



Georgia Academy
OF EARLY LEARNING

Parent Handbook

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Philosophy

We believe all people should have opportunities to learn and develop to their full potential. We believe with the nurturing, stimulating environment provided at Georgia Academy that children can become contributing adults, who are responsible, independent, and self-sufficient.

Mission

Our mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of the children, families, staff members, and communities we serve. By continuing to uphold our school to the highest standards, we ensure that our children are engaged in an enriched learning environment and that our staff members are committed to ongoing professional development. It is essential that our school goes beyond meeting children's basic needs. We will provide interaction, stimulation, affection, security and learning through hands on exploration and discovery.

Value Statement

We will ensure the success of our mission by adhering to the following value statements:

- We will always provide the highest quality of customer service to our clients.
- We will provide consistent, age-appropriate educational experiences for the children we serve.
- We will always provide quality care which ensures that each child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs are met to the highest level possible.

Equal Opportunity Statement

Georgia Academy is an equal opportunity educational provider and employer. We do not discriminate on the basis of a person's race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, and/or age in educational programs or activities that it operates, or in employment decisions.

Enrollment

Enrollment Requirements:

Georgia Academy enrolls children from six weeks through twelve years of age. Every child enrolled at Georgia Academy must have an Enrollment Application on file. All applications must be filled out completely by parents prior to the child's first day in the center. Additionally, we require a child-care immunization certificate from your child's physician within thirty (30) days of the actual enrollment date. When these certificates expire, please make sure they are updated.

Enrollment information is kept on file in the center through our computer database. It is important that parents update the information as changes happen. All information on children and families is kept confidential.

Hours and Days of Operation

Georgia Academy is a full year program. Our normal hours of operation are 6:30a.m. to 6:30p.m. A late fee of \$2.00 per minute is charged for every minute after closing that the child remains on the premises, payable at the time your child is picked up. Georgia Academy will be open Monday through Friday throughout the year except for the observance of the following holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. Should the traditional holiday fall on a Saturday, we will be closed the Friday before. If the traditional holiday falls on a Sunday, we will be closed on the following Monday. We will close on days of inclement weather when closing is determined necessary by Georgia Academy administrators. If we are aware of a closing in advance, we will post a notice at our school. In the event of inclement weather, please check our website or Facebook page or call the center for additional information prior to transporting your child to the center. We will be closed four additional days per year for our quarterly Teacher Workdays. You will receive an Annual School Calendar at the beginning of each school year specifying the exact dates of each closing.

Curriculum

Georgia Academy's EXCLUSIVE 2400 Curriculum, provides hands on, center-based activities designed to develop emerging skills. Our curriculum utilizes research-based programs such as GELDS to build an educational foundation for the children in our center. In addition, the curriculum supplements the teachers' education in early childhood development, while allowing them room to be creative! The children delight in the fun, interactive activities; they develop a love for learning while they grow, play, and have fun!

Infants and Toddlers - 2400 Curriculum for infants and toddlers incorporates stimulating activities, promoting growth and development through daily routines. Established in an atmosphere of caring, love and hugs, 2400 Curriculum gives teachers fun activities to do with little ones all day even during the routine of eating! Infant and toddler guides follow a weekly format and teachers choose several daily activities for each child. Lesson plans are personalized and crafted to meet each child's specific needs.

Twos, Threes, and Fours - For two-, three-, and four-year old children, 2400 Curriculum follows a daily activity format that matches the ever-changing needs of each rapidly developing child! Each age group has a separate curriculum that is specific to their educational and emotional needs, interests, and activity level. Lessons for these age groups incorporate small and large group time activities, along with center-based

activities. The activities in 2400 Curriculum meet learning objectives for each child based on research and best practices.

School Age - 2400 Curriculum for school age children takes into consideration the special needs of this active group. Whether they want to work on a creative art project, do homework, or just relax, 2400 Curriculum assists the school age teacher in creating a fun environment where schoolers want to be!

