



# PARENT HANDBOOK

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# PARENT HANDBOOK

## Mission Statement

To provide high-quality, early learning, a program that will help children establish a solid academic foundation for when they enter school.

We will provide your child with an individualized learning experience. At the academy, children, parents, and teachers grow together to help instill children with a love of learning while introducing them to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), while focusing on 21st century skills.

## Specific Goals for the Program

- ❑ STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING purpose is to serve and guide your child in a loving, fun-filled, safe, learning environment.
- ❑ STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING believes childhood is a time for exploring, creating, discovering oneself and meeting the world through many hands-on experiences. It's a time for blossoming and being cherished.
- ❑ STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING administrators and caregivers are committed to the belief that children can achieve. We believe that most of life's learning, including how to learn, occurs in the first five years of life.
- ❑ Our center is clean and inviting with lots of materials and equipment for your child to use and explore at his/her own pace. This is the perfect place for your child to learn, be creative and blossom. We have carefully selected a loving and caring staff. And, together we will work to provide whatever is developmentally appropriate for your child, and help him/her to reach their full potential.
- ❑ We respect parents as the most significant providers of care and nurturance. We are pleased to be an extension of the parents.
- ❑ Play is essential; it is the way young children learn. With our low student-teacher ratios, our program can be as individualized as possible. The children will refine their social-emotional, language, cognitive, gross-motor, and fine-motor skills throughout our curriculum.

## **Ages of Admittance:**

- Toddlers 3 to 4
- Pre-K 4 to 5
- School Age 6 to 12

Enrollment Policies Admission into The STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING is determined by the availability of space for a particular group and your position on the waiting list. Orientation for admission will be made by appointment. We reserve the right to accept or reject enrollment applications.

## **Before a child is officially enrolled into The STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING, the following items are mandatory:**

- A non-refundable registration fee of \$100.00 is required for all families at the time of enrollment. The payment must be in the form of cash, future payment may be made online. A \$50 annual fee is due in October for all families.
- Current physical examination form documenting all updated immunizations must be updated every year and as your child receives immunizations on schedule-Director will send frequent reminders.
- Verification of diet restriction, if any, from the doctor.
- First week of tuition or verification of subsidized day care. Once a spot is offered to you, you have 24 hours to either accept or decline the space. If you choose to accept, you have 1 week from when the space is available to start care. If you choose not to start more than a week after the spot becomes available, you are still responsible for payment. If you choose to not pay, you will lose your space.
- In order to withdraw from the program or switch your days within the program, The STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING requires at least a 14-day notice.

## **Arrival/Hours of Operation and Important Times**

- The center operates Monday through Friday between the hours of 6:00 AM until 6:00 PM, except for listed holidays and vacations.
- Children can never be allowed on the premises before operating hours or without permission from the Owner or Director.
- Students must arrive at the academy by 9:30am, unless another drop off time has been discussed with the Director.
- Breakfast will be served from 9:00 to 9:30. Children who arrive at 9:30 or later, will not receive breakfast.
- The academy desires that no child is at daycare for more than 9 hours.

## Program Rates and Hours

Monday - Friday 6:00am to 6:00pm

### Full-time

Care for your child is defined as 5 days per week for 5 hours or more per day. The minimum enrollment for this program is for 3 days each week.

#### Preschool

Age: 3 years of age  
\$200 week, \$40 daily rate

#### Pre-K

Age: 4 to 5 years of age  
\$190 week, \$38 daily rate

#### School Age

Ages: 5 to 12 years of age.  
\$180 week, \$36 daily rate

### Part-time

Care for your child is defined as attending less than 5 days a week or less than 5 hours a day, then they're considered part time. Minimum enrollment is for 3 days.

#### Preschool

Age: 3 years of age  
\$190 week, \$38 daily rate

#### Pre-K

Age: 4 to 5 years of age  
\$180 week, \$36 daily rate

#### School Age

Ages: 5 to 12 years of age.  
\$170 week, \$34 daily rate

### Blended Rates

Care rates for children attending school during the school year. This rate combines days during the school year when a child requires part-time care during school and when the child requires full-time.

Ages: 4 years of age  
\$160 week, \$31 daily rate

Ages: 5 to 12 years of age.  
\$150 week, \$29 daily rate

### Drop-In Care

We understand that "unscheduled events" will occur and you may need last-minute child care. We are here to help!

The drop-in care is one flat fee of \$75 for children 3 to 12.

The same enrollment process is followed. An Annual \$100 non-refundable registration fee is required. All enrollment forms must be completed prior to being accepted into the center.

Availability is not guaranteed.

## Separation of Child From Parent

If the child cries at the moment of separation, he/she will rarely continue for more than a few minutes. Remember, it usually takes at least 3 or 4 weeks for a child to completely adjust to the new situation. This will make the separation less frightening. Our staff is trained to deal with separation anxiety and will make every effort to help make the transition smooth. Parents are also very encouraged to say goodbye to their children every morning. Although it may be hard at first, it shows the child that you are leaving but you will return. Phone calls, texts, emails, or even random visits are ALWAYS welcome to check on your child throughout the day, or you can use the Brightwheel application to have pictures and messages sent to you. It is highly recommended that parents download the Brightwheel application.

## Late Pick Up

- ❑ We close at 6:00 PM. Chronic tardiness will be assessed for appropriateness for the program. Late pick-ups require additional staff time. Late fees will be applied. For every 15 minutes there is a \$15.00 fee. Late fees must be paid at the time of pick-up.
- ❑ ALL LATE FEES MUST BE PAID WHEN YOU PICK YOUR CHILD UP THAT DAY. THE CHILD IS NOT ALLOWED TO RETURN TO THE PROGRAM until late fees are paid.
- ❑ After 15 minutes, if there is no one present to pick up the child, attempts will be made to contact the parent(s). After unsuccessful attempts to contact the parent(s), attempts to contact an individual on the Emergency Contact List, to pick up the child. And last, after unsuccessful attempts to contact someone on the Emergency Contact List, we will contact the local authorities. The Director or teacher will follow police instructions and remain with the child until the situation is resolved (parent arrives or law enforcement officials take responsibility for the child).

## Sign-In/Sign-Out/Pick-up Person Notification

- ❑ It is required by law that you sign your child in and out everyday. This will be done through the Brightwheel application. At sign out time, only the designated person can sign the child out. Please do not share your pin with anyone. Individuals designated by you will also receive an “invitation” to “join” the center. Upon acceptance, they will receive a pin.
- ❑ We will not release your child to anyone other than those listed on the Designated Pick-Up Person form.
- ❑ Any person, other than the parent or authorized to pick up, **must be on the pick-up list, and must show a picture ID (State Identification Card or Driver’s License). A copy of the license will be made.**

- If for any reason there is a person not listed and needs to pick up the child, the parent must give authorization in advance. In the event of an emergency, a parent/legal guardian may give a verbal consent which will be recorded on a "Verbal Consent Form".
- Whenever taking a person off the pick up list, parents must do so in writing.

\*Modified under Covid-19

## Covid-19 Policy

As a result of the recent pandemic, new policies and procedures have been established. There are so many "unknown/fluid" factors concerning Covid-19. The policy and procedures outlined below may change due to availability of additional information/research.

