



PARENT HANDBOOK

Mission Statement

Our mission at The Academy is to keep each individual infant, toddler or child safe, healthy and happy while promoting age appropriate learning from infancy to school readiness.

We stress total development of each child with active learning and prepare each child to enter kindergarten with keen, well-developed intuitive understanding of learning life lessons both physically and academically.



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Overview

At The Academy for Active Learners, each child continuously develops new skills and curiosities. Our teachers and parents learn from each other, children, environment and experiences, to better enrich the lives of all of our students. The first three years are what Jean Piaget, French developmental psychologist, calls the sensorimotor period, where infants and toddlers learn through sensory exploration. They develop physical and cognitive skills, and learn about people and objects by becoming fully involved with their surroundings.

Our indoor gym is an exceptional way for preschoolers to excel in their gross motor skills by playing on the gym equipment, developing balance, body/spatial awareness, hand/eye coordination and so much more. Each class rotates through the indoor gym daily, with age appropriate gym equipment; infants: soft play structures for climbing/playing, toddlers/preschoolers; play structures, balance beams, games and more! Indoor gym equipment rotates weekly, focusing on different areas, to enable children to build upon skills they are using. We have approximately 100 children daily at the center and pride ourselves on nurturing each individual child. We have ample opportunities for parent involvement including communication daily, bringing in show-n-share items from home, participation in curriculum such as community helpers week, festivities for the holidays, and bringing in special treats or craft projects for the classrooms!

Our outdoor playground is over 10,000 square feet filled with exciting play features! The staff stay engaged with everything from obstacle courses, to sprinkler and water table play in the summer to baby swings!

Child Rights: Each Child must be provided child care services without discrimination to race, age, national origin, religion, disability, sex or family composition. Children must be treated with dignity, consideration and respect in full recognition of their individuality.

Structured Curriculum

Our curriculum, “Creative Curriculum”, is aligned with the State of Maine’s Early Childhood Guidelines. Our teachers mostly provide structure-based activities with goals and objectives clearly stated in their planning to reach each child individually.

We are also inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy, which is an approach to teaching, learning and advocacy for children. In its most basic form, it is a way of observing what children know, are curious about and what challenges them. Teachers record these observations to reflect on developmentally appropriate ways to help children expand their academic and social potentials. Long term projects connect core academic areas in and out of the classroom.

Each month there are cross-curriculum themes with pretend play activities, songs, art projects, role-playing, language arts and reading at the age-appropriate level for each classroom. We assess children daily with informal and formal observations, compiling a

portfolio for the parents to monitor their child's progress over their time at The Academy. We work on fine and gross motor skills at all ages, as well as social development, proper communication and conflict resolution emphasizing being kind. Through positive encouragement and guidance, we assist each child in gaining positive self-esteem, confidence and independence.

Our program provides many benefits including a lower teacher/child ratio than state regulations require, large indoor gym & playground!

Fees & Payment Policy

Hours of Operation: 7am-5:30pm

Parents choose their set schedule for 9 hours of childcare. We do offer extended care (more than 9 hours.) It is available as part of our weekly tuition at a 30% discount (below), or for a \$10/day and must be arranged in advance.

Drop-Off and Pick-Ups:

Families adhere to their set schedules and must email to receive approval of scheduling changes. Late Drop Off: The latest parents in any classroom may drop off is 11am.

**** Early drop-off or Late pick up fee of \$1 per minute will be applied to your invoice****

We rely on kids schedules to determine how many staff need to be present to ensure we are within proper ratio requirements.

Please contact us online for current rates.

We only provide child care for either 4 or 5 days a week.

Non-Refundable Enrollment Fee: \$195/child

Method of Payment & Late Payment Policy: biweekly cash or ACH payments via our online system. Late fee is \$25 per late payment.

**** Please note:** If payment is over one week late \$25 per day will be assessed and the director reserves the right to terminate services immediately.