Adjustment Period

We know that changing or starting a new school isn't easy. The first day, especially, is often full of excitement and anxiety over the unknown. That's why, at Georgia Academy, we focus on making the transition as welcoming and worry free as possible, for your child and for you. To ensure that's the case, here are a few things to keep in mind. On your child's first day, you will receive instructions and log in information for ProCare, our parent communications app. You can log in at any time to see what your child is up to, to send a message to your child's teacher, or to check your balance. When your child goes to class, we will place their belongings in a personal space labeled with their name and photo. Throughout the day, we will continue to care for and comfort them, doing our best to ensure every child feels comfortable and safe. It typically takes 2-4 weeks for children to adjust completely. Drop offs may be difficult in the beginning, but over time they will love coming to school. Every child will acclimate on their own timeline. Our job is to help them along, as they learn to trust their new environment as an extension of home.

ProCare

ProCare is an application our teachers use to record your child's activities and provide you with updates throughout the day. This allows you to check in and view everything from naps to snacks and provides you with a complete history of your child's experience in our program. Photos are stored safely and securely in a journal format and allow you to see just how much fun your child is having! Whether it be at work, home, or on the go, through ProCare's mobile app, you'll receive real time updates on your child's activities to your email and smartphone. You can visit the ProCare website, where you'll find ProCare's pages dedicated to Internet Safety and FAQ's, as well as a Contact Us page if you have any other specific questions. Just go to schools.procareconnect.com/login.

Preferred Pick-Up Time

We request that all Infant and Toddler children (Rooms 1-5) arrive by 9:00am, and Preschool and School-aged children (Rooms 6-9) arrive no later than 8:00am. This is not strictly enforced but helps with scheduling and preparing for the day. If you need to arrive later, please call the center prior to your child's preferred arrival time to make us

aware of their attendance. If children are not here by their preferred arrival time and we have not heard from you, they will be marked as absent.

What to Bring

All children will receive a school bag to keep their belongings from home in. Anything your child brings in should fit inside this bag. Bags will be checked daily in the classroom. Diapers and diaper creams will be removed from your child's bag and placed in their personal storage space, but extra clothes and pull ups will always stay in your child's bag so that you know when extra clothes are needed. We will let you know if diapers or creams are running low through the ProCare app. Please provide the following:

- Infants Only:
 - Bottles (Labeled with Name/Date) (If Applicable)
 - A Sleep Sack (Labeled with Name) (Cannot Swaddle)
- Diapers (Sleeve Labeled with Name/Date) (If Applicable)
- Diaper Rash Cream (Labeled with Name) (Only If Necessary)
- At Least 2 Sets of Extra Clothes (Labeled with Name) (Seasonally Appropriate)
- At Least 1 Pair of Extra Shoes (Labeled with Name) (Close-Toed)
- Jacket or Coat for Cold Days (Labeled with Name)
- Pacifier (Labeled with Name) (Only If Necessary)

What Not to Bring

Our toys and equipment have been carefully selected to provide a safe and stimulating environment and they are shared by all children. Georgia Academy is not responsible for the loss or damage of personal belongings. Each child's bag will be checked daily. Please do not bring the following:

- Toys from Home
- Plastic Bags/Other Choking Hazards (i.e. necklaces, small toys, coins, etc.)
- Anything with the label "Keep out of reach of children." (i.e. chapstick, lotions, diaper creams etc.) (If necessary, must be checked in up front, and stored securely away from children)
- Food from Home (with the exception of children enrolled in our Infant Program or with a doctor's note.)
- Wipes (with the exception of children with a doctor's note.)
- Water Bottles/Sippy Cups
- Blankets or Lovies from Home
- Money

Clothing

Dress your child for lots of fun activities! Clothing should be loose and comfortable and layered for warmth in cold weather. Closed-toed shoes with rubber soles are necessary to avoid serious falls and are required during all activities. Please mark your child's name clearly on all articles of clothing, including shoes. All children are required to have a complete change of clothes, including socks. Georgia Academy is not responsible for the loss or damage of clothing.

