

Seedlings Academy Parent Handbook



Organically Nurturing One Child At A Time

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide a fully integrated preschool program to foster the development of each child's social, emotional, educational and physical growth to their full potential. We do this by providing the healthiest, safest, and highest quality preschool environment, both indoors and outdoors. Additionally, we create strong partnerships to support families in making healthy choices for their children and the environment.

Our Goal

To prepare children for successful future academic and social achievements as well as prepare each child to become an environmentally conscious and global citizen.



Honestly FREE of: chlorine, latex, lotions, fragrances, common allergens, phthalates, fragrances, optical brighteners, PVC, heavy metals, organotin (MBT, DBT, TBT) & harsh petrochemical additives.



Seedlings Academy reserves the right to make any changes to this handbook as needed. Should changes be made, all parents will be notified in writing.

About Seedlings Academy

Our Philosophy

At Seedlings Academy, we “organically nurture one child at a time.” Each child is an individual progressing at their own rate (socially, intellectually, emotionally, and physically). A preschool's effectiveness is based on the culture of the school as well as the quality and experience of its management and teachers. At Seedlings Academy we hire experienced staff and encourage the continuation of education to grow professionally.

We also realize the importance of communicating and working with you to build and foster an on-going relationship. Communication is key! With our open-door policy, we encourage you to speak directly to teachers and the director as well as visit the school at any time. In addition, special announcements and important information can be found on the bulletin board as you enter the school and on our Facebook page.

This parent handbook is the start of our communication process. Please review the entire Parent Handbook. You will need to sign the enrollment contract stating that you have received and read the Parent Handbook and return the enrollment contract with your child's enrollment packet prior to the first day of your child's attendance at Seedlings Academy.

Discipline Policy

Staff encourage all children to be responsible and caring individuals who respect themselves and others. Therefore, discipline is always administered in a loving and respectful manner. Your child's growing sense of independence may have them test the limits of acceptable behavior. This is when setting limits that young children can understand and can be consistently enforced is appropriate.

The following age-appropriate discipline techniques may be used:

- Staying one step ahead and distracting/redirection children from unsafe objects or activities.
- Having patience and providing support gives opportunities for the child to correct misbehavior and learn from these incidents.
- Noticing and praising good choices and/or behaviors.
- Modeling appropriate behavior/communication, in order to be a positive influence on our children.
- Providing time for children to play independently to allow them to choose and direct their activity and build confidence.

Under no circumstances is a child ever hit, spanked, shaken or otherwise disciplined physically. In addition, no child should be disciplined physically inside the school. Food will never be withheld by a child as a form of discipline.

If a child exhibits consistent behavior, which compromises the well-being and or education of others, Seedlings Academy will request a conference that includes the child's parents, the child's teacher and the Director to work on a behavior plan. If the behavior cannot be corrected within a reasonable time, the child's enrollment will be terminated. Additionally, Seedlings may refer to and recommend a referral to a child psychologist and pediatrician for medical consultation.

Termination of Enrollment Policy

In certain circumstances, it may be necessary for the Administrator to decide to discontinue a child's attendance. Every effort will be made to correct a problematic situation before a final decision is made. Termination of enrollment may be the result of the following:

- Abuse of other children, staff or property

- Disruptive or dangerous behavior
- The center's inability to meet the child's needs.
- Failure to supply all required paperwork in a timely manner.
- Failure to pay the required weekly tuition.

If you decide to terminate enrollment for any reason, you must provide written notice two weeks prior to the last day of enrollment. If written notification is not given two weeks prior to termination, two weeks of full tuition will be billed and due on the final day of enrollment.

Licensing

Seedlings Academy is licensed in the state of Florida by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). The program is accountable for the statewide licensure of Florida's childcare facilities. The purpose of the program is to ensure a healthy and safe environment for the children in childcare settings and to improve the quality of their care through regulation and consultation. The department ensures that licensing requirements are met through on-going inspections of childcare facilities. The current DCF license for Seedlings Academy is displayed in our front office. In addition to our state license, Seedlings Academy is also licensed as an Eco-friendly environment.