Annual Increase: The Academy tuition rates incur a 4-5% increase each September.

Release of Children & Approved Pick Up

We often have grandparents and sitters pick up children from the center. Parents are required to complete an approved pick up form so we know who we may release your child to while in our care. We require those on the approved pick up list, to bring their drivers license or photo id so that we may be certain the child is being released to the correct caregiver. We also require parents to inform their child's teacher of any change in pick ups so we are expecting it. If anyone that is not on the approved pick up list ever tried to pick up a child, we would immediately inform that child's parents.

Withdrawal/Termination Policy

During non-vacation months, we require a 2 week withdrawal notice if leaving the center, however 4 week notice is appreciated for planning purposes. For billing purposes, if notice is given in the middle of the week, the following week will begin the notice period since we do not prorate tuition. If a parent is withdrawing their child around the July 4th vacation, we require a 6 week notice and the child's last day may not be two weeks prior to the holiday closure week. If a parent is withdrawing their child/ children in the month of December, for billing purposes, the child's last day may only be after the vacation week.

If more advanced notice is feasible, we would be appreciative.

Payment is, of course, required during this time period and written notice in an email is required to complete to officially withdraw your child.

If the director of The Academy feels that a parent or child is behaving inappropriately towards staff or children and there appears to be no resolution to the situation, the parents may be asked to find alternative child care services, with or without notice.

Infant Classroom

The Ocean Room (6 wks – 12 months)



Young infants thrive on the warmth and caring from a close relationship with parents and caregivers. This security prompts infants to explore and begin to shape their identity. It is important for babies to create bonds with caregivers and for the caregiver to become extremely in sync with the baby's needs.

A baby's brain is a work in progress. The outside world shapes its development through experiences that a child's senses — vision, hearing, smell, touch and taste — absorb. The development of a child's brain holds the key to the child's future. Our teachers use touching, talking, reading, smiling, singing, counting and playing with children will help a child's brain develop and nourishes the child's potential for a lifetime.

Infants are always placed on backs for naps in their individual pack-n-play in our dedicated nap room.

Our teachers provide parents with a daily report on each child's activities throughout the day using our app.

The Academy provides a crib/bassinet for each child.

We ask you to bring the following:

- ✓ crib sheet and sleep sac (we do not swaddle)
- ✓ clean changes of clothing (several that are weather appropriate)
- ✓ diapers and wipes
- ✓ sunscreen, hat, pacifier (as needed)
- ✓ milk (formula or breast milk- enough for each day/week)
- ✓ Pureed foods and finger foods (families provide all food for children under 12 months)

Toddler Classroom

The Farm Room (1 year olds)



Curious, the mobile toddler learns to propel them to explore the environment when they feel secure. Our teachers guide and gently direct our toddlers to explore their surroundings through positive and comforting interactions, activities, and fun play-time. Children in the Farm room are provided with breakfast and snacks.

Parents may choose to have their child participate in our lunch program for an additional fee, or bring in a boxed lunch with cold pack. The Academy provides milk and water for all children during meals and snacks. Our teachers provide parents with a daily report on each child's activities throughout the day using our app.

The Academy provides a pack-n-play or nap mat for each child, breakfast, morning snack and afternoon snack. We do not give bottles in this classroom, sippy cups are used throughout the day.

We ask you to bring the following:

- ✓ crib sheet
- ✓ diapers and wipes
- ✓ several clean changes of clothing (weather appropriate)
- ✓ sunscreen, hat, winter gear to go outside
- ✓ pacifier (as needed)
- ✓ lunch in lunchbox if not participating in Lunch Program (we heat up food as needed)

Skilled Toddler Classroom

The Jungle Room (2 year olds)



“Who am I, and who is in charge?” Although the older, skilled toddlers are asserting their own control and independence, they still need a strong sense of security in order to explore the world with more purpose. Our program provides a nurturing, yet structured environment to promote language development, how to sort out feelings and communicate them in an appropriate manner. Sharing, developing friendships and a love for pretend play are also areas of focus. Toilet training is actively targeted with this age group. We will work with parents and families to provide support for each other to promote success on the road to being diaper free!

