless access is prohibited or restricted by court order. A copy of such court order must be on file with First Start Learning Academy. First Start Learning Academy shall make opportunities available at least twice each year for parents, legal guardians, or legal custodian communication with First Start Learning Academy staff regarding the child's adjustment to the First Start Learning Academy and the child's growth and development.

All records required by the Department for licensing purposes are available to the appropriate licensing representative and those agencies authorized above. Any original paper record may not be removed from the premises of First Start Learning Academy, except in response to a court order or subpoena specifically requesting such document. A charge of \$0.25 per page for photocopies of your child's records will be payable at the time of the request.

## OBSERVATION & SUPERVISION

Upon arrival, each child shall be observed by a staff member for symptoms of illness. Any evidence of unusual bruises, cuts, or burns shall be noted in the Marks report and reported immediately to the Administrator. Food allergies and other allergies of specific children shall be made known to the Administrator, staff members, and substitutes having direct contact with these children. A screening of temperature and questions will be checked and documented. Parents, guardians, or legal custodians are required to let staff know if anyone has been in contact with Covid

## ADULT SUPERVISION

Supervision is a key factor in providing safe environments both indoors and outdoors, including on-campus and off campus, land and/or water activities for children in attendance at First Start Learning Academy. Staff supervision will include:

- A. Display awareness - a skill that requires a knowledge of children, including knowing each child's range of skills, interests, ability to interact with others and developmental stage. Knowledge of children helps teachers to monitor and enhance skills that promote children's positive behavior.
- B. Implement positioning - a skill that requires being able to see all the children. Staff position themselves to be aware of the entire environment and to see as many children as possible. All children are always monitored by sight and sound.
- C. Implement scanning - a skill that involves regularly glancing around the classroom and playground to see children's involvement and what is happening.
- D. Use redirection - a skill used as an aid in preventing undesirable and unsafe behavior. Children are redirected to other areas/activities when undesirable behavior is imminent or occurs. This technique helps ensure the safety of all children.
- E. Provide supervision for all children in areas that are near equipment where injury may occur requires the use of the above methods and being in close proximity to the children. Children waiting to be picked up due to illness or injury are kept safe, comfortable, and under close supervision.
- F. Implement quality interactions – staff will engage in meaningful interactions with children to promote learning during play and routine times.
- G. Implement consistent supervision strategies and not perform other duties while responsible for the supervision of children.
- H. Be aware of the importance of communicating with each other about their location within the environment.

## REGISTRATION INFORMATION

A registration form and contract must be signed and completed. An up-date immunization record must be on file in the office within 10 days of enrollment. Registration fees are NON-Refundable, regardless of reason or whether the child attended the center or not.

Weekly Tuition 6weeks-18 months \$115.00

18mths-3 \$105.00

3-5 years \$95.00

6-12 year \$65.00

### Other Fees

#### Registration Fee (PER CHILD)

One Time Only, Upon Enrollment -\$50.00

Tuition Late Fee-	\$10.00 per day after 6:00p,
Non-Complaint Wipes Fee*	\$10.00 per month
Late Pick-Up	\$1.00 per minute after 6:00pm

\*Non-Compliant Wipes fees are charged to only those who fail to bring wipes to your child's teacher by the due date designated by the teacher. Fees are nonnegotiable.

## HOLIDAY CLOSING:

Tuition is due for the following Holidays that First Start Learning Academy is closed. When Holidays land on normal workdays.

New Year's Eve and Day	Thanksgiving Day & after
Martin Luther King Day	Christmas Eve
Memorial Day	Christmas Day
Independence Day	Labor Day

## SNOW DAYS

For the latest information check KVOM or check your local news station KARK 4 at [arkansasmatters.com](http://arkansasmatters.com) KARK 4 for the most up-to-date information. If the weather worsens, we



may have early dismissal. Parents will be notified by phone if this happens. Tuition is due for these days, regardless of attendance.

## ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Please sign your child in and out daily at the front desk. Please consider that nap time is from 12:00 to 2:00pm, when bring your child in for the day, we request that your child arrive by 9:00 am every day. If your child is late, we ask that you call by 9:00am and inform FSLA staff that your child will be late. If your child is not in attendance by 9:00am without calling, we will not accept your child for the day. Maintaining Ratio is very important if you bring your child at an unscheduled time without prior approval you will be asked to wait if it put the center out of ratio compliance.

## RELEASE OF CHILDREN

No child will be released to persons not authorized by a parent or guardian. We must have written authorization of changes in pick up. If we have any doubt that the person picking up your child has not been authorized by a parent or guardian, we will not release the child until we contact you.

## HEALTH AND MEDICATION POLICY

### **Health Policy**

The Arkansas State Licensing requires that we keep the official current immunization record up-to-date and on file.

Your child will be isolated from the other children and sent home if he/she display any of the following symptoms below. Children must be free of these symptoms for 24 hours before they can return to the center- no exceptions. This is a State Regulation stated in Arkansas Minimum Licensing Handbook.

1. No child or staff shall be admitted who has a contagious or infectious disease.
2. The parent or legal guardian shall be notified as soon as possible when a child has any symptom that requires exclusion from the facility. The child shall be separated from other children and closely monitored until the parent arrives to pick the child up.

3. 3. The caregiver shall determine if the illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities, results in a greater need for care than the childcare staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children or poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others. The caregiver shall temporarily exclude the child from childcare if the child has:
- a. Sudden change in behavior, such as:
    - lethargy or lack of responsiveness.
    - unexplained irritability or persistent crying.
    - difficult breathing.
    - a quickly spreading rash.
  - b. Fever over one hundred and one (101) degrees oral or one hundred (100) axillary (or equivalent method) in a child who also has pain, behavior changes, or other symptoms of illness.
    - An infant younger than two (2) months with any increased temperature shall get urgent medical attention, within an hour.
    - An infant younger than six (6) months with any increased temperature shall be medically evaluated.
  - c. Diarrhea, defined as watery and runny stools if frequency exceeds two (2) or more stools above normal for that child, and is not related to a change in diet or medication (Exclusion from childcare is required if diarrhea cannot be contained in the diaper or if diarrhea is causing soiled clothing in toilet-trained children);
  - d. Blood or mucus in stools (unless caused by hard stools);
  - e. Vomiting illness (two (2) or more episodes of vomiting in the previous twenty-four (24) hours);
  - f. Abdominal pain which lasts more than two (2) hours.
  - g. Mouth sores with drooling.
  - h. Rash with fever or behavior change;
  - i. Conjunctivitis or “pink eye” – with white, yellow, or green eye discharge, and red (“bloodshot”) eyes, exclude only if child has:
    - Fever.
    - eye pain.

- redness or swelling of the skin around the eyes; or
  - if more than one (1) child in the program has symptoms.
- j. Pediculosis (head lice), until after the first treatment.
- k. Active tuberculosis, until a health care provider or health official states that the child is on appropriate therapy and can attend childcare;
- l. Impetigo, until treatment has been started.
- m. Strep throat, until twenty-four (24) hours after antibiotic treatment has been started.
- n. Chicken pox, until all lesions have crusted (usually six (6) days after the rash appears);
- o. Rubella, until six (6) days after onset of rash.
- p. Pertussis (whooping cough); until five (5) days of antibiotic treatment.
- q. Mumps, until five (5) days after onset of gland swelling.
- r. Measles, until four (4) days after onset of rash; and
- s. Hepatitis A, until one (1) week after onset of illness or as directed by the health 45 department.

## FOOD ALLERGY POLICY

When a child with an identified food allergy enrolls/attends First Start Learning, the Administrator will provide the family with the Food Allergy Action Plan to be filled out by the child's health care provider. This action plan must be filled out and returned to the Administrator.

Based on the child's Food Allergy Action Plan, caregivers will receive training and put into practice:

- Preventing exposure to specific food(s) that triggers allergy
- Recognize symptoms of allergic reaction
- Treating allergic reaction
- Parents and staff shall arrange for setting to have appropriate medication (if necessary) on site, proper storage of medication, equipment, and training to use while in childcare

The child's assigned teacher(s) will promptly take proper steps outlined in Action Plan if a reaction occurs in childcare.