Hours of Operation and Late pick up

Seedlings Academy is open from 6:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. We are closed to observe the holidays indicated in your enrollment packet. Holidays are subject to change annually. If your child has not been picked up by 5:30 PM, you will be charged a late pick-up fee. **This fee is \$3.00 per minute per child and should be paid to the teacher at the time of pick up.**

If children are left in the center after closing, staff will follow these procedures:

- Try to contact you by phone
- Try to contact your emergency contacts
- Try to contact authorized pick-ups

If the above attempts are unsuccessful and you have failed to pick up your child 30 minutes past closing time, police or local authorities (Department of Children and Families) will be contacted.

Child/Staff Ratio

Seedlings Academy is staffed to meet or exceed all required ratios by DCF. Our teachers and the morning and afternoon assistants work together to provide your child with a safe and quality learning environment.

Registration Policy

To comply with state regulations, all registration papers must be completed and **placed on file prior to your child's first day of attendance at Seedlings Academy. All paperwork must be turned in 3 days prior to first day and director must confirm the file is complete.**

Our registration packet can be found on our website at www.Seedlingsacademy.com.

Registration forms include:

- Child enrollment application
- Physical and Immunization forms (2) from your child's Physician
- Enrollment contract
- Influenza form
- Allergy/Food permission form
- Stroller/Walker form

- Permission to photograph form
- Topical ointment authorization form
- Art & Activity form
- Enrollment questionnaire
- ACH form

*** Medical Physical and Immunization Forms **must be kept current**. For the safety of your child, any changes must be communicated to the office immediately. Outdated forms will keep your child from attending Seedlings Academy. Please remember to get updated forms when at the doctors.

Tuition Policy

Upon acceptance to Seedlings Academy a \$150 NON-REFUNDABLE yearly registration fee (\$80 per additional child) is required to hold your child's place in our program. The infant classroom requires yearly registration along with the first 2 weeks (NON-REFUNDABLE) these will then be credited to your tuition when your child begins. Your child is not officially enrolled until payment of the registration fee is received and all paperwork is submitted and approved. Enrollment is contracted for year-round arrangements, unless participating in the before/after care or summer camp program for school aged children.

Seedlings Academy tuition is based on the program in which your child is placed and is **due every Monday**. ACH is the ONLY form of payment Seedlings Academy takes. If other forms of payment are approved by the director, and tuition is not received by 5:00pm on the due date, a late fee of \$20.00 will be assessed PER DAY. If a check is returned for any reason, a \$30.00 bank charge will be assessed. Any person with 2 checks returned will be asked to make payment in the form of cash only.

Enrollment will be terminated at the discretion of the school for non-payment of tuition. There are no discounts, credits or refunds given for any reason (weather or illness.) In the event that any attorney fees and/or court costs are incurred by Seedlings Academy due to an attempt to secure tuition payments not received, you will be obligated to pay all costs associated with collection of fees owed.

Child Abuse Reporting Policy

The safety and well-being of the children is Seedlings Academy's first concern. Staff are mandated reporters of child abuse. If any staff member has suspicions that a child is being abused or neglected, they MUST make a report to the Florida Department of Children and Families.

Rights to photograph children

Seedlings Academy has the right to take photos for incidents and or accident purposes. We use photographs for documentation to share with parents, guardians and or higher authorities (ie: DCF, ELC, Health Department)

Child Custody Policy

If a parent/guardian is not legally able to pick your child up from Seedlings Academy, a copy of the current court order must be included in your child's file.

Attendance Policy

Parents are required to bring their child into the facility and sign them in on the computer each day. **To prevent class disruption, all children need to arrive at Seedlings Academy by 9AM.** Parents are responsible for the supervision of their child before their child arrives in their classroom and once the child is signed out of our care. Should your child need to arrive between the hours of 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. please make prior arrangements with the Director.