Parents may choose to have their child participate in our lunch program for an additional fee, or bring in a boxed lunch with cold pack. The Academy provides milk and water for all children during meals and snacks. Our teachers provide parents with a daily report on each child’s activities throughout the day using our app.

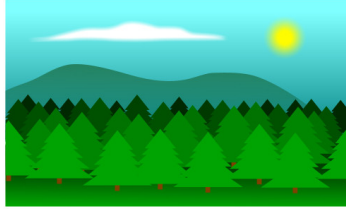
The Academy provides a nap cot for each child, breakfast, morning snack and afternoon snack. We do use open cups and ask you to bring in water bottles as well.

We ask you to bring the following:

- ✓ crib sheet and lovie to help provide comfort while napping
- ✓ diapers and wipes
- ✓ sunscreen, hat, winter gear to go outside, water bottle
- ✓ several clean changes of clothing (weather appropriate)
- ✓ lunch in lunchbox if not participating in Lunch Program (we heat up food as needed)

Early Preschool Classroom

The Forest Room (3 year olds)



As an early preschooler, your child will begin to explore their independence more in a larger classroom environment, with plenty of opportunity for expanding their social skills, vocabulary, team building, caring, all while learning their academics in a fun and exciting manner!

Our teachers are excellent communicators and are always searching for ways to show children how to properly communicate their feelings/needs, to lessen the amount of physical confrontations that may occur, (which are common ways for preschoolers to show their frustration). We believe in using “I statements”; “I’m sad because she took my toy.” We find that repetition and consistency with these statements is helpful for children to express what it is that they may be feeling and why, and then creates a platform for conflict resolution skills to build upon. This creates a greater understanding of how social interactions work and the child gains self-confidence and independence.

Toilet training is in full swing. We will work with parents and families to ensure we support each other to help each child gain confidence and the skills to use the bathroom independently.

Parents may choose to have their child participate in our lunch program for an additional fee, or bring in a boxed lunch with cold pack. The Academy provides milk and water for all children during meals and snacks. Our teachers provide parents with a daily report on each child’s activities throughout the day using our app.

The Academy provides a nap cot for each child, breakfast, morning snack and afternoon snack. We do use open cups and ask you to bring in water bottles as well.

We ask you to bring the following:

- ✓ bedding bag- crib sheet, blanket, small pillow and lovie
- ✓ clean changes of clothing (weather appropriate, a couple changes of clothing)
- ✓ sunscreen, hat, winter gear to go outside, water bottle
- ✓ lunch in lunchbox if not participating in Lunch Program (we heat up food as needed)

Pre-K Classroom

The Town Room (4 - 5 year olds)



Play is an expression of our creativity, and our creativity is at the very root of our ability to learn, to cope and to be whatever we may be. At The Academy, we realize that a child-scaled environment increases children's interest and concentration, and it delays boredom. We provide a safe and encouraging environment for our preschoolers with a classroom arranged with evolving areas within the class. Your child will spend their day actively learning during circle time with songs, fishing for letters, reading books with teachers in the language arts area, playing with water/sand/beans at the sensory tables, at train tables, using manipulative in the creative building/fine-motor area, pretend-play in kitchens and dress-up costumes as firefighters or fairies and so much more!

Children need to be fairly potty-independent to be enrolled in this classroom. This classroom is structured and to provide consistency for the students we ask that children be dropped off before 8:30 if eating breakfast and by 8:45 in order to start their day. Of course we understand appointments come up, but it is helpful for the children if this is consistent.

The Academy provides a nap cot for each child, breakfast and afternoon snack.

