



Smart Start Academy

Parent Handbook

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Jersey City NJ 07307*

*462 Central Avenue
Jersey City, NJ 07307*

*178-180 Newark Avenue
Jersey City, NJ 07306*

*532 Jersey Avenue
Jersey City, NJ 07302*

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Program Information

Curriculum

At Smart Start Academy our curriculum of choice is the Creative Curriculum. The Creative Curriculum is an early childhood curriculum that focuses on project-based investigations as a means for children to apply skills. This curriculum addresses four areas of development: social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language. Our educators are guided while creating thematic units designed to support children's natural curiosity and stimulate their creativity. Our teachers offer their students the opportunity to work in depth, giving them the time they need to reflect, consolidate and transfer their learning.

The Creative Curriculum for Preschool is based on five fundamental principles. They guide practice and help us understand the reasons for intentionally setting up and operating our preschool programs in particular ways. The principles are as follows:

- Positive interactions and relationships with adults provide a critical foundation for successful learning.
- Social-emotional competence is a significant factor in school success.
- Constructive, purposeful play supports essential learning.
- The physical environment affects the type and quality of learning interactions.
- Teacher-family partnerships promote development and learning.

To learn more about the Creative Curriculum for Preschool, please be sure to visit www.teachingstrategies.com.

Representational Development/ Seven Multiple Intelligences Theory

At Smart Start Academy we believe that no one set of teaching strategies will work best for all students at all times. Therefore, we also follow the seven multiple intelligences theory when designing our lessons and teaching our students.

- Linguistic – verbal/think in words;
- Logical/Mathematical- reasoning;
- Spatial – images/pictures;
- Kinesthetic – somatic sensation;
- Musical – rhythms and melodies;
- Interpersonal- bouncing ideas off other people/cooperative groups;
- Intrapersonal – deeply within themselves.

Application Policy

The Student Application is to be filled out completely in order to validate your child's enrollment. Your child's enrollment will be secured upon receipt of the completed forms and a **non-refundable** annual application fee of \$250.00. At the commencement of each year (**July**) all re-enrolling families will be required to submit an updated application along with the annual application fee of \$250.00 per student enrollee.

A One Thousand, Two Hundred & Fifty (\$1,250.00) Dollar security placement fee per student enrollee is required upon registration/annual renewal and credited to your child's account in the form of tuition. SSA will apply the security placement fee to the last academic month of the school year (June), given SSA is notified by May 1st as to withdrawal intentions. If notice of withdrawal is not received by May 1st, SSA will automatically roll over security placement fee into the following Academic Year (Sept-June). Security Placement is nontransferable.

Families who enroll after March 31st will have their security placement fee apply toward the last month of the following academic school year (Sept-June). Currently enrolled families will be responsible for submitting written notification of intent of withdrawal past the last academic month (June) by May 1st. If written notification is not submitted, SSA will roll over the security placement fee to the following academic year (Sept-June).

Fees are not subject to receive any discounts, including but not limited to, Security Placement, Application, Smart Sitter, SSA Apparel, Late fees, App Fees and any special extra curriculum fees.

Monthly Tuition Payments: SMART Tuition Portal (Blackbaud)

Monthly tuition payments are due before the 26th of the preceding month for the following month. Standard monthly tuition will be paid through each family's SMART Tuition Portal. **Yearly subscription will be due to SMART Tuition Portal (Blackbaud) at the start of each year or upon enrollment.**

A 3% processing fee will be incurred if tuition is paid and processed at any of our centers via check/credit card for all standard tuition payments. Other payments e.g., uniforms, backpacks, key fobs, back up care/temporary care fees will NOT be subject to the 3% processing fee unless paid by credit card.

S.S.A. will provide an online monthly calendar to each parent which will highlight when tuition is due each month. A \$25.00 daily late fee charge will be applied if payment is not received on said due date. **(Tuition due dates are subject to change. Notification of any changes will be provided)**

Monthly Tuition Programs

Tuition programs are categorized by age and program. Depending on the age of your child and program chosen by your family, the tuition fee which coincides with both will be due on tuition day. The 1st of the month determines which tuition category your child is eligible for. For example, if your child turns 19 months by the 1st of October; the fee due would fall under the 19-35 month age group for the month of October.