VPK Attendance Policy

Students need to be in attendance with a minimum of 80% of the VPK hours each month.

- If a child needs to be out of school exceeding the 80%/20% rule and it is due to health reasons a doctor's note will be required upon returning to school.
- If a child needs to be out of school exceeding the 80%/20% rule and it is due to a planned family vacation, previous approval by the director is required.

If your child is enrolled in the free 3-hour program and they exceed the 80%/20% rule for the school year prior to the end of the program, they will be dis-enrolled.

On the last day of each month a parent or legal guardian is required to sign the Student Attendance and Parental Choice Certificate short form.

Regardless of graduation dates, all VPK students are required to attend the last day of school. Parents of students enrolled in our wrap around program who do not attend the last day(s) of school will be responsible for payment to Seedlings Academy for any lost tuition due to absence on these days.

Tobacco/Drug Free Policy

Seedlings Academy is a smoke and drug free environment. **Smoking, Vaping and all other tobacco products are prohibited at all times on Seedlings Academy property, this includes the parking lot, buildings and playground.**

Accident/Injury Financial Responsibility Statement

Seedlings Academy is not responsible for medical bills related to or in conjunction with any accident, injury or illness that occurs while attending Seedlings Academy. Parent/guardians are responsible for all bills related to medical treatment of their child/children. Seedlings Academy makes every effort to prevent any accident or injury from occurring while in care.

Non-Discrimination policy

Seedlings Academy accepts children on a first-come, first-serve basis. Seedlings Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, employment status, housing status, ethnicity, national origin, or any other category recognized by State or Federal law.

Open door policy

Parents/Guardians are welcomed and encouraged to visit the school at any time throughout the day.

Seedlings Academy Learning Experience

Learning Philosophy and Curriculum

Children are constantly developing self-confidence, independence, learning, constructing their own knowledge and gaining an understanding of the world through everyday experiences. It is important to be conscious of the whole learning environment such as: play areas (inside and out), learning centers, and quiet areas. At this age children are learning to be individuals as well as attaining social skills.

In addition to the Creative Curriculum, Seedlings Academy incorporates a STEAM curriculum throughout your child's day. Our curriculum provides skills and experiences to help your child grow as an individual, become a successful part of a group setting and prepare them for successful learning in the years ahead.

What Is STEAM?

STEAM is an acronym which stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math. STEAM elements, when applied in our “age appropriate” day to day activities, provide an experimental and educational experience that excites, engages, and enriches your child’s hands-on learning.

Science – Prepares your child for success by scientific explorations to foster lifelong curiosity and skills to predict and test how things work.

Technology – Prepares your child for success by using technology as a learning tool to gain innovative and adoptive approaches to problem solving.

Engineering – Prepares your child for success by planning, testing, and constructive play to understand how things work and how to solve problems.

Arts (Art, Music and Dramatic Play) - Prepares your child for success by exploring and imagining, to develop physical, cognitive, emotional, vocal, listening, and problem-solving skills.

Math – Prepares your child for success by providing a foundation for understanding numbers, logic and spatial relationships.

Element	Skill Development	Sample Learning Tools
Science	Observation, exploration, questioning, predicting, cause and effect	Gardening, animal visitors, experiments, insects, weather elements, magnets, flashlights, mirrors, magnets, solar system models, weather elements
Technology	Logic and Reasoning, problem solving, innovation, use of new technologies, cause and effect	Computers, tablets, and simple machines like gears, wheels and pulleys and building sets
Engineering	Problem solving, design, logic and reasoning, cause and effect, fine and gross motor skills, trial and error	Building blocks, Legos, construction sets, magnets, sand and water tables, and gears
Arts Art Music Dramatic Play	Imagination, physical, cognitive, emotional, vocal, listening and problem solving skills	Painting, coloring, clay, plaster, yarn, felt, beads, ribbon, craft sticks Singing, musical instruments, dancing, musical tunes Dress up clothing and accessories, kitchen set
Math	Counting, operations, algebraic thinking, measuring, geometry and spatial sense	Counting tools, matching shapes, patterns, measuring cups and tape measures, unit blocks, money, cash register, peg number boards, monthly calendar