We ask you to bring the following:

- ✓ bedding bag- crib sheet, blanket, small pillow and lovie
- ✓ clean changes of clothing (weather appropriate, a couple changes of clothing)
- ✓ lunch in lunchbox if not participating in Lunch Program (we heat up food as needed)
- ✓ sunscreen, hat, winter gear to go outside, water bottle



Holiday Schedule 2023-24

- September 4, 2023 – Labor Day
- October 9, 2023 – Columbus Day
- November 10, 2023 - Veteran's Day
- November 23 & 24, 2023 – Thanksgiving Break
- December 22, 2023- Open 7am-12pm
- December 25-29, 2023– Winter Break
- January 1, 2024 - New Years Day
- January 15, 2024 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- February 19, 2024 – President's Day
- April 15, 2024 – Staff Day/Patriot's Day
- May 27, 2024 – Memorial Day
- July 1- July 5, 2024–Indep. Day/Summer Break
- September 2, 2024 – Labor Day
- October 14, 2024 – Columbus Day
- November 11, 2024 - Veteran's Day
- November 28 & 29, 2024 – Thanksgiving Break
- December 20, 2024- Open 7am-12:30pm
- —Ocean & Town 7:30am-12:30pm / Farm, Forest, Jungle 7am-12pm—
- December 23-27, 2024– Winter Break

No rate or schedule adjustments will be made for the above holidays or personal vacations. These are all paid vacation dates

Health & Illness Policy



We do our best to keep your children healthy while in our care. Unfortunately young children get sick. We do require payment of tuition even when children may be kept home or sent home due to illness. If a child requires prescription or over-the-counter medication, the Medication Permission Form must be completed.

The Department of Health & Human Services regulations prohibit the admittance of any child into a childcare center that exhibits any of the following symptoms:

- **Fever** (100.4°f or higher) –child must be fever free for 24 hours without the aid of medication
- **Diarrhea** –child must be symptom free for 24 hours without the aid of medication (after 3 diarrhea bm's your child will need to be cared for at home)
- **Vomiting** –child must be symptom free for 24 hours without the aid of medication
- **Runny nose** with colored discharge (check with doctor and note returned)
- **Rash** (check with doctor and note returned)
- **Discharge from eyes or ears** (check with doctor and note returned)
- **Lice** –child needs to be treated and nits removed before return
- **Communicable diseases** – covid-19, chicken pox, hand/foot/mouth, influenza, conjunctivitis (pink eye), etc. The child may return when the incubation/quarantine/contagious period has passed and the child is well enough to resume normal childcare activities, accompanied with a doctor's note.

Illness while in our care: if your child becomes ill while at our center, parents and emergency contacts will be called and your child will need to be picked up within the hour. During this time, your child may be cared for outside of their classroom.

Medication: If your child requires medication while here at The Academy, we do need you to provide the prescription label from the physician and a completed medication administration form. The staff are trained and will record any prescriptions administered while in our care.

Emergency- In case of emergency, parents, child's doctor and/or ambulance may be called accordingly. Parents are required to complete the Authorization to Treat Minor form and Child's Physical Health Status form.

****No rate adjustment will be made for sick days****

Meals & Snacks

The Academy provides healthy, nutritious and age-appropriate breakfast and afternoon snacks (including fruit, pancakes, waffles, eggs, cereal, yogurt, apple sauce, vegetables, graham crackers, and milk.) Parents have the choice to provide lunch for their children daily in a lunch box with ice pack or participate in our Healthy Lunch Program for \$25/wk per child. Menus can be provided. We incorporate many vegetable purees in our recipes to sneak more nutrition into their meals.

***If your child has special dietary requirements, we will work with you to meet their needs. If you need to control your child's food intake more closely, feel free to provide breakfast and snack also.*

We have also been recognized as "Gold Standard" by 5-2-1-0 Let's Go Program in Maine!