Birthdays

Your child's birthday is a special occasion, and we enjoy celebrating with fun and special snacks to recognize your child during the day. If you notify the Director, arrangements can be made for you to provide a pre-packaged treat (ingredients must be listed) for the class. Parents are always encouraged to celebrate with us. We do ask that gift giving be reserved for home.

Medicines

Georgia Academy administers medications only at 11:00 a.m. and 3:00p.m. It is our policy to administer prescription medications or over the counter medications with a doctor's note only. Non-Prescription Topical Medications also require authorization from the parent. This includes any medication used for diaper rash, insect repellents (containing DEET) or sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher) that is applied. In order for staff to give medication, the parent must fill out the medication form. All information on the form must be complete. Medication forms must be updated and signed weekly, as applicable, to ensure proper ongoing dispensing.

STATE LAW REQUIRES THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION TO DISPENSE MEDICATIONS: Date form is completed, full name of the child, name of medication, prescription number, if any, dosage, the dates to be given, the time of day medication is to be dispensed, and signature of parent. The school will notify you in the event of any adverse reaction to the medication.

Emergency Care

In case of an emergency, we will notify you and/or your physician immediately. If you are unavailable, we will notify the person(s) listed on your child's enrollment application. First aid will be administered immediately, if necessary. Our staff members are trained in CPR and First Aid. We have made arrangements with a local hospital to provide emergency care. It is important to keep your emergency contacts and numbers current.

Nutrition

A nutritious breakfast, lunch and two snacks are prepared at the school and served daily. The weekly menus are posted on the ProCare App. Table manners are practiced and conversation is directed toward information about the foods served and good nutrition.

Meals are provided for all children, so children should not bring additional food into the school unless your child requires a special diet. Georgia Academy does not permit food brought from home except in the cases of severe allergies, a medical condition or cultural/religious dietary restrictions. In these cases, food must be labeled with the child's name and the date. Food requiring refrigeration will be stored in the kitchen refrigerator. Food from home must be in its original pre-packaged state and cannot contain peanuts. Food will not be shared. Written instructions for the diet from the child's physician must be provided, and an allergy form must be filled out by the parent. Any exceptions must be approved by the Director.

Child Care Licensing does not allow anyone in the school to mix any type of formula. Parents of infants are responsible for supplying pre-mixed formula, commercial baby food, and completing a current and accurate feeding plan form. Parents must bring in the number of formula filled plastic bottles needed for the day. The bottles should be marked with the baby's name and current date.

Field Trips

Field trips are an exciting opportunity for your child to learn more about the community or enjoy recreation away from the school. These adventures for Pre-K four-year-olds through school age children are planned and announced to you in advance. You must give written permission for each trip on a Field Trip Permission Form. In order to keep our children safe when away from the center, we ask that all children wear their Georgia Academy T shirts with printed center address and phone number. We welcome you to attend any Georgia Academy field trip. Please be aware that parents will need to arrange their own transportation as we are unable to allow parents to ride our buses under the provisions of our insurance policy. We adhere to state teacher/child ratios during field trips.

SIDS Policy

We have a number of policies designed to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Infants, unless otherwise ordered by a physician, are placed on their backs to sleep. We do not allow pillows, quilts, comforters, stuffed toys, etc. in a crib with a child younger than 12 months.

Safety

Release of Child to Others - Under no circumstances will Georgia Academy release your child to anyone without specific authorization from the parent. Make sure the staff is aware of your child's arrival and departure. You must accompany your child in and out of school. Our center staff will not allow any child to leave without an authorized adult to accompany them out of the building.

Traffic - Our building was designed with spacious parking for your convenience. If you plan to spend any time in the center, please park in the spaces away from the front door. Please do not stop or park in the Forward Only Lane.