- At this time for safety reasons and to reduce the number of people entering the academy, parents are NOT permitted to enter the academy unless there is an emergency regarding their child. If a parent must enter, they **MUST** have a mask on (provided by the parent), have their temperature checked (must be less than 100.4) and they will be asked the following questions:
  - Have you traveled internationally in the last 30 days?
  - Have you or anyone in your household had the following symptoms:
    - Coughing
    - Temperature
    - Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
  - Have you been in contact with anyone who has tested positive for Covid-19

## Covid-19 Sign-In Procedures

- Parents will sign their child in at the front door using their cell phone and scanning the barcode displayed at the door
- Children must arrive at the center wearing their personal mask. Prior to entering the center, parents will remove their child's personal mask and take it with them
- Staff will put a mask on your child which is provided by the center
  - The mask will remain at the center and will be washed daily

*There are concerns from parents that children are not going to wear a mask all day. We will strongly encourage children to wear their masks. It adds another layer of protection and is recommended by the Center for Disease and Control.*

*Please work with your child and encourage them to wear their mask and practice wearing it at home and outside of the home.*

- Parents will remain outside the door while a "safety check" is conducted on their child. If any of the following symptoms exist, the child **WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO STAY**.

- Child's temperature is 100.4 or above (temperature will be taken with a non-touch thermometer)
- Trouble breathing, rapid breathing
- \*Coughing and or/runny nose
- Diarrhea
- Chills
- Muscle Pain
- Headache
- Sore Throat
- Rash
- Loss of taste or smell (parents will be asked)

*\* Note: These symptoms may not be related to Covid-19, however; every safety measure will be taken to ensure the safety of all enrolled children and staff.*

*\*If a child has a cough and or/runny nose, as long as those are mild respiratory symptoms and DOES NOT have a fever, the child **MAY BE** permitted to stay. This is at the discretion of the Director/Owner.*

### **Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) Associate with COVID-19**

MIS-C is a diagnosis that impacts children and has recently been introduced by medical professionals. These symptoms vary from case to case:

- Fever - prolonged and persistent
- Rash
- Conjunctivitis (redness of the white part of the eye)
- Stomachache, vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Tongue is redder than usual and looks like a strawberry
- Swollen hands and/or feet, lymph nodes
- Irritability and/or usual sleepiness or weakness

We encourage parents to look for these symptoms, as we will look for them at the center to help ensure the safety of the children enrolled in the program.

### **Child Exhibits a Symptom of Covid-19**

- Child will be isolated in a corner of a class room with a cot
- Child must wear a mask
- Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately
- Parents/guardians must immediately pick up the ill child (within 30 minutes).
- Contact their child's healthcare provider
- Cot will be cleaned and disinfected after the child leaves

## When the Child Can Return to Care

- The child can return within 48 to 72 hours if he/she is clear of symptoms, and has not used medication to aid in the recovery.
- Certain circumstances will require documentation from the child's physician.

## Covid-19 Pick-Up Procedure

- Parents ring the doorbell
- Sign their child out at the front door using their cell phone and scanning the barcode displayed at the door.
- Parent should have their child's personal mask
- Child will be brought to the front door
- Staff will remove the child's academy mask and it will be washed before being used again
- If you are not able to pick up your child. Designate a person who is NOT a vulnerable person (older person, such as a grandparent or a person with serious underlying medical condition). *Please inform them of the new Covid-19 procedures.*

*Please note: designated person must be 18 years of age or older.*

## Covid-19 Reporting Procedures

If there is a positive case of Covid-19 in a child or adult who has been present child care facility:

- Pennsylvania Department of Health will be contacted
- OCDEL will be contacted
- Parents are informed and updated
- Academy will be closed for 24 hours for a deep cleaning

Each circumstance will be handled case by case. It depends on the type of contact the person has had with an enrolled student.

## Other Changes Due to Covid-19

- Staggered times for:
  - Snacks
  - Lunch
  - Outside play time
- Seating arrangements
- Children will have their own educational supplies (pencils, crayons, scissors, play dough, etc).
- Personal items must be left at home
  - Book bag
  - Stuffed Animals
  - Toys
  - Electronic (Cell phones, Ipads, etc)

## **Dismiss a Child**

We reserve the right to dismiss a child for several reasons. Some reasons may include:

1. Parents/guardians or child(ren) jeopardizes the health and safety of other children.
2. Parents/guardians or children display abusive conduct towards staff, other children, or the academy property.
3. Parents/guardians are uncooperative with the staff, operating policies, admission agreement, or become delinquent in payment fees.
4. Child's continual refusal to follow directions and his/her behavior starts to impact other students and interferes with the learning of others.
5. Unfounded accusations against a staff member.

We believe that every parent, child, or staff is entitled to be treated with respect at all times. If there is a problem, we want to deal with it as professionally and efficiently as possible. By working together as a team, we can provide the best care possible for your child. If a situation occurs that angers or upsets you, we will try to rectify the situation immediately. Please keep in mind that people make mistakes. If you still feel the need to threaten the staff in any way, your relationship with the center will be terminated immediately.

## **Safe Routes/Drop Off and Pick up Policy**

Stepping Stones Academy-Reading has established a safe route policy when dropping off or picking up children. In order to keep children safe, all children must be escorted to the facilities corridor. A staff member will walk the child into the facility. No child should be left unattended in the corridor, in a car or outside the building. Please be mindful of crossing children in between parked cars.

## **Withdraw from Academy**

Parents are required to provide the academy with a two weeks notice prior to removing their child from the academy. If the two week notice is not provided, parents are obligated to pay tuition/copays, and late fees (if applicable) for those two weeks.

## **Tuition Payments**

Tuition payments are due every Friday. If payments are not received by 6:00 PM on Friday, a \$35.00 late fee will be charged and is due upon receipt. If your account is seven (7) days late, your child(ren) will NOT be permitted to attend on Monday. Once the account is paid in full, your child(ren) can resume attendance.

Invoices will be sent every Thursday as a reminder through the Brightwheel application. Please be sure to check your brightwheel application frequently for important information from the Academy.

## **Absences**

- Childcare fees are based on enrollment, not attendance. Therefore, to maintain your child's spot in the classroom, fees must be paid during the absence of the child due to illness, holidays, vacations, school closings, or for any other reason.
- Parents should call or text the center to notify staff of their child(ren)'s absence or going to be tardy..
- Parents wishing to remove their child from the program for one entire month or more, are required to pay 85% of the monthly tuition to hold their child's spot.
- Accepted payment types: cash and payments may be made through the Brightwheel application.

*Note: There will be NO tuition refunds for a child going home early due to illness or personal matters.*

## **Increase of Fees**

Parents or guardians will be notified at least one month in advance of any increase in tuition or other fees.

## **Additional Charges**

Additional charges may occur for transportation to and from school, special events and field trips. You will be notified in advance for these occasions. Payment for all special events will be due one-week prior to the day of the event.

## **Holidays Observed/Closings\***

- MLK Day
- MEMORIAL DAY
- 4TH OF JULY
- LABOR DAY
- THANKSGIVING AND THE DAY AFTER
- BETWEEN CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEARS – (dates TBD/year)

\*Credit will not be given for holiday closings or non-COVID illness. Religion/ Culture as we serve children of many faiths, no religion will be emphasized more than the others. However, at times, religious holidays may be discussed, such as Christmas, Easter, Hanukkah, etc. We want to teach the children that our differences should be celebrated. Children and families are encouraged to bring in books, traditional clothing, musical instruments, etc. to teach the children about their culture.

## Vacation Policy

A two-week notice of vacation time must be given to the center. The regular tuition will be charged for vacation time, since your child's place at the center is being reserved.