- They will notify emergency medical personnel if epinephrine has been given.
- They will notify parents of any allergic reaction or possible contact with food that may cause an allergic reaction.
- They will take the Action Plan and medication during outside play or walks.

Individual child's food allergies will be posted prominently in classroom and/or wherever food is prepared (care will be given to confidentiality issues).

Staff are not authorized to transport children in a medical emergency.

## LOCATING A MISSING CHILD

All teachers, aides, and adults, in the First Start Learning Academy building will be questioned as to the last sight of the missing child. The Administrator and a designated staff person will search the building and the outside premises. If the child is not located after 5 minutes, 911 will be called and the parents/guardians will be contacted.

## TOILET LEARNING

First Start Learning Academy will work cooperatively with you on toilet learning once your child advances to the (18–24-month-old room). When you and your child are ready to begin training, please let your child's teacher know what routine and procedures you wish to have followed. Be sure to bring in extra clothing during this transitional period. Soiled articles will be stored in a plastic bag for parents to take home to launder. We strive to make the transition into undergarments a positive learning experience through the use of encouragement and praise. We request that pull-ups or transitional diapers are not used, as they inhibit the child's natural response to wetness. Toilet Learning is a cooperative effort between parents and staff. If it is determined that follow-through and/or progress is not moving forward, toilet learning may be halted by the Administrator. Consistency is important for the child during this learning period

## CULTURAL AND ETHNICAL DIVERSITY

First Start Learning Academy staff strives to provide the children with a wide range of cultural and ethnical diversity. We provide this by the use of items such as toys, equipment, books, songs, and posters. We stress to the children that we are all unique and special. Parents are welcome to share information. First Start Learning Academy does not provide specific religious training We do read and discuss about God.

## BIRTHDAYS AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Unless your child is on a restricted diet, please do not send food with your child. Snacks from home will only be allowed on certain occasions such as birthdays or special occasions where the entire class can be supervised. Snacks should be nutritious and age appropriate. This is a safety precaution against choking, and for proper nutrition. If your child is celebrating a birthday, parents may send a treat for the child's group or center. In regard to allergies or special diet requirements, treats will not be distributed to children unless they have met prior approval from the center. First Start Learning Academy is a nut free campus.

## REST/NAP TIME

In compliance with State regulations, children under 5 years of age in care for more than 4 hours shall have a nap or rest period. Childcare workers shall permit a child who does not sleep after 30 minutes and a child who awakens to have quiet time through the use of equipment or activities which will not disturb other children. The children do not have to sleep but are encouraged to lie quietly. Children over the age of one are required to lay on a cot provided during nap time, children under one year old will sleep in cribs. A pillow, blankets, comfort item, etc., are permitted during nap time, but must remain in your child's cubby at all other times. All children have assigned cot's that are labeled with his/her number.

## SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME

In order to reduce the risks of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) all employees and volunteers working at First Start Learning Academy with children receive training on the steps taken to reduce SIDS prior to working with children. To reduce the risk of SIDS, staff will do the following steps:

Children under one year of age:

- Child will be placed to sleep on his/her back in a crib unless the child's physician authorizes another position in writing.
- Child will not sleep in a crib or playpen that contains materials such as sheepskins, pillows, fluffy blankets, bumper pads, or stuffed animals.

Children under two years of age:

- Cots shall contain a tight-fitting sheet covering shall fit snugly over the cot.

## SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME

Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Training (SBS) is required for all employees and volunteers prior to beginning employment with First Start Learning Academy.

Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) occurs when an infant or young child is violently shaken. The shaking may only last a few seconds, but it can cause severe brain damage and even death. The neck muscles in a baby or young child are underdeveloped and weak and are unable to support the baby's large head. When a child is violently shaken, the brain bounces back and forth inside the skull, tearing blood vessels and causing damage to the brain. Have a plan to cope with your baby's crying. Crying is how babies communicate their need of hunger, attention, discomfort, frustration, sleepiness, boredom, or sickness. Have a plan to reduce your stress. Proper diet, exercise, and rest, along with a good support system will help minimize stress levels. Stepping away from the situation briefly while your child is talking with everyone that cares for your baby and making sure they know the dangers of shaking a baby. Tell them how to cope with your baby when he/she cries. And remember to ask for help when you feel frustrated or need a break. Never shake your baby. Child Abuse or Neglect Any staff member or employee who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected, as defined in Minimum Licensing Requirement, shall immediately take steps to notify the county welfare agency, or local law enforcement agency in compliance with Minimum Licensing Requirement. It is requested that staff members inform the Administrator and/or Program Director about the incident to ensure good communication. Staff members will log all suspected signs in the medical logbooks.