Fire and Emergency - Your child's safety is of the highest priority at Georgia Academy. Our school is equipped with fire sprinklers, an electronically monitored fire alarm system, controlled access system, security cameras, flood lights on the outside of the building, emergency exit lights over the exit doors, and an intercom in all rooms. Safety is emphasized regularly in our staff meetings and in all classrooms. Monthly fire drills and quarterly tornado, lockdown and evacuation drills are part of our safety plan. The emergency evacuation plan and diagram is posted in each room. In the unlikely event the school is severely damaged and considered unsafe, plans are made in advance to evacuate to a safe location. Should such an emergency occur, the Director will notify you and post a notice at the school.

Transportation - The safe transportation of our children is of utmost importance to us. Procedures for transportation have been established to ensure safety and to account for children at all times in all situations. Our buses are equipped with a fire extinguisher, and a first aid kit. A transportation checklist is used for head counts each time the children enter or exit the bus. Each child's medical record, name, address, phone number, and emergency numbers are on record in the bus with the staff person in charge. Our buses are inspected daily before they are driven. All staff members that qualify to drive the buses have the proper license, current CPR and First Aid training, and have been tested in road safety. Our drivers follow all transportation laws. Buses are checked thoroughly after children disembark.

Illness

We take every precaution to safeguard your child against illness. However, most children experience a normal number of infections. In the event of illness, our staff will comfort your child until you can come and take your child home or to the physician. If your child appears ill, has a high fever, is vomiting, or shows evidence of a communicable disease, please do not bring them to the school. If your child has such symptoms and is present at Georgia Academy, you will be asked to pick them up immediately. This requirement is imposed by the State and is intended for the protection of all the children.

A child shall not be accepted nor allowed to remain at the center if the child has the equivalent of a one hundred and one (101) degree or higher oral temperature and/or another contagious symptom, such as, but not limited to, a rash or diarrhea or a sore throat. As determined by the Director, it may be necessary for a previously ill child to present an approval for re-admittance signed by a physician. We will post a written notification on ProCare if a communicable disease is introduced into the school. Parents MUST notify the school immediately if their child contracts a communicable disease. Children with a communicable disease cannot attend the school. Georgia Academy follows the state's recommended procedures for the exclusion of sick children from the school, per the Communicable Disease chart. The chart is posted near the front desk.

Handwashing

Adherence to proper hand washing procedures is one of the primary ways that we reduce the spread of disease at our school. Children wash either independently or with staff assistance. Children who are developmentally able to learn personal hygiene are taught hand washing procedures and are monitored. Hand washing is required by all staff, volunteers, and children as hand washing reduces the risk of transmission of infectious diseases. We ask that all parents wash their hands upon entering the classrooms, as this also helps to reduce the spread of germs.

Children and adults wash their hands: on arrival for the day, after diapering or using the toilet, after handling body fluids (e.g., blowing or wiping a nose, coughing on a hand, or touching any mucus, blood, or vomit), before meals and snacks, before preparing or serving food, or after handling any raw food that requires cooking (e.g., meat, eggs, poultry), after playing in water that is shared by two or more people, after handling pets and other animals or any materials such as sand, dirt, or surfaces that might be contaminated by contact with animals, when moving from one group to another (e.g., visiting) that involves contact with infants and toddlers/twos.

Adults also wash their hands before and after feeding a child, before and after administering medication, after assisting a child with toileting and after handling garbage or cleaning.

Contact with Blood or Potentially Infectious Materials

Our staff take precautions to avoid contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials. All bodily fluids are considered potentially infectious. Our staff wear gloves when we may come into contact with blood, other potentially infectious materials, mucous membranes and nonintact skin. Once gloves are contaminated or damaged, they are replaced. We do not reuse disposable gloves, under any circumstances. Areas that may have been contaminated by bodily fluids are cleaned using a disinfectant solution approved by state licensing regulations.

Diaper Changing Procedures

The diaper changing table is sanitized after each use. Soiled clothing is not rinsed out due to state regulations. Instead, these items are placed in a Ziploc bag and sent home.