## Health and Illness Policies

All parents want a safe and healthy environment for their children. Therefore, if your child is ill, please do not bring him/her to the center. We care about the protection of each individual child, in addition to the health and welfare of the entire group. When the child is sick at the academy, the child will be brought to the office. There, the child will remain with the Director or teacher in isolation from the other children and staff members. The child will be offered a cot and anything else he/she requests or needs until the parent or guardian arrives. Please come get your child as soon as possible. If your child has a contagious infection or disease, please keep your child at home as recommended. It is important to inform the center so that necessary precautions may be taken and parents can be properly alerted. In the event that we are notified that a child has contracted a contagious infection, a letter will be posted to inform the parents of the symptoms. If you suspect that your child has a contagious infection, call your doctor and inform The STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING immediately. PLEASE DO NOT BRING ANY SICK/ILL CHILD TO THE ACADEMY..

To avoid spread of infection and illness, you are required to:

- Pick your child up from the center if one of following conditions is present:
- A fever of 100.4
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea.
- Excessively red eyes (conjunctivitis or "pink eye").
- Hacking cough.
- Contagious rashes.
- Ringworm, pinworm, or other similar skin problems
- A cold with coughing, a runny nose, and a fever.
- Uncontrollable, discolored runny nose.
- Contagious childhood diseases such as mumps, measles, chicken pox, etc.
- Open mouth sores.
- Drainage from the eyes, ears or open sores

Any two or more symptoms from this list requires that your child be picked up from the Center:

- Cannot participate comfortably in routine activities.
- Requires continuous one-on-one care.
- Excessively drowsy or appears fatigued.
- Having difficulty breathing.
- Unexplained loss of appetite.
- Flushed or pale appearance.
- Complaining of headaches, stomachaches, dizziness, or pain.
- Excessive yellow or green mucus discharge from nose, persistent sneezing.

If a child becomes ill during the day, the parent will be contacted immediately. If a teacher feels your child should not remain in childcare due to sickness, then the daycare staff will refer your child to the childcare director for a final decision. The child will be taken to the sick area and remain there until the parent or authorized person picks up the child to take him/her home.

The daycare director may require you to take your child home. If your child returns to the academy with symptoms, a note from your child's doctor indicating the diagnosis of illness or symptoms, and clarification that condition is non-contagious will be required. If the symptoms persist or become worse, your child may be sent home again. Any contagious illnesses must be reported to the Center immediately.

- For head lice, children and staff may return to school after treatment and no nits.
- For scabies, children can return to school after treatment.

**Do not bring your child back to the academy if they are still ill. Keep your child home for at least 24 hours to give them time to get better.**

## **Peanut Policy**

The STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING is a peanut free facility. This includes all nuts: peanuts, tree nuts, etc. This is to prevent any sort of allergic reactions. Please avoid feeding your child peanut products before entering the facility.

## **Doctor's Note**

If a child is absent for three (3) consecutive days due to illness, has undergone surgery, or has been hospitalized, a doctor's statement is required upon return.

## **Emergency Medical Care**

Parents will be contacted immediately. Emergency care will be contacted and the children will be taken to the hospital. Director or owner will accompany the child to the hospital. Parents will need to go to the hospital immediately to relieve the staff. If a child is exempt from medical care for religious grounds, special arrangements will be made in writing from the parent at the point of enrollment. An individual plan will be written out for each situation.

## **Injured at the Center**

If a child is hurt during the day, first aid procedures will be followed. An accident report will be filled out in Brightwheel, where the parent has full access to the report.

The STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING will always have staff on hand that is certified by the American Red Cross in First Aid, and in infant/child CPR. Medication will be administered by assigned staff or the Director and only under the following circumstances:

1. Prescribed medication or non-prescription drugs must be under doctor's orders.
2. A permission slip must be written and signed by the parent.
3. The original container and label must bear the child's name, directions for administering the medication, date, and doctor's name. Allergies to medication must be kept on file for emergency situations. All allergies must be on a signed statement by the physician or a parent's signed statement.
4. All administration of prescribed medications and non-prescription medication will be recorded in a medication administration log with the date, time, child's name, the name of the medication, and the dosage given and the name and signature of the staff member administering the medication. The center has the right to refuse to administer medication at the discretion of the Director. It is preferred medication is NOT administered at the center at all possible. Your child's Health and Medical Form must be completed. The well being of your child is important to you, to us. Therefore, there are certain laws established by the State for our benefit. Your cooperation is essential as we seek to follow the laws. Please remember that we have a responsibility for the health of all the children in the center.

## Medical Requirements

Each child must have a completed medical form signed by his/her doctor prior to attendance at the daycare - should be dated no later than 6 months from the time of enrollment.

Public Health mandates that your child must have:

- An up-to-date medical form, which must be updated every two years.
- A TB test with results.
- DPT must have a physician's signature and date.
- Copy of immunization records to include: Polio, measles, and mumps must be up to date. A second dose of MMR is to be given between the ages of 4 and 6.
- Flu Shot (optional) - If you decide not to have your child immunized, please write a statement indicating so.
- HIB must be up to date.
- Physician form must have a physician's signature and date.
- Any allergies (food, medication, etc.) must be listed.
- Medical forms must be filled out completely.

## Special Needs

The Academy has a strict policy and will not discriminate against a child/family with special needs. When a student has an IEP, the academy will request a copy from the parent. The IEP will be thoroughly reviewed and areas of concern will be addressed with the parent. Reasonable accommodations will be made for students, The academy will work with the parents and any outside agency which may be involved. Working together as a team and open communication is the best way to assist the child. When requested, staff will make every possible attempt to attend the IEP.

## Care Play Policy

Children with special health care needs should have a care plan on file with the program. Should your child have a medical condition such as asthma, diabetes, allergies etc, please see the director for a care plan for them. This form can be completed by your child's pediatrician and returned to the Director. The Director will review this form with the parents and instructions for the care of your child will be shared with the appropriate childcare-staff.

Please communicate any changes to your child's medical care plan immediately to the director.

## Methods to Inform Parent of Child's Progress

1. Conferences: Parents will have the option to meet with their child's teacher at the 45-Day Conference or they may decline the meeting. Meeting notices will be sent to parents through Brightwheel the 1st week in October. Participation is not mandatory, but highly recommended. If you feel that a conference is needed at any other time, please inquire with the Director.
2. Baseline Assessment: A development screening will be completed for every child within the first 45 days of enrollment into the academy. The assessment tool that will be used is ASQ-3. If you choose not to attend the 45-Day Conference meeting, you will be given a copy of the development screening report.

## Supervision Policy and Procedures

Effective supervision reduces the risk of harm to children by preventing injuries and accidents. It also promotes positive, responsive and intentional learning environments for children and child care providers. Effective supervision also requires the academy and its staff to assess their supervision practices on a regular basis to ensure that we continue to promote safety and to meet the needs of children enrolled in our program.

### Parents will:

- Inform staff if a person, other than authorized persons, will be collecting the child. This can be done via a phone call or through the Brightwheel app.
- Ensure that contact information is current and accurate;
- Inform staff of any current or pending court orders affecting the child. Provide the daycare with a photocopy of the court order to be kept with the child's enrollment form;

### Academy employees will:

- Conduct regular safety checks of the academy indoor and play area to ensure equipment is safe and to remove any hazard items
- Maintain staff to child ratios, as outlined in the Child Care Licensing Regulations
- Periodically check the children's toys for safety
- Ensure that children under our care are picked up by "authorized" individuals

## **Staff will observe children at play and behavior:**

- Directly and carefully monitor children when playing and engaging in fun activities
- Observe play and anticipate what may happen next in order to provide caregivers with the opportunity to assist children and intervene in the event of potential harm
- Position staff to allow for the supervision of the entire group of children
- Monitor children's health to identify early signs of fever, illness, or unusual behavior
- Watch and participate in children's play to ensure that children are playing in a safe manner.