Summer Camp Tuition Payments

A 50% nonrefundable/nontransferable security placement payment toward summer tuition is collected every year during the April and May months. The additional 50% balance will be due on or before the 26th of the preceding month for the following month. *Example: 50% remaining balance of July tuition will be due on or before June 26th.* Summer Camp tuition payments are non-refundable. **If your family is unable to attend a pre-registered session; all payments will be forfeited.**

Withdrawal

S.S.A requires a full academic school year commitment (Sept.-June). If it is not met, security placement (deposit) and any other fees collected are forfeited. Security Placement fee is **non-transferable & not refundable** in cash/check form. If a family decides to withdraw for any reason mid-month, there will be no refund of their tuition for any prorated amount. Security placement will **only** be applied to the last month of the academic school year (June) given SSA receives written notification of withdrawal intent by May 1st. **If notice is not received by May 1st, SSA will automatically roll over the security placement fee to the following academic year (Sept-June).**

For those families unable to fulfill the 10-month commitment, their security placement fee and any prepaid tuition may be applied to their child's last month of tuition given SSA is notified in writing of child's withdrawal 2 **full** months prior to the departure. Written notification must be submitted by the 1st of the month. If notification is submitted after 1st of the month, the following month will be considered the **first full** month's notice of withdrawal.

Please Note: Security Placement fees can ONLY be refunded in Tuition Form. The Summer Months (July & August) do NOT apply toward the 2-month withdrawal notice clause stated above.

Change in Start Date or Program

As a courtesy, parents are allowed one postponement of their original anticipated start date. This postponement cannot exceed 30 days from the original start date. If the child is unable to start within this period, the security deposit is forfeited and Family agrees not to seek legal remedy to retrieve fees.

Parents who wish to change their child's current program (days/times of attendance) at Smart Start Academy must submit a written request at least **two** months prior from their desired date of the program change.

The school Director will notify the family in writing if the new schedule is available and of any tuition/fee modifications required. (*Change of Program is only approved upon availability and is not guaranteed*).

Returned Check Fees

There will be a \$35.00 Service Fee applied to all checks returned to us by the bank as **Non-Payable**. After the first returned check you will be asked to pay in **Cash** and we will be happy to give you a receipt.

School Policies

- **UNIFORMS-** are to be worn at all times prior to drop off and as always for your convenience; we do have additional uniforms for sale at our schools.
 - School year (September-June) We ask that **ONLY** the polo short/long sleeve be worn. Summer Camp T-shirts are not allowed.
 - Summer Camp (July-August) We ask that only the lightweight t-shirts be worn at all times.
- **SCHOOL BAGS-** Are an essential part of S.S.A in making sure all your child's belongings are kept together and return daily to the correct child. Also, these bags must be used daily; even if they are empty, they must be brought to school daily. These are the only bags that need to be used between the staff and the parents. (Book Bags and shopping bags are not allowed at all!)
- **STROLLERS-** At this time, we are limited in space with the amount of strollers we can accommodate in all of our facilities. We ask parents to be courteous and allow the stroller area to be primarily for infants and toddlers.

- Infants ages 0-12months can continue to bring in their traditional stroller.
- Waddler/Toddler 12months-24 months are required to bring in a standard simple umbrella stroller. (*For example Maclaren Mark 2 Stroller or Baby Cargo 200 series*)
- Preschool/ Pre-k 24-months and up at this time due to space constraints, we ask that only a true simple compact travel umbrella stroller be brought to school, if necessary.
- Double Strollers: We understand siblings may require a double stroller; therefore, we accept double umbrella stroller only (*Example: Summer Infant 3Dlite Double Convenience Stroller for Infant and Toddler or Delta Children City Street LX Side by Side Stroller*)

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures (*times vary depending on center location*)

Half-Day Session:

Drop Off: Parents may drop off their children between the hours of 7:00-9:00am. Hours may vary depending on location.