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Our teachers are required by state law to report suspected child abuse/maltreatment. This includes non-accidental injuries, such as welts, bruises, cuts, burns, scratches, and broken bones.

Suspected sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect are also reported. Child neglect is defined as abandonment, lack of food, utilities, shelter, or lack of supervision.

Teachers are trained to recognize indicators of possible abuse. If they fail to report suspected abuse/maltreatment, teachers can be charged with a Class C misdemeanor. Reports are confidential and are considered allegations until an investigation is completed. The phone number for the Child Abuse Hotline is posted on the parent bulletin board near the sign-in sheet.

## INTERVIEWS BY DHS AND OTHER AGENCIES

Any staff member or children in attendance may be interviewed by Child Care Licensing, by the Division of Child and Family Services, and/or by law enforcement officers for the purpose of investigations or to determine compliance with licensing requirements. Child interviews do not require parental notice or consent.

## SUNSCREEN POLICY

Parents will provide sunscreen protection with SPF 30 or higher for the child in attendance at First Start Learning Academy with a signed written permission form. Parents may choose to provide their own brand of sunscreen protection with a signed permission form. This authorization will be kept on file. Specific information regarding the product will be listed on your child's health history form.

## EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN FIRE

If a fire breaks out, the smoke detectors emit an alarm signal. When the alarm is sounded, children have been instructed to stop what they are doing and meet the teacher for guidance to the nearest emergency exit. The teachers will take their tablets which have attendance sheets and the emergency information on them prior to. Teachers and children will exit single file to the nearest exit. Maps of the most efficient fire exit routes are posted in each room. All staff members will be oriented in the designated fire exit procedure from each location. Fire drills will be practiced with both exit strategies to help prepare staff in case of a real emergency. Children will remain as a group with their assigned teacher as they exit the building. The teacher's attendance sheets will be used to account for each child present by name and sight. Once all children are accounted for outside the building, the group will advance to the gated area at 318 N. Chestnut. The children will not re-enter the building without the proper approval from the fire department. First Start Learning Academy staff will call the parents of the children.

## TORNADO

When the alert monitor is sounded and tornado warning issued, Administration will alert all rooms. Teachers and children will move single file to the following areas:

Infant/ Toddler: ..... Kids  
bathroom hallway  
Preschool: ..... East bathroom in hallway  
School Age ..... Wall in their room, overflow to hallway with a staff member.  
PreK: ..... Staff Bathroom, overflow to hallway.  
School Age: .....To Kitchen, overflow to hallway with a staff  
member.

The children will assume the tornado drill position (crouched, arms covering heads). The teacher's attendance sheets/emergency information will be used to account for each child present by name and sight.

The internet or radio will remain tuned to the local station to receive storm or tornado watches or warnings. Flashlights are available in each room. The contact person(s) in case of an emergency is the Administrator and/or Assistant all attempts to provide timely information will be a priority. In the event that First Start Learning Academy was destroyed by a tornado, staff and children will evacuate to Morrilton High School or 201 W. Church Parents will then be contacted and told where to pick up their child/children. It will also be announced on KVOM and KARK 4.

#### SEVERE WEATHER

Inclement weather usually does not close the center. The center may remain open if schools in the area close for the day. Parents will be notified through radio announcements on Kvom if the center closes because of weather conditions. Please contact the center if you need assistance.