Nut-Free Facility

Due to increasing amount of food allergies, our center is a nut-free facility; this includes both peanuts and tree nuts. We want to protect any children that may come to The Academy with a severe nut allergy, in order to do this we have to keep any food products that contain or may have been manufactured with nuts out of our building. This is to insure that the oils that come from nuts do not touch any surfaces that a child with a nut allergy may come into contact with. There are a lot of nut-free options out there that kids love!

Playground/Gym Policy

Each classroom will have a minimum of one hour of outside play incorporated into their daily schedule, weather permitting. Our teachers have creatively threaded nature and elements of the outside environment into their curriculum and weekly themes. Not only will our outside play time have a lot of physical activity, but will also create a learning environment where children may be watering their plants or learning more about seasons, insects and weather.

Winter weather/snow days: We do not follow public school closings. Our staff live fairly close-by so that we may be open for parents that do still need to attend work, and we will only close if the main roads are unsafe to drive on. We will play outside when temperature is above 25°F and will remind parents to send in appropriate weather gear, (snow pants, boots, mittens and hats in winter.)

The indoor gym has soft play toys and equipment, targeting different skills and building upon them. Classrooms spend between 30-90 minutes in the gym daily, depending on age group and outside weather. All classrooms will be rotated through the gym twice on

days where the weather does not allow us to go outside. The gym is sanitized in between classroom usage and professionally cleaned each evening.

Parents & Teachers Working Together: **Discipline & Negative Behaviors**

We use praise and create positive redirection as our main form of discipline and guidance, and we also address the unwanted behaviors directly to ensure the children and parents understand which behaviors are not acceptable. Our teachers are excellent communicators and are always searching for ways to show children how to properly communicate their feelings/needs, to lessen the amount of negative or physical confrontations that may occur. We believe in using “I statements”; “I’m sad because she took my toy.” We find that repetition and consistency with these statements is helpful for children to express what it is that they may be feeling and why, and then creates a platform for conflict resolution skills to build. These skills start rather simplistically, and as the child becomes more in tune with their feelings and environment, the “I statements” and the conflict resolution process becomes more complex. We will work with families directly to ensure we are utilizing similar strategies at home and at school so there is consistency in the child’s world.

We do not use any type of physical discipline, corporal punishment, or humiliation as a form of discipline. We approach each situation as a learning opportunity and are committed to doing so in a positive manner. We also encourage and teach sign language in our younger classrooms to assist with communicating their needs when language has not been built yet.

Safety is our primary concern at The Academy. More serious, unwanted behaviors will be handled with close communication between the teachers and the parents/guardians of the child/children involved. Incident reports will be completed as needed and parents will be asked to meet with the Director and staff to discuss behavior modification plans as appropriate. If there are behaviors so extreme and that the child’s behavior is not improving, the parents may be notified with or without two weeks notice, that The Academy may no longer provide care for the student.

Biting: Although biting is commonly seen in young children for many reasons, it is not an acceptable behavior. We will work with families to determine a course of action, which may include using chew/biting toys that the child may carry with them, having a teacher shadow the child that has bitten to ensure that the other children are safe and unharmed again; prevention and early intervention is key.

Directly following an incident, the children will be separated and the child that was bitten will be tended to immediately. Both parents of children involved will be called to notify them of the situation. The teacher and/or director will speak with the parents to discuss a detailed plan of action to eliminate the behavior. Parents may be asked to

come and pick up the child if the behavior is not improving and alternative resources/ educational settings may be discussed to determine the best support and placement for the child. Children may be released from our care if the problem persists.

Additional Information

Staff, Babysitting & Parents Night Out

We believe in hiring on educated and experienced teachers that are committed to the early childhood field. Each classroom has a lead teacher that must obtain a Bachelor's Degree in Education or closely related field, plus 4 years experience with the 0-5 age group. Co-teachers must have completed at least 18 units of continuing ed credits as well as 4 years experience with the 0-5 age group. All of our staff are required to have up-to-date First Aid/CPR Certifications and register with Maine Roads to Quality to track their education and experience on their career path.