Child Safety Policies

Health Policy

For the protection of your child as well as the other children, we require that children do not attend school if they appear ill or have been ill within the past 24 hours, unless you have a doctor's note.

Upon recommendation of the Committee on Control of Infectious Diseases for the American Academy of Pediatrics, a child should be kept at home until they are symptom free, without medication, for 24 hours:

- Temperature of 100 or more
- Vomiting or diarrhea (more than 2 loose stools within 24 hours)
- Any symptom of a childhood disease such as Scarlet Fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox, whooping cough, etc.
- Sore throat, headache, stiff neck, continual coughing, or croup.
- Any unexplained rash or skin infection, boil, impetigo, pink eye, or other infection.
- Any signs of nits and/or lice.
- Loss of appetite
- Any other contagious or communicable disease

If a child develops a fever or other symptoms of illness while at school, they will be isolated and the parents/guardian will be contacted to take the child home.

If your child is sent home, they cannot return until they are symptoms free, without medication, for one full school day. Once an antibiotic has been given for one school day, your child may return to school. Some cases may require a doctor's note stating that the child is able to return to school, please speak with the Director if you are unsure. If your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease, please be sure to inform the Director. We make every effort to limit the spread of all communicable diseases and appreciate your cooperation. If in doubt, please keep your child/ren at home for a school day and seek medical care.

Please understand, we take this matter very seriously in an effort to keep everyone at Seedlings Academy healthy!

Administering Prescription and Over the Counter Drugs Policy

A form found in the front office must be completed, in order for Seedlings Academy to administer prescription medication to your child. Medication must be brought to school by the parent or guardian in its original container with the pharmacy label bearing the child's first and last name, and dosing instructions intact. All medication **must be** handed to the school Director.

A doctor must prescribe over the counter drugs (aspirin, cough syrup, or cough drops) to your child, if we are to administer them. You will be required to complete the drug administration form in the front office. All over the counter drugs must have a copy of the original prescription from your child's Physician. No over the counter drugs will be given contrary to the label's directions, unless accompanied with a note from your child's Physician.

It is against school policy for these non-prescribed medications to be brought to school by the child. If your child does bring medication of any kind to school, we will secure it, and a parent will be asked to pick it up from the school. This is for the protection of your child and other children.

Head Lice

Head lice is a very common occurrence in young children and has nothing to do with cleanliness. Lice is very easily transmitted by leaning back in an upholstered chair where someone had previously sat who had head lice, sharing caps or helmets, hair accessories, brushes, combs, even sitting close and touching heads. Randomly checks are conducted by office personnel. If head lice are found on a child, the following steps are taken:

- Parents are notified and the child must be picked up from school.
- That child's head must be treated with a product formulated to remove head lice.
- Nits must be removed with a special nit comb included in the product.
- The child will be excluded from school the following day.
- Upon returning to school state health laws require examination of hair and scalp by office personnel before returning to school
- A handout of additional information regarding lice is given to parents at the time of pick-up.

If your child is sent home with lice, verification of treatment will be required before your child is allowed to return. Only acceptable form of verification is a dated receipt. Upon returning to the center, your child will be checked by a staff member of Seedlings Academy as we maintain a "NO NIT" policy.

To avoid infestation, it is important to inspect all family members for two weeks and treat if infected. Nits on the scalp may be seen more easily on the hair at the back of the neck and above the ears.

Please be assured that we will do everything possible to prevent infestation in our center. With your support, we will stop the lice from spreading.