## **Toddler Program**

At STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING, teachers understand that children learn more by doing than by being told. Toddlers discover their world on a physical level. They are expected to walk, climb, carry objects, clean up toys, and dump or drop things rather than just sitting at tables. In planning for your toddler, our educators are prepared to be flexible and spontaneous. Because they are active explorers, toddlers are eager to try new things and use materials in different ways. Our understanding educators will go with the cues of the child and extend the learning when necessary. Toddlers are working on becoming autonomous. The teacher respects this and allows opportunities for the child to be responsible and make choices.

Expectations for behaviors are developmentally appropriate and allow the child to be challenged yet to feel support from the teacher. Our educators, with patience, warmth and respect, redirect toddlers to help guide them toward controlling their impulses and behaviors. Constant testing and expression of opposition are viewed as the child's development of a healthy sense of self. The teacher views herself as a model for how she wants the children to develop. The teacher recognizes that routine times are important moments to help children learn about themselves and others. Our staff views playtime as valuable, and facilitates this so that children stay interested and move from simple to more complex aspects of play.

The classroom includes materials for children to engage in imaginative play, appropriate experiences for creative exploration, various manipulatives to develop cognitive and physical skills as well as building blocks, music, and books. The environment allows the children to choose activities and respects their need for ample time to use and reuse learning tools. This fosters competence within the children. The setting is stimulating and inviting. It offers comfortable spaces for privacy and for interacting in small groups. Children are encouraged by staff to care for the belongings and the environment in ways they can handle. The educator creates and adapts the environment and activities to meet the children's changing needs from day to day.

## **Experience Early Learning Curriculum**

The Experience Early Learning Curriculum system has a unique approach to teaching by incorporating 35 research-based skills into playful games and discovery projects. This cross-disciplinary model supports a child's ongoing social-emotional, physical, language, and cognitive development. Children's understanding expands as they play and explore, and each activity integrates 2-3 skills from different learning domains.

The curriculum is based on child development theories and brain research, and was chosen by the staff. To ensure effective implementation, staff members receive training on the curriculum and assessments. Progress is evaluated through observation and monitoring children's assessments.

Each child at the academy has a portfolio that is used to monitor their development. The portfolio is shared with the parent(s) during their child's conferences.

In addition, the teaching staff have access to numerous resources, including a teacher's guide, math guide, literacy guide, music CD, books, and a wild array of supplies.

## **Experience Early Learning Curriculum and Assessment Tools at the Academy**

The Academy features an Experience Early Learning Curriculum, which includes observation prompts in each activity. This provides an opportunity for teachers to assess children's skills as they learn and play in a natural environment.

A range of tools is available to support teachers in their authentic assessment of children. These tools include a Monthly Assessment Planning Toolkit, a Daily Star Assessment Activity with Demonstration Videos, a Developmental Skill Continuum, and a Weekly Activity Skills Chart.

The Academy uses various methods to assess children's progress, such as portfolios, anecdotal records, and observations logged into student accounts on Brightwheel. The Experience Early Learning Curriculum includes an assessment component, with starred lessons indicating areas where children are to be assessed. A portfolio is created for each child to track their progress and to assist in identifying areas of improvement.

New teachers undergo training in utilizing the curriculum and assessment procedures through observation and hands-on learning. New teachers are paired with experienced staff to guide them through the process. The director is always available for consultation and is willing to assist with lesson implementation and assessments as needed.

## **Authentic Assessments**

At the academy, we foster Holistic Growth in Diverse Student Populations Across All Subject Areas. To promote development across all content areas for all children, to include those who are culturally and linguistically diverse, it's essential to implement effective teaching practices.

Assessing Curriculum and Teacher Effectiveness through Observation and Children's Evaluations. To evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and the teaching staff, teacher observations and children's assessments are employed. If a school-age child struggles with homework, more emphasis will be placed on helping the child improve in the areas where they are deficient.

Children are tested on letter and sound identification, and the assessment results are placed in one of three categories: mastery, almost, or not there. If a child does not demonstrate mastery of the letter, additional support will be provided to help them improve their understanding.

Children are also exposed to STEM, which in early childhood education can tap into students' potential for critical thinking. It can turn students into lifelong learners who want to know the why and how behind it all. It can help students see themselves as important participants in the world.

## Support Language Development

This policy statement focuses on children who are Dual Language Learners (DLLs). DLLs are children learning two or more languages at the same time or learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language. These children come from households where a language besides English is spoken.

To facilitate language learning and development, we provide various forms of linguistic support:

- Spanish-to-English interpretation
- Sign language
- Communication devices
- Visual booklets

Enrollment information is available in Spanish upon request, and bilingual staff is available to assist with completing enrollment forms and communication needs. Our classrooms are equipped with books in both Spanish and English to provide exposure for children of different backgrounds. Our dramatic play areas also showcase American, Latino and Chinese food to encourage interaction among all children.

In cases where the family speaks a language other than Spanish, our STARs coach will be contacted to assist with providing a translator for the family.

### Sign Language

Sometimes it is hard to understand what toddlers want/need. The center will be using sign language to help communicate with the toddlers. Simple signs like “more”; “please”, and “all done” will be used most often. These especially help with meal times. Our educators will help the children sign it, but believe it or not, they catch on fast!

Our Pre-K scholars will learn 26 words in sign language (one for each letter in the alphabet). In addition, they will learn a variety of phrases such as thank you, sorry, please to name a few.

### Social Service Booklet and Behavioral Referrals

Academy Provides Social Service Booklet and Behavioral referrals for parents.

Our academy recognizes the difficulties parents encounter when searching for the right services to support their children and family. To alleviate this burden, we have designed a social service booklet that is sent to every parent through the Brightwheel application. Hard copies are available upon request made to the director.

If a child continues to engage in unacceptable behavior at the academy, the following steps will be taken:

- A meeting will be scheduled with parents, classroom teacher and the director to discuss the behavior and review or readminister the Ages and Stages assessment. Together, the team will develop a plan of action and define goals for the child. At this meeting, a second meeting will be scheduled to check in on progress.

- At the second meeting, we will discuss the progress of the goals set in the first meeting. If necessary, referrals to appropriate agencies (Keystone STARS, BCIU, Etc.) will be made at this time. In addition, we offer referrals to Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants based on observations and assessments such as the ASQ-2 Social assessment.
- In the event the parent(s) chooses not to assist the program in the referral process. The child runs a risk of being terminated from the academy.

## **Conferences and Baseline Assessment**

### Conferences:

Parents will have the option to meet with their child's teacher at the 45-Day Conference, which is held during the first week of May and October. Although attendance is not mandatory, it is highly recommended. If needed, parents can also request additional conferences with the Director. Meeting notices will be sent via Brightwheel. This is an excellent opportunity to receive updates on their child's progress and for providers to better understand any family dynamics that may be at play.

### Baseline Assessment:

Within the first 45 days of enrollment, every child will undergo a development screening with ASQ-3. If parents choose not to attend the 45-Day Conference, they will receive a copy of the development screening report.

During the conferences, parents will meet with the child's teacher and director, who will share the child's portfolio and recent assessments. Additionally, feedback gathered from the conference can aid providers in modifying lesson plans to assist with the child's social and behavioral development.

The upcoming conference will be attended by the child's teacher and director, parents are highly encouraged to attend as well. This is an excellent opportunity for parents to receive updates on their child's progress and for providers to better understand any family dynamics that may be at play. At the conferences, the child's portfolio is shared and recent assessments. Additionally, the feedback gathered from the conference is crucial and can aid providers in modifying lesson plans to assist with the child's social and behavioral development.

## **Parental Involvement in our Program**

At the academy, we value and welcome parents and guardians to participate in our activities. We believe that your involvement and engagement are crucial as we work together to provide exceptional care and education for your children. Please feel free to reach out to the Director to schedule a visit.

