

**Suncoast
Academy Inc.
Parent Handbook**

4207 W San Miguel St

Tampa FL 33629

813-253-3284

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Parents,

Welcome! We would like to thank you for choosing Suncoast Academy Inc and ensure you that we have a commitment to all parents and children enrolled in our center. This handbook has been prepared especially for you, the parent of the child enrolled in our center. You will find many of our policies and operating procedures explained here. By reading this handbook you will feel more confident in your family's adjustment into our program. We suggest that you keep this handbook for reference throughout the year. My staff and I look forward to working with you and your child.

Thank you,
Chris Rivenbark
Center Director/Owner

Mission

We believe that the first years of life are extremely important in influencing the eventual intellectual & personal development of the child. The center will dedicate its efforts to providing a happy, healthful environment to nurture the intellectual, physical and emotional growth of the children in our care. Our philosophy promotes understanding of the child's need to examine his environment, to be able to deal effectively with all kinds of people and situations, and to handle and use his/her own feelings themselves and their accomplishments, to be self-confident, and to have a well-developed self-esteem. We know that the numerous experiences we provide for them, the attitudes we show, and the behavior models we expect them to copy will influence their development.

Philosophy

Intellectually, our program and materials provide a solid foundation for the student. Goals for our children include: developing skills for creative thinking, making wise choices, arriving at workable solutions, living with responsibility, and developing and living with a sense of humor.

Physical education is an integral part of our program and very important for young children. It is important to help each child develop a strong healthy body and an informed attitude toward the care of his/her body.

An appropriate level of fitness can lead to a more confident outlook, emotional stability and better health in general. An effective physical education program can influence a child's total development.

We recognize the importance of the role of the teacher. Her training, natural abilities and personality are crucial in setting the stage for learning. By the experiences that the teacher makes possible for the children, and by her knowledge of child development and how children learn, she will be able to turn the classroom into a mini lab where children can "discover" for themselves about the real world. A teacher, having a soft voice, being enthusiastic listener in a creative classroom, can inspire her students.

Goals

The overall goals of Suncoast Academy Inc. are:

- o To provide a program where children develop intellectually, socially, physically and emotionally.
- o To provide opportunities for children to gain independence, self-control, and respect for others.
- o To provide an environment which will enhance the self-esteem of all children through successful learning experiences.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Registration Fees

Annual registration fees are payable when a child enrolls or re-enrolls and are not refundable. Any new enrollee who is placed on a waiting list will be required to pay the registration fee and will be given a day of space availability. Otherwise no space will be reserved. Submission of the registration forms and fee guarantee students enrollment on an agreed date.

Additional Fees

SUMMER CAMP - Theme related activities, crafts and games abound during the summer. A variety of field trips are offered for all children ages 4 and up. A summer calendar is provided with any extra cost listed on it.

DANCE PROGRAM - We have teamed up with Bay Area School of Dance Arts to offer dance classes to children (boys and girls) ages 3 and up. The children are transported to the studio once a week and are included in the recital at the end of the year. Many of our young students have continued on at the studio after graduating from preschool and are still building wonderful memories. The cost for this program is \$35.00 per month.

Tuition

All tuition fees are due and payable on Monday for the current week and can be paid on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis, IN ADVANCE. Late fees will be charged on all tuition fees not paid on time. Payment is due each week no matter if the child is present or absent in the facility. If a child attends one day of the week, full payment is due for the week even if the child is withdrawn that week. There will be no pro-ration of tuition fees.

Late Payment Fees

For tuition fees remaining unpaid on Monday or the first day your child attends daycare, a late payment fee of \$5.00 will be added. An additional fee of \$5.00 will be added for the second day of attendance in which the tuition fee remains unpaid. Unpaid accounts on the third day of attendance can result in the refusal of admittance of your child back into the center until all fees are paid in full.

Late Pick-up Fees

Parents arriving after the center closes at 6:00 PM must pay the late fee of \$1.00 per minute in CASH to the employee on site.

Returned Checks

A \$35.00 charge is assessed for all returned checks. The returned check must be picked up immediately upon notification. After two returned checks, all payments must be in CASH ONLY for a period of three months.

OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

Hours and Days of Operation

Our hours are 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday. It is important that you pick your child up on schedule. For children who are not picked up on time and remain in the facility after 6:00 PM, late fee charges will be added. Special arrangements may be made for half-day children in advance to remain on the hourly basis in case of need.