Used diapers are placed in the diaper pails located in the classrooms. Staff members wash their hands before and after each diaper change and wear gloves while changing. Staff members also wash the children's hands after each change. When a child is on the changing table, a staff member will always have at least one hand on the child to protect against falls. Diaper rash ointment may be applied per parent instructions, provided a Non-Prescription External Preparations Authorization form has been completed. The complete step by step procedure for diaper changing is posted by each changing table. All diaper changes are documented on the ProCare App.

Potty Training Procedures

Potty training usually occurs in our toddler classrooms. Our staff will communicate with your family to ensure that our efforts align with your home potty training procedure. We welcome your input! Our facility is specially equipped with child size toilets to help children make this transition in a comfortable and safe manner.

We will do our best to help your child have a successful and stress-free potty-training experience. We understand that accidents happen and are to be expected. Please dress your child in "user friendly" clothing, particularly when they first begin potty training. Your child needs to be able to pull his/her pants or dress up and down without difficulty. Diapers or pull ups with Velcro on the sides are preferable. Items that you may want to avoid include shirts that snap in the crotch, belts, and overalls. Please send two changes of clothing, plus one extra pair of shoes. Your child's teacher will notify you when it is time to try "big boy/big girl" underwear. This will enable us to ensure that your child will remain comfortable throughout the day.

Positive Guidance and Discipline

Proactive discipline improves children's self-esteem and problem solving skills and encourages pro social behavior. This helps the school maintain an atmosphere of warmth and understanding.

It also helps children develop as individuals and as part of a group. Our policy is to use *Time In* as opposed to *Time Out*. This strategy creates a nurturing situation where the child's dignity remains intact. Our discipline and guidance procedures include: providing interesting choices of activities, redirecting children away from problems and into positive interactions, providing consistent positive communication of positive behavior with minimal attention given to misbehavior, simple rules that are consistent, enforced, and clearly communicated to children, allowing children to problem solve

among themselves without teacher interference, and arranging the environment to promote positive behavior and self-control. Providing children with the opportunity and motivation to make choices helps them to: function independently, develop social skills through gentle guidance, respect the needs and rights of others, adapt to routines and simple rules, become a responsible group member, and build positive self-esteem.

When negative behaviors disrupt the learning environment, we may suggest a behavioral plan for home and school. In extreme circumstances, we may determine that the child's emotional and educational needs may be better met in another setting. It is our policy not to release the names of children involved in behavioral incidents to other parents. We maintain confidentiality and will only discuss your child with you.

Policy Regarding Investigations and Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

Georgia Academy follows the state rules and regulations for child care learning centers regarding the reporting of suspected child abuse, and cooperates with authorities during any investigation of suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. All employees are considered mandated reporters. A mandated reporter is an individual who holds a professional position (as a social worker, physician, teacher, or counselor) that requires him or her to report to the appropriate state agency cases of child abuse that he or she has reasonable cause to suspect. Per the state rules and regulations, any suspected incidents of child abuse, neglect or deprivation shall be reported to the local County Department of Family and Children Services in accordance with state law. Further information regarding reporting suspected abuse is available for families to review in our front lobby in the Rules for Child Care Learning Centers.

In-Home Babysitting

Georgia Academy does not render childcare services off of its premises, except in the event of field trips which have been authorized in advance by the parent. We prohibit our staff from assuming such responsibility. Georgia Academy staff members are selected and retained only on the basis of their fitness for rendering childcare services in a controlled and fully supervised childcare program. Georgia Academy offers no assurance of the fitness of its staff members for performing these and other services (such as transporting children or caring for them in the home) in an environment which is not professionally supervised, and none should be implied or inferred under any circumstances. If parents arrange for off-site care, the staff member undertakes such service on his own behalf and not as an employee of Georgia Academy. The staff member's continued employment with Georgia Academy is placed in jeopardy if they choose to provide off site services to our clients, as it is against our employment policies.

Tuition Express

Tuition Express allows us to process payments safely, quickly and efficiently. Tuition Express is a PCI Level 1 Service Provider. Automated payments are proven more secure than paying by check, as the potential for check fraud and identity theft are eliminated. Additional information is available at TuitionExpress.com.