#### NO HEAT, NO WATER

National Emergency In the event that First Start Learning academy was to lose water and/or heat, First Start Learning Academy will contact the proper agency to gather information about the problem and/or length of time the center may be without heat or water. If the problem cannot be rectified within an hour, parents will be notified to pick-up your child. If there is a National Emergency or bomb threat or gas leak or other threat to the building, staff and children will evacuate to Morrilton High School. Parents will then be contacted and told where to pick up their children. It will also be announced on KVOM and KARK4. The contact person(s) in case of an emergency is the Administrator and/or assistant all attempts to provide timely information will be a priority.

#### DAILY ROUTINE AND DRESS

Hand-Washing Procedures Handwashing, when done correctly, is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Good hand-washing technique is easy to learn and can significantly reduce the spread of infectious diseases among both children and adults. Proper hand-washing techniques are posted by each hand-washing station. Children are assisted and supervised during hand-washing times. Adults are expected to wash their hands when entering a classroom. First Start Learning Academy.

#### INFANTS AND TODDLER ROUTINE

Each child shall be allowed to form and follow the child's own pattern of sleeping and waking periods. Emphasis in activities shall be given to play as a learning and growth experience.



Throughout the day, each infant and toddler shall be held, rocked, talked to, sung to, and taken on walks inside and outside the center. Routines such as bedtime, feeding, cleanliness, and diapering shall be used as opportunities for language development and other learning experience. While a non-walking child is awake, the child's position and location shall be changed several times. For infants and toddlers, a daily care report is recorded on the PDF filler App regarding feedings, nap times, diaper changes, and other information. Food and formula brought from home shall be labeled with the child's name and dated. Drinking water shall be offered to the infant and toddler several times daily. A child unable to hold a bottle shall be held whenever a bottle is given. Commercial baby food containers that are opened in the center, shall be covered, dated, and refrigerated. If not used within 24 hours, leftover food shall be discarded. A child too young to sit in a highchair or feeding table shall be held or placed in an infant seat while being fed. Infants shall be encouraged to experiment with self-feeding with hand and spoons. Eating utensils and cups shall be scaled to the size and developmental level of the infants and toddlers. The application of lotions, powders, or salves to the child during diapering may be done only at the specific written directions of the parent or physician. These directions shall be recorded and in the child's file and posted in the diapering area in accordance with HIPPA requirements. Wet or soiled clothes, blankets, and sleeping bags will be placed in a plastic bag and sent home with the child. Proper diapering procedures are posted near each diapering station. Staff review procedures and are expected to follow the steps outlined.

#### AGE-APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES

Developmentally appropriate programs are both age appropriate and individually appropriate. Programs designated for a specific age group are based on the knowledge of how children learn, with attention to the needs and differences of the individual child. Lesson plans are based on motor skills, cognitive, social emotional and language developments, art, science, and math exploration. Children are taken outdoors every day, except inclement weather such as excess heat (90° or higher) or cold (20° under 2 years or 0° age 2 and older). Other weather factors may be considered, however please send appropriate clothing each day. We have many sand toys, trucks, and large climbing activities. There is a flexible balance of indoor/outdoor, active/quiet, and group/individual participation.

#### SUGGESTED DRESS / ATTIRE

Children should dress comfortably, simply, and suitably for the weather. We do engage in a number of "messy" activities that, despite smocks, clothes can get dirty. We do not inhibit the children unnecessarily, so we ask you to send them in comfortable clothes that they can play in without hesitation. Remember also that children will be playing outdoors, so be sure their clothing is sturdy and durable. Dress in layers on cold days! An extra set of clothing (well labeled)

including underwear, socks, pants, and shirt should be available at the center in case of accidents. An extra sweater or jacket at school is also recommended since the temperature often changes noticeably. Proper shoes are to be worn comprised of closed-toe, clean, and in good repair that are appropriate for walking and running.

**\*\*\*LABEL ALL CLOTHING PROMINENTLY WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME. \*\*\***

Parents will be asked to provide the following:

- ❖ bottles, formula, and baby food (if you choose not to accept center provided formula/food)
- ❖ diapers and baby wipes
- ❖ appropriate attire for outdoor activities for each day
- ❖ an extra set of clothing, including underwear and socks

First Start Learning Academy does not substitute center diapers/wipes for any child that is out of diapers/wipes. Some children have experienced sensitivity to certain brands of diapers/wipes. On occasion we have had a supply of diapers/wipes left from an existing family, however that supply cannot be reliable and/or guaranteed that no allergic reaction will result.