## **A Collaborative Partnership**

As your child's primary influence, you play an integral role in our program. Effective communication between you, your child's teacher, and the Center Director will enhance this relationship and ensure that your child has a positive early learning experience. To facilitate this partnership, we offer the following:

- Regular family/teacher communication to share ideas and discuss your child's progress.
- Conversations and frequent written updates highlighting your child's development.
- Recommendations for home-based learning activities that support your child's learning and enjoyment of the program.
- Regular parent-teacher conferences to discuss your child's progress.
- Daily happenings are uploaded in Brightwheel for families to see what their child is doing throughout the day.
- A secure online environment, Brightwheel, offers convenient online payment options and access to important child and family information, including the primary family Account Holder and Account Members.
- Newsletters are published six times a year to share activities that your child participates in and upcoming events.

## **Join our Workshops Twice a Year and our Fun-filled Summer Carnival**

Through our Brightwheel program, parents can choose the educational component that best suits their child's needs. Topics in early literacy include, but not limited to: family literacy, developmental issues, STEM, and other topics that assist families interest. We also invite all families to participate in our end-of-summer carnival – it's a blast!

## **Engaging with Families and Utilizing Communication Tools**

At the academy, we take pride in our communication with families and have a variety of tools at our disposal. These include our Brightwheel app, newsletter, websites, surveys, and social media. However, the most effective tool appears to be the Brightwheel app, as it provides quick and easy access via mobile devices. Parents can also view notes from their child's classroom observation.

## **Classroom Observations**

The Academy Director conducts three annual classroom observations on Group Supervisors to assess their performance. After the observation, a formal meeting is held with the employee to discuss the findings. The four areas under consideration include the effectiveness of lesson plan implementation, classroom management, preparedness, and teacher-student relationships. Employees may add valuable information that they feel is relevant to their evaluation. Based on the evaluation, further professional development may be required to improve performance. These evaluations are important in identifying potential deficiencies in the program.

## **Clothing and Personal Items**

Please dress your child in comfortable, simple clothing. When dressing your child, remember that your child will be engaged in finger-painting, outdoor play, sand/water play, etc., so dress them accordingly and be aware that your child may get dirty while playing. Teachers and smocks will of course help keep them clean but it is never a guarantee. Independence is encouraged when playing and using the restroom so please make sure your child is able to pull down their pants on their own to use the restroom.

- Please clearly label all clothing, shoes, scarves, mittens, hats, etc. with your child's name.

- ❑ All children must have a complete outfit, underpants, shirt, pants, socks, pillow, labeled blanket for nap time.

Anything you would like your child to have while here, please feel free to bring it. Some limitations may apply due to licensing but we will tell you if a concern comes up. Please also feel free to ask questions at any time.

## **Outside Toys**

If your child has an attachment with a certain toy or stuffed animal that he/she may need at rest-time, please inform the director upon enrollment of your child. If the child wishes to play with the toy throughout the day, the child must be willing to share it. If the child refuses to share, then it will be taken for the rest of the day.

## **Transitions**

A transition of children to the next, older classroom occurs at different times during the year. Transitions are dependent on the child's readiness and age. In addition, the recommendation from the current teacher and proposed classroom teacher, we look at the child's development and maturation levels, as well as the availability in the next class. Because of the lack of availability, it is impossible to promise the transition into a particular classroom. However, the academic needs of the child will always be met. In cases of an approved transition, teachers will begin to talk to the children about the class; visit; then nap in class prior to the actual move into the class. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to visit the child's new room at any time. Transition plans will be discussed with the parent in advance of the move. If we have more than one child ready to move and both are about the same developmentally, we will be transitioning the oldest child first.

For school age children who have reached the age of 12, will be phased out of the program. Parents will be notified 3 months before the child turns 12.

## **Children in Self-Care**

If deciding whether a child is ready for self-care, parents must consider several factors, starting with the child's maturity level. There is no magic age at which children develop the maturity and good sense needed to stay alone. Some states have laws specifying the minimum age at which a child can legally stay alone. Others do not specify an age but consider the child's maturity. Check with your state child welfare agency about the law in your state. If your state does not specify an age, as a general guideline, most children before age 11 lack the decision-making skills necessary for self-care. When assessing your child's readiness for self-care, consider his or her physical, mental, social and emotional maturity. Please ask the Director for an article called: Home Alone: children in Self-Care.

## **Toileting Procedures**

The center will accept a limited number of children who are not fully potty trained. Parents are responsible for providing an extra change of clothing, pampers, pullups, creams or powders to be used for changing your child. All children using the toilet are required to wash their hands with antibacterial soap and water after each use. Stepping stools and assistance is provided if needed. If a child requires a potty seat, it too will be cleaned and disinfected after each use. Examples of readiness include being able to dress and undress oneself with ease, balance on a step stool to wash hands, and clean their bottom with tissue with little to no assistance. We will work together to ensure that this process is as easy and successful for your child and your family as possible. It is important for parents to remember that sometimes using the potty at home and using the potty at school is different. It is easy to get frustrated with your child but they will go when they are ready. Potty training should be a natural experience, not a forced experience.

## **Guidance and Discipline Rules Discipline**

In the daycare setting, guidance can be defined as helping your child learn to control their behavior. Discipline is directed towards the child's negative behavior and not toward the child as a person. In disciplinary situations, actions are provided in the methods of:

- Getting down to the child's level and making eye contact
- Taking the time to explain the misdeed to the child and helping the child make a better choice in the future by using words to explain his or her needs and frustrations. Offering alternatives or other problem-solving approaches.
- Removing the child from the situation and giving him/her some quiet time with the book or puzzle.

In older children, giving them the dialogue of what to say to the child that they hurt or did wrong by asking the child if they are okay. If the child responds no, then have the child ask what would help them feel better; whether it be a hug, a high-five, or a fist bump, it helps the children begin to understand that they need to fix their mistakes with others and help when needed. Parents will be informed of any consistent inappropriate behavior. Staff will discuss and help develop a plan in an attempt to redirect inappropriate behavior.

## **The Initial Consultation**

Would require the parent(s) of any child with chronic behavioral concerns and who attends the center, to talk with the Director or classroom teachers to discuss the problem and together, establish solutions or steps for correcting the behavior.

## **The Second Consultation - Suspension or Expulsion**

Would be established if the initial plan fails. Again, the parent(s) will be required to meet with the Director and/or classroom teachers. The problem will be identified and a new approach will be outlined to approach the problem, and discuss the consequences if progress is not achieved. It is not the goal of the academy to suspend or expel a student. If the consultations, together with the parent, attempts are unsuccessful, the third phase will be to contact ECMH. Consultation helps adults strengthen their relationships with young children and build capacity to respond to children's social-emotional needs. IECMHC can help reduce caregiver stress, as well as increase caregivers' reflective practice skills.

IECMH Consultants are available by appointment to provide IECMHC Virtual Office Hours consultation via telephone or video conference. IECMHC Virtual Office Hours is a short-term, collaborative, problem-solving conversation to help us find next steps for: Child Social-Emotional Concerns | Child Behavioral or Developmental Concerns Emotional Well-being of Teachers and Caregivers | Partnering with Families. The final phase we strive to avoid involves discussing suspension or expulsion. Such a decision will only be considered after all available support measures have been thoroughly exhausted.

### **Physical Punishment Prohibited**

Employees will follow the rule of absolutely no hitting, spanking, swatting, beating, shaking, pinching, or other measures intended to induce physical pain or fear (will result in immediate termination of an employee); you can not threaten or refuse to provide food, rest, or use of the bathroom; nor, is profane or belittling language allowed. A violation of these rules can lead to an employee being suspended or terminated, depending on the offense.