Holidays

We will be closed for the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- ML King Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- 4th Of July
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the day after
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day

There will be no reduction in tuition given for these holidays.

School Calendar

School calendar is posted on front bulletin board and included in the enrollment package.

Arrival Procedures

A daily sign-in sheet is provided on the front counter. It is the parent’s responsibility to sign your child in and out of the facility each day.

Departure Procedures

Parents will provide Suncoast Academy with the name, address and telephone number of all persons authorized to pick up their child. Anyone not recognized by staff will be asked to show identification. Anyone picking up must sign out on the sign-out sheet provided on front counter.

Attendance Policy

For any child participating in our school transportation program, notification of schedule changes must be given to center prior to 2:00 PM. We cannot assume responsibility for the child if not properly informed.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Our Teachers

It takes a special kind of person to work at Suncoast Academy, Inc. We hire the best qualified and most experienced child care professionals possible. Every staff member has completed or is in the process of completing the 40 hour child care training credential. The lead teacher in each preschool classroom has a CDA credential. All staff have received the Infant/Child First Aid and CPR training, and most importantly they LOVE children and teaching.

Background checks are completed on all staff members according to Hillsborough County child care licensure requirements.

Curriculum

Infant -Toddlers-Prek2’s-- Infant/Toddler Planning Guide: The curriculum guide for infants and toddlers correlate with the Early Learning Accomplishment Profile (E-LAP) instruments. Activities can be linked to emerging skills identified during the assessment process to facilitate a child’s developmental progress. **The Infant-Toddler Planning Guide** provides hundreds of activities to stimulate infant and toddler development through routine and planned activities. **The Infant-Toddler Planning Guide** contains strategies to ensure social/emotional development which fulfill the character development requirements of the School Readiness Program.

PreK3 – Houghton Mifflin PreK is a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that is aligned with critical age-appropriate learning goals, including those defined by Early Reading First, Head Start, NAEYC, IRA and NCTM. The integrated curriculum incorporates literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts, and social/emotional and physical development. **Houghton-Mifflin PreK** contains strategies to ensure social/emotional development which fulfill the character development requirements of the School Readiness Program.

PreK4/VPK –DLM Early Learning Express published by The Wright Group of McGraw Hill, includes four teacher edition manuals that each include nine thematic units filled with lesson plans that are based on the latest research. The curriculum also includes built-in accountability by providing an assessment in each manual covering the areas of Language and Early Literacy, Math, Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts, Health and Safety, Personal Development, Physical Development, and Technology. **DLM Early Childhood Express** contains strategies to ensure social/emotional development which fulfill the character development requirements of the School Readiness Program.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Open Door Policy

We encourage your interaction and participation in your child's day at our center. Parents have unlimited access to all areas of the building used for child care during hours of operation and are welcome to drop in at any time to visit their child and/or participate in as many activities as possible. You may attend field trips, class parties, special luncheons and events, or simply stop by to join the daily fun.

Communication

Communication between home and school is extremely important in order to ensure the success of your child. Please feel free to discuss any concerns you have with your child's teacher or the Center Director. It may not be possible for you to have a long conversation with your child's teacher at drop-off or pick-up times as the teachers are responsible for supervising all of the children in their care. If you have a special concern, a meeting or phone conference may be arranged.

There are a variety of ways that we communicate with parents:

- Email
- Parent Bulletin Boards
- Children's V-Files
- Notices and Letters
- Daily Reports for Infants and Toddlers

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent/Teacher Conferences for the VPK will be scheduled two times per year, or more often by request. This conference will summarize each child's progress in our program. Conferences will be scheduled in November and May. Parents of all other age groups are welcome to schedule a conference at any time.

Parent Education and Resources

Suggestions for Parents at home:

- o Read to your child every day.
- o Praise your child when he/she successfully completes a task.
- o Set aside a special time each day to listen to and talk with your child.
- o Discuss school activities, school friends, and new experiences
- o Establish bedtime and wake up routines
- o Have your child participate in every day chores

Separation

Children handle separation in many ways. The key to your child's adjustment will be a cooperative effort between the parents and the staff. Children need time to adjust to their "new" routine. As a result of this, while your child is adjusting you may see tears and hear "please, I want to go home." This is simply your child's way of handling a new routine.