Emergency/Non-Emergency Pick Up Policy

Only the person(s) listed on the enrollment form will be allowed to pick up your child from Seedlings Academy.

If a person not listed on the enrollment form needs to pick up your child/ren due to an emergency, we ask that you contact the director by phone.

Anyone authorized to pick up your child/ren MUST have a valid photo ID with them.

Updated Contact Information

A current enrollment form is required for each child in our care. It is VERY important that we have current contact information, including phone numbers, address, and employment phone numbers on file. These numbers are used if your child is sick or injured so it is critical that we are able to reach you. If the information provided should change during the year, please notify the office immediately to update your form.

Emergency Care Policy

Our center has an emergency preparedness plan in place in the event that an emergency should occur while your child/ren in our care. In order to prepare children for the unlikely need to evacuate the building, our center conducts monthly fire drills/periodic severe weather drills.

At least one member of our staff is always on hand who is certified in First Aid/CPR. In the case of a minor accident/injury, such as a scraped knee from the playground, staff will administer basic treatment and TLC. You will be informed of any accident upon your child's pick up and required to review and sign an accident report. This form will be placed in the child's student file. If more care is needed, the parents will be contacted immediately to assist in deciding the most appropriate course of action.

Severe Weather/Hurricane Policy

Seedlings Academy will follow the Lee County Public School systems hurricane policy. If a hurricane threatens Lee County during the summer, we will inform parents of any possible closing. Seedlings Academy may need to remain closed after a hurricane if there is excessive damage to the building or playground area, or a continued power outage. Please be sure to check the Seedlings Academy Facebook page for updates.

Biting

Biting is a very common behavior among toddlers, which means there are a lot of concerned parents out there. You are not alone. The good news is that there is a lot that parents and caregivers can do to reduce and, ultimately, eliminate biting.

To set the stage for effectively addressing this challenge, avoid calling or thinking of your child as a “biter” and ask others not to use this term. Your child is not a “biter”, they have bitten another child. Labeling children can actually lead to them taking on the identity assigned to them, which can intensify biting behavior rather than eliminate it.

Children bite in order to cope with a challenge or fulfill a need. For example, your child may be biting to express a strong feeling (like frustration), communicate a need for personal space (maybe another child is standing too close) or to satisfy a need for oral stimulation. Trying your best to understand the underlying cause of the biting will help you develop an effective response. This makes it more likely that we will be successful in eliminating the behavior. (1)

Depending on the ages of the children and the circumstances involved, actions might include:

- Shadowing the child
- Discussing a better solution for all children involved.
- Separation of involved children
- Giving the child something appropriate to bite on.
- Ensuring that the environment provides enough challenging activities.
- Maintaining a log to track when the behavior occurs.
- Conferences with parents to discuss the child's actions at home, parental discipline techniques, search for outside resources, etc.

Just as any other behavior issue regarding a child is confidential, the name of the child that has bitten another child is also confidential, in order to ensure the privacy of the child and family and prevent bias from others enrolled in the center. We will keep you informed as to what steps are being taken.

Dress Policy

Comfort and safety must be considered in selecting the clothing and shoes your child wears to Seedlings Academy. Your child should wear comfortable play clothing and close-toed style shoes for outdoor play. Some sandals and flip flops are not appropriate and can be dangerous when actively playing.

A complete change of clothes, including socks, underwear, shorts, t-shirt is required in case of an emergency. If your child is being potty trained, please send three outfits and sets of socks to school. A large zip lock bag, clearly marked with your child's name, should be used to store your child's change of clothes. All clothing should be labeled with the child's first and last name.

Sunscreen Policy

Sunscreen is a necessary part of life in Southwest Florida year-round. Parents should be aware that outside play is important for the growth and development of children and as such, we have outdoor play on a daily basis (weather permitting) and sunscreen should be applied daily at home or before the child/ren enter the school. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure the child/ren have sunscreen applied before school.