Parents will be notified in writing and verbally at pick-up times concerning the “stock” of their child’s diapers/wipes. Parents are responsible for always maintaining an adequate supply. If a child is out of diapers/wipes, and needs a diaper change, the child will be changed promptly, and the parent will be contacted to either deliver diapers/wipes at that point or pick-up their child. Please plan accordingly.

Also, if there is a discrepancy regarding diaper usage and diaper changes recorded on your child’s PDFfiller page, please bring that to the attention of your teacher or Administrator immediately. It is the responsibility of First Start Learning Academy staff to properly record all diaper changes.

## PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Children are welcome to bring things from home to share at show and tell times. However, the center cannot assume responsibility for loss or damage to these items. Parents are asked to help the child understand that it is not wise to bring toys that he/she may not want to share. There may be certain times when your child has something special to show on a certain day. Please talk

to your child's teacher before doing so. First Start Learning Academy reserves the right to restrict items if they cause distractions and/or issues in the classroom.

Children's clothing looks very much alike, and it is very important that you clearly mark all clothing with your child's full name. Please be sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather for outside play time. An extra set of clothing is helpful to have in your child's cubby.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

### INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE PROGRAM

First Start Learning Academy is designed for children six weeks through twelve years of age. The children are cared for through programs designed to provide for developmentally appropriate care and learning experiences.

A positive experience is the result of careful attention to the child's physical environment, to the activities available, and to the ways teachers interact with the child. The physical environment is structured to encourage experimentation, exploration, and expression by providing daily opportunity for active and quiet activities, group and individual activities, and indoor and outdoor activities. In providing these opportunities, the child will be allowed time for free selection, be protected from fatigue and over stimulation, and be given the freedom to progress at his/her own rate. In promoting the above opportunities, examples of activities that will be incorporated into the daily schedule are self-esteem and positive self-image, social interaction, self-expression, large and small muscle growth, and intellectual growth. This growth will be assisted by trained staff using a variety of preschool curricula.

Our childcare program is designed for children's growth and development. It includes programs and activities to help children develop socially, creatively, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. Each child's development is recorded and shared with the parents during conferences and when requested by parents.

All children regardless of race, sex, handicap, color, national origin, religion, or age are welcomed. The child must be emotionally capable for participation in an all-day program. Children with special physical or emotional needs will be accepted if the program is determined to be in the child's best interest, and/or if the child does not require an inordinate amount of staff time that would detract from other childcare.

### CURRICULUM AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

First Start Learning Academy curriculum is based on Teaching Strategies Fun shine and Creative Curriculum, which supports Arkansas Early Learning Standards (AELS). Teachers receive on-going

training process pertaining to child development and education. Portfolios which include quarterly assessments, goal setting, individualized activities, observation, and reassessments are part of the high-quality learning care offered to all families. Information about your child's development will be shared on a regular basis through parent-teacher conferences, by appointment, during pick-up/drop-off and in your child's mailbox. Please talk to your child's teacher if you would like more information.

## INFANT AND TODDLER PROGRAMS

Infant/Toddler Program is designed for children two weeks to 36 months. Infants develop and learn at their own rate, but they need an environment that allows them to practice these skills. Care is taken in choosing equipment and planning curriculum to provide a wide variety of activities and experiences for your child designed to meet his/her physical, emotional, social, and intellectual needs. Our program individualizes care for the basic needs of an infant like eating, changing, and sleeping, as well as, encouraging development such as crawling, walking, rolling over, sitting up, and communicating. The teachers plan activities based on the child's needs and abilities. Other activities include singing, reading stories, playing peek-a-boo, and rolling a ball.

First Start Learning Academy providing care and supervision to infants and toddlers shall comply with the additional requirements of this section:

Prior to admission, an interview shall be conducted with a child's parent/guardian to obtain written information which will aid childcare workers in individualizing the program of care for the child. Information shall include all the following (which is included in the Intake for Child Under 2 Years form):

1. Schedule of meals and feeding.
2. Types of food introduced and timetable for new foods.
3. Toileting and diapering procedures.
4. Sleep and nap schedule.
5. The child's way of communicating and being comforted.
6. Developmental and health history.