During this adjustment period, it is very common for the tears to stop within minutes of the parent's departure. For the benefit of your child, please follow through on your departure after saying good-bye. When a parent says good-bye and does not leave, it creates a sense of fear in the child (ie. Maybe mommy's not leaving because something is wrong). As your child masters this new routine, the tears will cease. This is all part of the process of growing up, while at the same time helping to build a confident, self-assured child.

Grievance Procedure

The Director and staff members are in agreement that all parent concerns should be addressed as soon as they arise. If a parent has a concern related to their child in the classroom setting, the teacher should be the first source of communication. The Director and Asst. Director are available at all times for additional consultation and discussion on all issues concerning the school. Parents are invited to bring suggestions and questions concerning to the Director or Asst Director at any time.

DEVELOPMENT SCREENINGS POLICY:

Suncoast Academy is a special place for your child to learn and grow through programs designed to meet his or her individual needs. With parent permission all Suncoast Academy preschool students will be screened through the "Ages and Stages" Questionnaire.

This assessment will assist the program and staff in meeting any additional needs that may be identified to ensure the wellbeing of children's social, physical, intellectual, cognitive, and emotional development. All assessment information will be shared with parents.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Illness Policy

In compliance with child care licensure law, we have elected to care for children who are experiencing minor cold symptoms but are not exhibiting any signs of a contagious disease. If a child's condition worsens during the day, the parent will immediately be notified and decision will be made concerning the child's best welfare and care.

Parents will be asked to pick up their child immediately if they are exhibiting any of the following:

- o Fever (101 F or higher)—child needs to be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school
- o Nausea or vomiting
- o Diarrhea: runny or watery stools or 2 or more loose stools within last 4 hours.
- o Sore throat, loss of voice, hacking or continuous coughing, running nose with colored discharge.
- o Runny and/or crusty eyes: Watery, matted, and/or red/pink eyes are usually the signs of an eye infection
- o Unexplained rash
- o Head Lice (may not return child to care until ALL nits are removed)
- o Communicable diseases (chicken pox, roseola, conjunctivitis, mumps, measles, influenza, etc.)

This benefits your child and the other children. Your help at keeping your sick child home is appreciated.

Parents of a child with a diagnosed contagious condition are asked to notify us as soon as possible so that we may alert parents to watch for symptoms in their own children.

Medication Policy and Procedures

A signed authorization to dispense medication must be filled out each week for as long as needed. All medication must remain in the original container, labeled with the child's name, type and date of prescribed medication and put in a zip lock baggie. Please arrange your child's schedule as medication will only be given at lunch time and per directions on medications.

Emergency Procedures and Drills

Fire drills are held once a month. Our Risk Management Plan is at the front desk and there is also a copy in each classroom. You may request your own copy, if needed.

In case of severe weather we will follow the recommendations of the Hillsborough County School board in regards to school closings. Closings will be announced on the school answering machine, via email or notices posted on our exterior door.

Guidance and Discipline

Suncoast Academy's staff makes every effort to produce a positive, warm, trusting relationship between child and teacher. It is our belief that positive reinforcement along with a quality educational child care program will produce minimal discipline problems. Our purpose is to help your child retain control of their emotions and actions, not stop him/her from expressing feelings and moods.

Nutrition Policy: Meals and Snacks

All meals and snacks are prepared based on the recommended dietary allowances contained in the food pyramid. Morning snack and afternoon snack is provided every day. Lunch is provided Monday through Thursday, menu is posted on bulletin board and on our website (www.SuncoastAcademy.com). On Friday, please bring a lunch for your child in a lunch box with their name on it. All meals and snacks brought from home must meet child's nutritional and dietary needs. Please note due to limited space, we are not able to store your child's lunch in our refrigerator.

Parents may bring breakfast in for their child; however breakfast is from 6:30 AM until 8:00 AM. Please do not bring your child in with food after this time.

Birthdays

Classroom parties are welcomed and usually take place at our 8:30 AM snack time. Parents are responsible to bring birthday cake or cupcakes and/or any other party items needed.

STATEMENT OF RECEIPT OF HANDBOOK

I/We, _____, the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of _____, acknowledge that I/We have received a copy of Suncoast Academy’s Parent Handbook and have been given the opportunity to read the manual, ask questions about, and understand the policies contained therein. Furthermore, I/We agree to abide by the policies set forth in the manual.

I/We understand that the policies described in the Parent Handbook are not conditions of enrollment, and the language does not create a contract between Suncoast Academy and the parents. Suncoast Academy reserves the right to alter, amend, or otherwise modify these guidelines, in its sole discretion, without prior notice.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____