Registration Fee

An annual registration fee shall be charged for each child at the time of enrollment, renewable each year thereafter, and due and payable by January 15th of each year.

Tuition

The tuition is determined on an annual basis, payable weekly or monthly and due in advance on a specified day of each week. Our general policy is to adjust our fees annually, if necessary. Parents will receive at least a month's notice, in writing of any fee adjustments.

Late Charges, Penalties, and Returned Checks

All registration fees and tuition payments are due as indicated at the time of enrollment. It is late if not paid by the due date. A late charge shall be automatically added to the tuition for that week and for each week thereafter that a balance is carried forward.

If an account becomes delinquent, you will need to make arrangements to make payment. In the event arrangements to make payment are not made, Georgia Academy may, at its discretion, dismiss the child and the parent shall remain responsible for the balance due and any expenses incurred by Georgia Academy in the pursuit of payment.

If your check for tuition is returned to Georgia Academy, a service charge will be assessed. This charge, along with the tuition, is payable immediately.

Absences and Vacations

Tuition and other fees must be paid in full without deduction for absences of any duration or for any cause, and without substitution of any other days of attendance as "make up" days. Georgia Academy has this policy because staffing and other operational costs are incurred on the basis of fixed levels of enrollment, and because few of these costs are eliminated when the child is temporarily absent. After one year of continued enrollment at Georgia Academy, one week of absence from the center is available at no charge. Also, each year, families will be allowed two weeks of half price tuition if your child misses an entire week due to illness. Your account must be current

and in good standing to receive these benefits. Your child's place in the class will be maintained.

Grievance Policy

By enrolling your child in Georgia Academy, you are agreeing to abide by the policies and procedures outlined in the parent handbook. If you have a problem regarding curriculum, a staff member, a student, etc., we request that you follow the steps below until the problem is resolved.

First, raise the issue directly, and as soon as possible, with the staff member most directly involved. If this does not resolve the problem, arrange for a meeting with the director to discuss the situation. Documentation of the issue is required of the staff, parent, and the director. Hopefully, all parties will be able to resolve the matter at hand. If you need to discuss the situation further, please contact the school's owner. (Communication should be open and honest, focusing on the issue and not the person. This includes listening carefully and respectfully while the other person is talking, and exercising responsibility and mutual respect; respect by staff for parents' special relationships with their children; respect by parents for staff as professionals. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times during this process.)

Withdrawal Policy

Georgia Academy requires at least a two-week advance written notice of withdrawal from the center for full time and part time students. The Withdrawal Form is available from management. The obligation for full payment of tuition and other fees will continue until the date indicated by the parent as the date of withdrawal on the Withdrawal Notice Form. If parents fail to provide written notice, they will remain responsible for the full tuition for the two (2) weeks after the child's last day of attendance plus any late charges or penalties which shall accrue until full payment is received. In any situation where the child is temporarily withdrawn from Georgia Academy, and regular payment of tuition has been temporarily suspended by the parent, the enrollment may be terminated. Reenrollment will be based on availability of space, and an additional registration fee may be required. We notify parents of children whose behavior endangers themselves, staff or other children. These children may be asked to leave the center. Georgia Academy reserves the right to disenroll a child from the program should it become necessary. Every effort is made to avoid this process, but when staff and management have tried and been unsuccessful in correcting inappropriate behavior, the child will be disenrolled.

State Licensing

Our center is regulated by:

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
670 East Tower Atlanta, Georgia 30334
404-656-5957, 1-888-442-7735
<http://dec.al.ga.gov>

A copy of the Rules for Child Care Learning Centers is located at:
[http://dec.al.ga.gov /documents/ CCLCRulesandRegulations.pdf](http://dec.al.ga.gov/documents/CCLCRulesandRegulations.pdf)

Thank You

Thank you for choosing Georgia Academy. Please let us know how we can assist you in making your time with our school a positive, memorable experience for your family.