It is important that children understand why certain behaviors are not acceptable. Therefore, The STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING, expects its employees to set limits and explain consequences to children when their behavior is inappropriate. Positive redirection should be used to assist the child with their behavior. Consequences should be age appropriate and related to the unacceptable act. Children should be allowed time to work out their own problems/concerns. Children are not to be disciplined for toilet accidents.

### **How a biting incident will be handled**

There are many different reasons why children bite. The child could be trying to relieve pain from teething, be exploring cause and effect, experience the sensation of biting, satisfy a need of oral-motor stimulation, act in self-defense, or communicate feelings of frustration or anger. The

teacher will immediately rush over to the incident and get down to the children's level.

- ❑ A firm "You do not bite your friends!" will be said.
- ❑ The focus will be on the victim of the bite giving first aid immediately.
- ❑ The child that bit will be asked to show the other child kindness - hug (if they do not have the language skills to talk it out) Otherwise, they will have to ask the victim if they are okay. If the child responds no, they need to ask what will make the child feel better (whether it be a hug, a high five or fist bump: just something to show that the child is sorry rather than just forcing the child to say sorry).
- ❑ The teacher will defuse the situation and remove the child who distributed the bite and redirect him/her to a different activity.
- ❑ The child may be asked to take a break from the area and read a book or do a puzzle instead.
- ❑ Biting and other physical injuries caused by one child to another or by a child to a teacher or director are causes for concern and must be documented. When your child causes an injury to another student or teacher, an incident report will be completed detailing the injury. The incident report becomes a part of the school's permanent record and a copy will be put in your child's file. If biting becomes a persistent problem, your child will be shadowed. What this means is that we will have a staff member who will be at the child's side or even hold their hand throughout the entire day. That way, if the child even comes close to biting another child, it will be stopped immediately.
- ❑ If your child receives a total of five incident reports because they have been involved in an incident, which caused injury to another child or teacher, a mandatory meeting will be required with the Parents, Teachers and Directors. At this meeting a plan of action will be discussed so that both the parents and the teachers can seek a consistent way to handle the situation and hopefully remedy the behavior. If after the meeting nothing changes and another five incident reports are completed (totaling ten incident reports relating to a biting or injury), the family will be given a two-week notice and the family will be asked to make other arrangements for the child. *Please note this will be handled on a case by case basis.*

The goal of the academy is not to suspend or expel students from the facility. STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING reserves the sole right to ask a child to leave the school immediately and permanently at any given time without two weeks notice if the injury that is caused to another child, teacher or director is deemed extremely severe by the Center's Directors. In this case, the normal five incident reports and the preceding protocol will not be possible and immediate dismissal from the program will occur.

## **School Transportation**

The academy provides limited transportation to schools within a 10 mile radius. Children receiving these additional services will be outlined in the “Fee Agreement” form.

- All drivers will have a current Pennsylvania Driver’s License
- Will possess current clearances and physicals
- Emergency contact information will be kept in the vehicle
- All children and drivers must be properly seated in restraints
- A cell phone will be accessible during transportation
- Every attempt will be made to ensure your child arrives at school on time. For this to occur, the parent must drop off their child at the center on time
- Parents must promptly notify the academy if their child will be absent

## **Inclement Weather Procedures**

The academy will follow the Reading School District schedule for late starts and cancellations due to bad weather. Any late starts or cancellations will be sent through Brightwheel.

## **Feedings and Nap Time**

- ❑ The center provides breakfast, a.m. snack, lunch and p.m. snack. What meal or snack your child receives will depend on the length of their stay at the center, and their arrival time. The specific meals or snacks your child will receive will be outlined in the “Fee Agreement”. At meal times, children are expected to try all of their food on their plate before they request more of something. It is ok if they do not like a certain food, but they still are required to try it.
- ❑ Milk will be served at breakfast and lunch and water will be made available as well. The children can always have water after their first glass of milk or more milk if they would like. If your child does not drink milk, they may have water or other milk alternatives provided by the parents. When the child is done with their meal, they need to ask to be excused from the table or tell the teacher that they are all done. This helps the teachers keep track of how the child ate that day and aids in classroom management to give the teachers time for their next transition into nap or next activity.
- ❑ Water will be offered several times a day and whenever the child requests it. For all children all naps or quiet time is scheduled after lunch. Staff will be present while the children are napping.
- ❑ Children, who do not sleep after 1 hour and those who are up before naptime is over, are permitted to quietly look at books or engage in quiet projects while the other children sleep.

## Outdoor Play

- ❑ All children play outdoors at their scheduled time each day, weather permitting. A parent's request to keep their child inside is difficult, if not impossible, to accommodate because staff are not always available to provide supervision to an individual child. In this case, the parent may choose to keep the child home.
- ❑ We will go outside unless it is colder than 30 degrees F, wind chill is considered, or hotter than 100 degrees F, so please be sure your child is dressed for the weather. Do not worry about your child being outside for very long, because teachers get cold/hot long before the children do!
- ❑ Your child may participate in walking field trips when planned by the staff as a regular part of the children's program/curriculum. Parents will be informed, in advance, of any field trips that The STEPPING STONES ACADEMY- READING will take. Parents are responsible for signing permission slips and returning them before the day of the field trip. Parents are always welcome to join the fun! The STEPPING STONES ACADEMY- READING will use a licensed transportation service for all group driving field trips. No trip will take place unless there is a safe ratio of adults to children. When the weather permits, we have the opportunity to go on walks throughout the neighborhoods or trips to local parks. When scheduled, STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING does not currently provide transportation to and from field trips through a licensed bus transportation company which you will be notified in advance of the up and coming trips.

## Birthdays

- ❑ We're thrilled to celebrate your child's birthday at the center.
- ❑ If you would like us to celebrate the day, we request that you speak to the center's director first in order to coordinate a healthy, non-allergenic snack. PLEASE CHECK ALL INGREDIENTS LIST FOR PEANUTS AND TREE NUTS. THIS INCLUDES THE FACILITY WHERE THEY WERE PROCESSED.
- ❑ Store bought treats are preferred but homemade goodies are allowed too, among the Director's approval.
- ❑ Your child's caregiver may add special songs, games, and stories to make it an extra special day for your child.

## Communication

We welcome your comments and suggestions. If you have any questions about your child's progress, we will be happy to do an evaluation. Parent/teacher conferences are encouraged and can be arranged based upon the parent's convenience during the center's operating hours. Working together, we can enhance your child's experience. Please feel free to call or stop by the center at any time.

- ❑ All information about the center and classroom news will be distributed to parents via the parent app, handouts, website, Facebook, and/or bulletin boards at the Center. We will upload children images on Facebook and Instagram if they have a media release form completed. Parents are encouraged to "like" and visit the pages often.
- ❑ The center will distribute daily activity logs via the Brightwheel application. It is strongly encouraged that we have 100% participation in the usage of the Brightwheel application. The application is FREE. These reports will include mealtime details, any activities or events the child enjoyed that day, nap schedule, and potty times.
- ❑ Please keep your child's teachers and the director aware of any changes at home. It can really affect a young child; therefore, using the staff as a resource can help the child and the family get through any situation at home.
- ❑ Parents may schedule appointments with a teacher or the Director if any concerns relating to a child's development or behavior shall arise. This way the teachers may devote their full attention to the problems and solutions.