Admission information for an infant or toddler shall be on file in the room or area to which the child is assigned and shall be known to the childcare worker. Childcare workers shall document changes in a child's development and routines every 3 months based on discussion with the parent. Each infant and toddler shall be cared for by a regularly assigned childcare worker in a specific self-contained room or area. Infants and toddlers may not be transferred to the care of

another childcare worker or another group or room in order to adjust group sizes or staff-to-child ratios, except under one of the following circumstances:

1. During the first 2 hours and the last 2 hours of center operation.

2. When the number of children in a group is one or 2 children to one childcare worker. First Start Learning Academy staff is in compliance with DCF 702(1) feeding code regarding infant care. First Start Learning Academy offers in accordance with licensing code and state nutrition guidelines; Parents Choice Milk Based Infant Formula, Rice and Oatmeal Baby Cereals, and pureed fruits and vegetables. Parents must complete an Infant Meal Notification Letter and Intake for Child Under 2 Years. These forms will provide staff with information specific for each child feeding and care.

### PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS (3 PREK AND 4 PREK)

First Start Learning Academy Preschool Program is designed to promote skills associated with socializing, structuring, and transitioning. The Preschool Program is purposely flexible so each child may grow and develop at his or her own pace. Care is taken in choosing equipment and planning curriculum to provide a wide variety of activities and experiences for your child designed to meet his/her physical, emotional, social, and intellectual needs. Trained staff will introduce your child to structured environments, workstations, name recognition, color awareness, geometrical shapes, and phonics. A child centered learning process respects individual differences and fosters self-motivation. Educational curriculum and learning environments are available Monday – Friday to meet all your child’s needs.

### SCHOOL AGE PROGRAMS

#### **First Start Learning Academy Before/After School Programs**

The Before School Program is designed for children who are in school all day and need a secure environment before school hours, 6:00 a.m. to 7:45 a.m., while their parents are at work. The children will be allowed to relax or play games before the school bus comes to pick them up. All students are supervised boarding the bus. The After School Program is designed for children who are in school all day and need a secure environment after school hours. The After-School Program provides childcare from 3:30p.m. to 600 p.m., Monday through Friday, only on the days school is in session. Homework assistance is offered from 3:30 – 5:00 pm Monday –Thursday, with free choice options available after homework is completed.

# FACILITY POLICY AND INFORMATION

## Where Parents can find Information

- Website ([firststartlearningacademy.com](http://firststartlearningacademy.com)) has information about the center, programs, handbooks, enrollment, pricing, and much more. Please take the time to check out this resource.
- Email ([firststart@405gmail.com](mailto:firststart@405gmail.com)) is used to submit schedule updates, weekly account information, and to communicate with the Administrator/Director.
- Classrooms provide access to the Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers Parent Handbook, and Employee Handbook for parents to review. The classroom has great information about your child's daily activities, learning environments, and how your child develops, please take some time to explore this very important part of your child's day.
- Bulletin Boards located in the main entrance of the center have information concerning center wide protocol, lesson planning. Staff can assist you in becoming more familiar with information located on the bulletin boards.
- Children's mailboxes are located near or within your child's room and may have information regarding upcoming events, parent resources, child illnesses, and other important news. Other resources are available upon request.

## OPEN DOOR POLICY

The open-door policy allows parents to visit at any time without notice. We encourage parent participation and involvement in their child's experience. First Start Learning Academy shall permit parents, legal guardians, or legal custodians to visit and observe their child's class at any time during First Start Learning Academy hours of operation, unless access is prohibited or restricted by court order. The staff at First Start Learning Academy work to communicate information about every aspect of your child's day. Information is provided to all parents through the PDFiller App, email, and verbal communication at pick-up or drop-off times. Parent-Teacher Conferences are held twice yearly, and parents are provided written progress report. We welcome opportunities to discuss your child with you and appointments are available upon request. State Licensing Rules for Day Care Centers and First Start Learning Academy policies are available to parents within each room.