Infant room

An infant's primary play space is the floor, so we try harder to ensure that their play space is as clean as possible. One way we do this is by requiring all people entering the infant room to wear shoe covers over their shoes, socks or bare feet. All staff members are required to wear shoe covers during the day as well. When you leave the room, please feel free to either take the shoe covers with you for future use or place them back in the basket for the next person.

Supply Policy

All supplies, including diapers, wipes, diaper cream, sunscreen and insect spray are provided by Seedlings Academy. Items needed for rest time such as a fitted crib sheet to cover the rest mat and a small blanket which can be stored in the classroom each week. Items will be sent home each Friday to be washed. ***Please remember to bring these items each Monday AM.*** If you prefer to bring in these items each day, please discuss them with your child's teacher.

Meals and Snacks Policy

Seedlings Academy will provide healthy snacks, meals, and beverages to children. New foods will be introduced to your children to help expand their palates. We rotate the menu every 5 weeks. Menu items are posted on the parent information board found in the front entrance.

Allergy Policy

Seedlings Academy will accommodate, to the best of our ability, any allergy restrictions any of the children in our care have. It is the responsibility of parents to keep Seedlings aware of any food allergies as they may develop. Certain allergies are unable to be accommodated because of the nature of our facility, but we will make every effort to do so if feasible. Besides food allergies and seasonal allergies (pollen, latex etc.) please inform the Director so they may be addressed.

Celebrating Birthdays and Holidays Policy

Children love to celebrate birthdays, holidays, and other important occasions. We are happy to help celebrate these days in our classrooms with a special treat. You are welcome to share ***store bought items*** with children in their class. Make arrangements with the teacher PRIOR to bring treats for them to share.

Please be sensitive to children's feelings. If a birthday is celebrated away from school, please mail invitations if all classroom students are not invited. If you invite the entire class, feel free to distribute invitations in class by giving them to the teacher who will place them in each child's folder.

Items brought from home

Items such as backpacks, balloons, gum, toys, play guns and other pretend weapons are prohibited and should be left at home or in the car. Seedlings Academy is not responsible for lost or damaged items. Gum and candy should also be saved for treats at home as it is not permitted at Seedlings Academy.

The only items to be brought from home are items used during nap.

Transitioning to a New Room

Children are transitioned to their new classroom at the start of each new school year.

Parent Communication Policy

Parent/teacher communication is the key to your child's success at Seedlings Academy. We communicate daily through our ProCare App. The school will send you an invitation upon enrollment. Folders are provided for each child that will assist us in sharing important information. We will provide basic information about your child's day for our infant thru 3 year old Seedlings. Please review your child's folder daily. We encourage our 4-year-old/VPK Seedlings to share their days with your family. If you feel you'd like additional information, please feel free to talk with the teachers.

Meetings with teachers and management can be scheduled as needed. If you have a time sensitive message, please contact your Seedlings Academy director directly at:

Cape Coral: - infoCC@seedlingsacademy.com – 239-549-8898

Fort Myers: - infoFM@seedlingsacademy.com – 239-931-7977

Screening and Referrals

Individual assessments on your child/ren may be done by a Seedlings Academy staff members using the Ages & Stages ASQ Developmental Screening Tool. This screening tool will help determine if your child may be in need of further screening from a professional for additional, outside services. An open line of communication regarding your child will always be maintained.

Questions/Comments/Concerns

Seedlings Academy welcomes any suggestions, questions, comments, concerns, or complaints. The Director has an open-door policy and is available to discuss any concerns, suggestions, or complaints from the parents or guardian.

Welcome to the Seedlings Academy Family!

(1)"SUPPORT US." *ZERO TO THREE: Why Do Toddlers Bite? Finding the Right Response*. ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families, 1 Jan. 2014. Web. 28 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/challenging-behavior/chew-on-this-resources-on-biting.html>>.