In order to keep our parent/teacher relationship on a professional level, we ask parents do not solicit our staff for babysitting or childcare outside of The Academy. We do offer however, "Parents Night Out" once per month for children enrolled at our center only. We will have our staff available at the center on a Friday evening (6-10pm), where we will have fun games and crafts, dinner and a movie before they are picked up. This will be offered on a first come first serve basis and space will be limited.

If you need to communicate with your child's teacher or our director, feel free to speak with us in person, call or email to set up an appointment as needed for more detailed issues. We do provide parents with the ability to download an app on their phones, where staff can communicate with them directly throughout the day. We ask that parents do not contact staff on their personal cell phones or use social networking (such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter) as a form of communication or connection with our staff. Our staff are asked to decline social media invitations from our parents.

Mandated Reporter Policy

The Academy for Active Learners staff are required by Maine law to report any instances of suspected child abuse, neglect or domestic violence. Our first concern is child safety, and if we suspect a child has been subject to abuse, we will file a report to authorities.

The staff member will bring their concerns to the director and discuss the situation and the director will notify the authorities (Department of Health and Human Services and/ or Child Protective Services.) The director may also inform parents when a report is made, except in the case of reporting suspected sexual abuse, in accordance with State of Maine guidelines.

It is important for teachers and staff to document concerns that they have or certain situations that arise with parents and children that seem somewhat out of the ordinary in order to track patterns and/or frequency of incidents. For example, there may be a recurring issue when a certain parent drops-off or picks-up a child, etc. Documenting concerns (even minor), is our only way to track incidents and ensure consistency even amongst teachers and staff. Teachers should always feel free to speak openly with our director regarding any concerns and feel comfortable to report directly if the situation calls for it. We are all here for the safety and well-being of the children.

Alcohol/Substance/Smoking/Firearms Policy

The center prohibits the use of alcohol, the use or possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances, firearms, pellet or BB guns (loaded or unloaded) in the center, parking lot, or on facility grounds.

The facility, buildings and grounds are considered to be “Smoke Free.” Smoking is not allowed in the building, playground or parking lot (including personal vehicles, entrances, or walkways.) Individuals who smoke must do so off the property.

If a parent, guardian or other authorized adult arrives to pick up a child and appears intoxicated or under the influence (exhibits behavior such as slurred/incoherent speech, difficulty walking or other unusual behaviors that may indicate use of drugs and/or alcohol, odors such as alcohol, marijuana, or other substances are noted by staff), the staff may request the parent or guardian seek an alternative form of transportation. The local police will be contacted to intervene if necessary. Safety of our children is our utmost concern.

Registration Check List

- Enrollment Contract Completed/Met with Director
- Basic Release Form
- Authorization to Treat Minor Form
- Physician Health Status Form Sent to Dr
- Immunization Health Records (from Dr)
- Permission to Photograph Form
- Development Form/Getting to Know Your Child
- Parent Handbook Agreement Form Signed
- Emergency Contact Form Completed
- Brightwheel App/Child Profile/Billing Info

Parent Handbook Agreement

I have received and read The Academy for Active Learners Parent Handbook.
I understand and agree to the policies and procedures outlined.

Please initial the following stating that you have read and agree to these policies:

_____ Deposit (2 weeks of deposit applied to first 2 weeks, save others for last 2 weeks)

_____ Health & Illness Policy

_____ Holiday Schedule & Policy on Vacations

_____ Tuition, Late Fee Policies & Late Drop-Off Policy

_____ Discipline & Negative Behavior Policy

_____ Withdrawal/Termination Policy

_____ Nut-Free Policy & Mandated Reporter

_____ Lunch Program Policy

_____ Alcohol/Smoking/Firearms Policy

Name of Child/Children: _____

Parent/Guardian (Printed): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____