## Family Involvement

We encourage families to become involved in the Center. We hope you will visit your child's room and get to know the teachers. Feel free to come in and observe the center at any time. Families are encouraged to visit your child's classroom and share your interests, hobbies and/or work experiences with the classrooms. If you have any items you would like to donate, the teachers would appreciate any items to share with the children. Parent meetings may be called at any time by the teacher, administrator, or parent. Formal parent teacher conferences will be offered twice per year for all parents who wish to discuss their child's development.

We take pride in our communication with our parents and our commitment to children. First Start Learning Academy provides multiple options for parent communication including PDFiller App, email, children's mailboxes located in or near your child's room, newsletters, Teaching Strategies, and daily communication with your child's teacher(s). If you feel your needs are not properly being met, please contact the Administrator. Your input and feedback is what will constantly help us grow and become the best we can for your child/children. Parent surveys are conducted annually to gather parent feedback and improve services. Suggestions are always welcome and may be submitted in the payment/suggestion box located by the office.

## TERMINATION OF ENROLLMENT

A two-week written request to terminate enrollment is required from the parent/guardian and must be submitted to the Administrator. Failure to notify the Administrator may result in further charges including, but not limited to weekly charges and/or late fees. The administration must be notified if a child is to be removed from the center. Any absence exceeding one week without notice shall be considered withdrawal, and another applicant will fill the child's slot. Parents are responsible for incurred day care bills. No notification is needed if a mutual decision between parent and the center has been reached and found that placement is inappropriate. First Start Learning Academy holds the right to dismiss a child from First Start Learning Academy.

Any items left after a family ends enrollment will be held for 2 weeks at the center. Families should contact the Administrator to schedule a time to gather the child's items. Items that remain after 2 weeks will be donated to a nonprofit agency.

## VISITOR POLICY

All visitors are to report to the office. All visitors must have written authorization from a parent/guardian prior to a scheduled visit. All visitors are to report to the office. All visitors must have written authorization from a parent/guardian prior to a scheduled visit. Unscheduled visitors will be detained in the office area while a parent/guardian is contacted. If no contact can be made, the visitor will be asked to leave. Proper identification must be presented upon request.

## STAFF / TEACHER'S EDUCATION

All teachers are qualified to work in Early Childhood Education and are highly qualified individuals. They are required to be certified in CPR and First Aid. Staff will receive training in Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) and Child Abuse/Neglect (CAN). All First Start Learning Academy staff are also required to obtain 25 hours annually of continuing education through classes, seminars, workshops, conferences, and other related early childhood events.

Monthly staff meetings are mandatory. The teachers strive to create a warm, fun-loving

## RETURN WITH ENROLLMENT FORMS PARENT EXPECTATION, ORIENTATION & POLICY REVIEW FORM

It is our number one goal to provide the kind of environment and the kind of influences that encourage all children to become creative, independent, responsible, well rounded, self-directed adults who can make decisions for themselves. Our desire is for excellence in meeting the needs of children and their families for nurturing, growth and development, relationships and understanding. First Start Learning Academy strives to make your orientation & enrollment experience pleasant, informative, and comfortable.

You can look forward to the following prior to making the choice to join our family at First Start Learning Academy

- Tour of the facility
- Introduction to teaching staff
- Visit with the classroom teacher
- Overview of the parent handbook • Overview of the enrollment information, rates, and contract information
- Discussion of child's needs and family expectations
- Overview of family supports and community resources
- Discussion of special circumstances (interpreter, health needs, custody issues, etc.)
- Invitation for extended visitation in the classroom prior to enrollment
- Open Door Policy



I have read the Parent Handbook and understand it is my responsibility to work in partnership with First Start Learning Academy for the care of my child(ren). First Start Learning Academy Parent Acknowledgement I have read this handbook and agree to uphold the policies as stated in the Handbook. I have had the expectations, enrollment, rates, and contract information explained to me. I understand that I can contact the Administrator if I have any further questions.

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for choosing First Start Learning Academy as your childcare provider. Please contact the office if you have any questions regarding the policies or services offered.