## Our Staff

- ❑ Staff are a pivotal part of our center and have been trained, and carefully chosen by their educational background, experience with children, and their love for children. Our center follows state regulations in hiring new staff. Each staff member has passed a background check done by the State of Pennsylvania, FBI, National Sex Offender clearance and a child clearance. In addition, they have completed the mandated reporter training and all staff members are CPR certified.
- ❑ The staff is warm and loving, open to children's needs, and flexible in their actions. Each staff member has also signed a confidentiality agreement. Our staff is forbidden by law and by administration to talk about any of their students or families outside of work. This ensures that the business of the STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING families stays at the Academy.

- The staff are prohibited to post pictures and names of any children in the center on the Internet, including all forms of social media. Photographs of children will periodically be posted to our website or Facebook. Only pictures of children who have a signed media form will be posted.

### **Rules and Responsibilities**

In order to maintain a safe environment for your child and reduce conflict amongst the children, the following rules are strictly enforced:

- No chewing gum or hard candy.
- No cough drops.
- No money (child could put in mouth and choke)

### **Discipline Rules/Guidelines for Staff**

All staff members must abide by the Center's discipline policies. Violations of these rules can lead to suspension or termination.

### **Important Rules for Parents**

It is the parent's responsibility to notify the Center in writing if the following occurs:

- Change of name
- Address
- Home or cell phone
- Work schedules
- Authorized pick up names and numbers
- Child Custody Legal decisions regarding issues of child custody will be respected. In fairness to parents and children, a copy of any court documentation should be provided for the file.

### **Insurance**

The center carries liability insurance as required by the state. The insurance will not include medical coverage for illness.

## **Responsible Parties**

The Director and owner is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING.

## **Parent Visitation Policy**

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has ended, the disease still exists. The academy will allow limited visitation by parents and support personnel from external organizations.

## **Risk Management**

Every effort is made to provide a safe environment for children. The center entrance will always be locked to prevent unauthorized entrance. Parents and visitors will be buzzed into the facility. We are equipped with a fire alarm system. Evacuation routes are posted throughout the center. Emergency exits are clearly marked. Staff are trained in CPR and First Aid. We will conduct fire drills once a month and active shooter every other month. The staff is mandated to report cases of suspected child abuse or neglect. The facility has a 24 hours web-based security surveillance camera.

## **Release of Information**

No records will be released without written consent of the parent or guardians. Except in the event of extreme emergency, when there is evidence of child abuse or neglect, information will be given to authorized individuals.

## **Universal Precaution Policy**

The following preventative measures are to be used to reduce the spread of all infectious and contagious diseases.

- Wash hands regularly. Hand washing is the best way to protect both child and caregiver.
- Use the recommended hand washing technique:
  - Use antibacterial liquid soap and scrub hands for 1 minute
  - Scrub top of hands, palms, between fingers, and under nails
  - Rinse under warm water with hands pointing down
  - Dry hands with paper towels.
  - Turn off the water faucet with a towel before disposing of it
- Wear disposable gloves while cleaning up blood, bloody saliva, urine, feces, or vomit, especially if there is a skin rash or open cut on your hands. If skin contact is made with these substances, wash the affected areas with soap under running water.

- Change gloves after contact with each child. Throw away disposable gloves after each use. Wash hands after wearing gloves.
- Supervise toilet-trained children to ensure that they wash their hands well after using the restroom.
- Clean up blood and bloody fluids on surfaces with 1 part ordinary household bleach diluted in 10 parts water. Isopropyl alcohol, Lysol disinfectant, and hydrogen peroxide can also be used.

## Health and Cleanliness Policy

We take the well being of your child very seriously and work hard to provide an environment that is as healthy as possible. We are committed to keeping our center and the children in it as clean as possible, in order to help minimize and/or prevent the spread of germs. Our center is kept clean and disinfected at all times. We thoroughly clean surfaces that children come in close contact with.

Toys are cleaned and disinfected daily, and water-play tables are cleaned and disinfected before being filled with water and carefully supervised when in use. Linens are washed once a week using unscented laundry detergent. Hand Washing is the single most effective practice in preventing the spread of germs. We wash our hands many times throughout the day, as well as the children's hands before and/or after engaging in a thorough list of activities. As previously stated:

Employees wash their hands:

- Before beginning working
- Immediately before handling food or feeding children
- After using the toilet, helping a child use the toilet, or after changing soiled clothing or diapers
- After coming into contact with any bodily fluid, such as a wet or soiled diaper, runny nose, spit or vomit
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty
- After cleaning a child, the room, toys, or bathroom
- Before giving medication

Children wash their hands:

- When they first enter the center
- Immediately before and after eating
- After using the toilet or having soiled clothing
- Before and after using water tables
- After using play-dough or other substances
- After playing on the playground
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty

## **Child Abuse and Neglect Policy**

The staff members are mandated child abuse and neglect reporters as required by the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act. If abuse or neglect is suspected, the parents will be notified of our intent to file a report with the Children and Youth Service. We will always make a report when it is warranted. Abuse is defined as: sexual abuse which includes touching; physical abuse injuries, including welts, burns, cuts, etc.; and verbal/emotional abuse including constant belittling or cursing at child. Neglect is defined as: failure to provide food; failures to provide nurturance; or disregard towards medical problems. These reports are being made to protect the child, the parent, and STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING.

### **Shaken Baby Syndrome, Abusive Head Trauma, and Child Maltreatment.**

Stepping Stones Academy-Reading will use positive redirection and positive reinforcement when addressing children. At no time is staff permitted to shake or cause physical harm to any child at the academy. These are grounds for immediate termination.

#### **Shaken Baby Syndrome**

- Shaking Baby Syndrome is a preventable, severe form of physical child abuse resulting from violently shaking an infant by the shoulders, arms, or legs. SBS may result from both shaking alone or from shaking with impact.

#### **Symptoms**

- Extreme fussiness or irritability
- Difficulty staying awake
- Breathing problems
- Poor eating
- Vomiting
- Pale or bluish skin
- Seizures
- Paralysis

#### **Abusive Head Trauma**

- Abusive head trauma often happens when a parent or caregiver becomes angry or frustrated because of a child's crying. It is caused by violent shaking and/or with blunt impact.

## Symptoms of abusive head trauma

- Vomiting
- Irritability
- Unusual drowsiness
- No interest in eating or trouble sucking or swallowing
- Stiff appearance
- Changes in consciousness
- No smiling, babbling, or talking
- Differently sized pupils

## Strategies to Soothe a Crying Baby

- First, make sure your baby doesn't have a fever. ...
- Make sure your baby isn't hungry and has a clean diaper.
- Rock or walk with the baby.
- Sing or talk to your baby.
- Offer the baby a pacifier.
- Take the baby for a ride in a stroller.
- Hold your baby close against your body and take calm, slow breaths.

## Child Maltreatment

- Child maltreatment includes all types of abuse and neglect of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caregiver, or another person in a custodial role (e.g., clergy, coach, teacher). There are four common types of abuse.
  - **Physical abuse is the use of intentional physical force, such as hitting, kicking, shaking, burning or other show of force against a child.**
  - **Sexual abuse** involves engaging a child in sexual acts. It includes fondling, rape, and exposing a child to other sexual activities.
  - **Emotional abuse** refers to behaviors that harm a child's self-worth or emotional well-being. Examples include name calling, shaming, rejection, withholding love, and threatening
  - **Neglect** is the failure to meet a child's basic needs. These needs include housing, food, clothing, education, and access to medical care.

## Symptoms of Child Maltreatment:

- Obvious malnourishment, listlessness or fatigue.
- Stealing or begging for food.
- Lack of personal care – poor personal hygiene, torn and/or dirty clothes.
- Untreated need for glasses, dental care or other medical attention.

- Frequent absence from or tardiness to school
- Child inappropriately left unattended or without supervision.

All staff will receive training and further education on ways to continue to protect the students and prevent abuse such as Shaking Baby Syndrome, Abusive Head Trauma, and Child Maltreatment.

## **Grievances**

All grievances concerning staff members, policies, or procedures should be made to the Director of the program so that action may be taken to address the grievance. Parents may request a conference with the Director or Owner and any party with whom they have a complaint.

## **Parent Notification Policy**

For unplanned or non-routine activities such as closures, etc... We will notify parents by sending emails, or text through the Brightwheel application.

## **Emergency Closings**

We will be using Reading Public Schools as a guide for emergency closings. Parents will receive notification through the Brightwheel Application for all emergency closings.

## **Emergency Plan**

We will be practicing fire drills every month and a variety of other safety drills throughout the year.

## **Video Surveillance**

STEPPING STONES ACADEMY-READING has a video surveillance system in operation during program operating hours. The cameras allow for constant surveillance of the classrooms.

# Sample Schedule

6:00 AM	Earliest Drop Off
6:00 AM - 8:30 AM	Free Choice
9:00 AM - 9:30 AM	Breakfast
9:30 AM - 9:45 AM	Clean-up
9:45 AM - 10:00 AM	Shake the Wiggles Out
10:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Circle Time
10:30 AM - 11:00 AM	Indoor/Outdoor/Free Choice
11:00 AM - 11:30 AM	AM Snack
11:30 AM - 12:00 PM	Group Activity/Free Choice
12:00 PM - 12:45 PM	Lunch
12:45 PM - 1:00 PM	Clean up
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Nap/Quiet Time
3:00 PM - 3:15 PM	Clean up - Cots away
3:15 PM - 3:45 PM	Hand washing/PM Snack
3:45 PM - 5:30 PM	Free Choice/Group Activity
5:30 PM - 5:45 PM	Cleanup Time
5:45 PM - 6:00 PM	Parent Pickup
6:00 PM	Academy Close

**WE ARE AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CARE PROVIDER.**

# Attendance Duration Recommendation Policy

## Recommended Daily Attendance Limit

While the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services does not mandate a maximum number of hours a child may attend a licensed child care facility, Stepping Stones Academy strongly recommends that a child's daily attendance not exceed ten (9) hours whenever possible.

This recommendation is made in support of children's overall well-being, healthy development, and family connection.

## Rationale for the 9-Hour Recommendation

Extended days in care can contribute to:

### 1. Fatigue and Overstimulation

Young children participate in structured learning, peer interaction, and physical play throughout the day. After extended hours, children may experience:

- Increased tiredness
- Difficulty regulating emotions
- Reduced focus and engagement

### 2. Emotional Well-Being

Children benefit greatly from meaningful time with their families. Limiting long daily separations helps support:

- Secure attachment
- Emotional stability
- Positive behavior patterns

### 3. Behavioral Regulation

Long days (10–12+ hours consistently) may increase:

- End-of-day behavioral challenges
- Irritability or frustration
- Difficulty transitioning home

## 4. Healthy Balance

Children thrive with a healthy balance of:

- Structured learning
- Peer socialization
- Rest
- Family time

Maintaining reasonable daily attendance supports this balance.

### Exceptions

We understand that work schedules and family circumstances vary. Occasional extended days may be unavoidable. Prior to the need for extended care, families will contact the Director for approval. However, when a child is consistently present for more than 10 hours per day, the Academy may initiate a collaborative discussion with the family to ensure the child's needs are being fully supported.

### Commitment to Partnership

Stepping Stones Academy is committed to partnering with families to promote each child's success, wellness, and development. Our goal is always to provide high-quality care while supporting healthy routines both at school and at home.

## Immigration Enforcement (ICE) & Government Agency Policy

### Purpose

Stepping Stones Academy-Reading is committed to maintaining a safe, secure, and supportive learning environment for all children and families. This policy outlines how the Academy will respond if Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or any other law enforcement or government agency requests access to our facility, records, staff, or children.

### Commitment to Child Safety

- The safety and well-being of every child is our highest priority.
- Children will remain in their classrooms and under staff supervision at all times.
- Staff will not permit any individual to remove a child from the premises without proper legal authorization and verification.

## Access to the Facility

- All visitors, including law enforcement or government officials, are addressed outside the main door entrance..
- Staff members are instructed not to grant access to classrooms, children, staff, or records without prior authorization from the Director or designated administrator.
- If an official presents documentation (such as a warrant or subpoena), it will be reviewed by administration before any action is taken.

## Legal Documentation Requirement

### The Academy will require:

- A valid judicial warrant signed by a judge in order to allow entry beyond public areas.
- Proper identification from the requesting official.
- Written documentation specifying the individual or records being requested.
- Administrative staff will verify documentation before responding to any request.

## Child Safety & PA DHS compliance

Under Pennsylvania DHS child care regulations, our primary legal duty is:

- Protecting children in care
- Preventing unauthorized access
- Releasing children only to authorized individuals

### Allowing entry without legal authority could:

- Violate DHS licensing standards
- Violate your own release-of-child policy

## Protection of Student Information

- Student records are confidential and protected.
- The Academy will not share information regarding a child or family without proper legal documentation or written parental consent, unless required by law.
- Staff are instructed not to discuss a family's immigration status.

## Parent Communication

- If a situation arises involving law enforcement that directly impacts a child, the child's parent or guardian will be notified as soon as legally permitted.

- The Academy will communicate with families in a calm and professional manner while maintaining confidentiality.

## Staff Training

All staff members receive guidance on:

- Maintaining child supervision at all times
- Directing all law enforcement or agency requests to administration
- Avoiding the release of confidential information

## Non-Discrimination Statement

Admissions, the provisions of services, and referrals of clients shall be made without regard to race (to include hair type, hair texture, or hair style), color, religious creed (to include all aspects of religious observances and practice, as well as belief), disability, ancestry, national origin (including Limited English Proficiency), age (40 and over), or sex (to include pregnancy status, childbirth status, breastfeeding status, sex assigned at birth, gender identity or expression, affectionate or sexual orientation, and differences in sex), and retaliation.

Program services shall be made accessible to eligible persons with disabilities through the most practical and economically feasible methods available. These methods include, but are limited to, equipment redesign, the provision of aides and the use of alternative service delivery locations. Structural modifications shall be considered only as a last resort among available methods.

Any student, and or/their guardian who believes they have been discriminated against, may file a complaint of discrimination with:

### Facility Information

Stepping Stones Academy-Reading  
50 N 4th Street  
Suite 100-102  
Reading, PA 19601  
Phone: 610.340.3561  
Email: [contact@steppingstonesacademy-reading.com](mailto:contact@steppingstonesacademy-reading.com)

### Office for Civil Rights

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Centralized Case Management Operations  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Room 509 HHH Bldg  
Washington, D.C. 20201  
Customer Response Center: (800) 368-1019  
TDD: (800) 537-7697  
<https://www.hhs.gov/ocr/complaints>  
Email: [ocrcomplaint@hhs.gov](mailto:ocrcomplaint@hhs.gov)

**(Within 180 days from the date of incident)**

**Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of Human Services  
Bureau of Equal Opportunity**  
Room 225, Health & Welfare Building  
P.O. Box 2675 Harrisburg, PA 17120  
Inquiries: (717) 787-1127  
Email: [RA-PWBEOAO@pa.gov](mailto:RA-PWBEOAO@pa.gov)

**(Within 90 days from the date of incident)**

### Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission

333 Market Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
<https://www.phrc.pa.gov/Complaints/Pages/How-to-File-a-Complaint.aspx>  
Inquiries: (717) 787-4410  
TTY users only: (717) 787-7279

**(Within 180 days from the date of incident)**