Pick Up: Pick up time is from 12:00pm to 12:30pm. Please sign your child out at the front desk.

Social Enrichment:

Drop Off: Parents may drop off their children at 3:30pm. Please sign in your child at the front desk.

Pick Up: Pick up time is from 6:00pm to 7:00pm. If you will be late for pick up, you must notify the school (*late pickup fee applies*). Hours may vary depending on location.

Academic Session:

Drop Off: Parents may drop off their children at any time between 7:00-9:00am. Hours may vary depending on location.

Pick Up: Pick up time is from 3:00pm-3:30pm If you will be late for pick up, you must notify the school. Please sign out your child at the front desk.

Full Day Session:

Drop Off: Parents may drop off their children at any time between 7:00am-9:00am. Please sign in your child at the front desk.

Pick Up: Pick up time is from 5:30pm-7:00 p.m. If you will be late for pick up, you must notify the school (*late pickup fee applies*). Hours may vary depending on location.

After School Sessions:

Drop Off: Parents may drop off their child at any time after 3:30pm. Please sign in your child at the front desk.

Pick Up: Pick up time is from 6:00pm-7:00pm. If you will be late for pick up, you must notify the school. Please sign out your child at the front desk.

Please note: an additional charge of \$1.00 per minute after 7:00pm will apply. Hours vary depending on location.

We must have the name and picture of anyone allowed to pick up a child, and this person MUST show legal identification. (Maximum two people per student)

Holidays

Please check the calendar that will be given to you at the time of Tours/Registration and according to the program that your child attends. We also have 3 Professional Days in which the teachers are expected to attend workshops and the school will be closed.

School Closings

We will notify our parents via email, Daily Connect & Social Media regarding unexpected school closings due to natural disasters/ inclement weather. Parents may also call the Jersey City/Hoboken Public Schools for closing/delay information, as we follow the same guidelines.

Parents are responsible for the full monthly tuition regardless of desired start date, early withdrawal (*without proper notice*), holidays, absences due to illness/personal preference, unexpected closures due to, but not limited to; inclement weather, pandemic, natural/unnatural disasters and/or any occurrence similar in nature causing the center to close and not provide childcare services for a limited or extended period of time.

Additional days will not be added in the event of an unexpected closure/delay.

Food at School

Meals: SSA provides a full balanced breakfast, lunch, and light dinner in accordance with the Department of Agriculture, Division of Food and Nutrition.

Allergies: If your child has food allergies notify the school director and teacher of your child's allergies. If your child's allergies are severe, parent will be required to bring in all meals for their child.

Please note: There are students at our school with severe food allergies, which is why nuts and nut products are not allowed at school.

Birthdays and Special Celebrations

Our school shares your desire to make your child's day special; however, birthday celebrations can be over stimulating, and we ask that some limitations be observed.

Parents may provide cupcakes and juice for snacks and may order pizza for the class that day. No favors or bags will be allowed, unless you wish to buy each child in the class a book or a coloring book. All celebrations must be limited to the times allowed by the classroom teacher and only the parents, grandparents and siblings of the child will be allowed to attend.

Parent Involvement

Communication between Smart Start Academy and our families is the foundation of your child's school success. Parents are a vital part of the community, and we encourage your involvement throughout your child's school experience. We keep our families informed through monthly newsletters, class calendars, parent teacher conferences and ongoing workshops. At SSA, families are encouraged to participate in a variety of classroom activities. Perhaps you would like to volunteer your expertise as a "guest presenter" and talk to the children about a favorite topic, teach us a song or help or lead us through an art project? The possibilities are endless at Smart Start Academy! Please be sure to keep an open flow of communication with your child's teacher in order to arrange a class visit.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/Teacher conferences will be held upon request of either party. Requests should be submitted via email or written form. Parents should provide at least 3 available days/times for the proposed meeting on said request. Once their child's teacher receives their request, he/she will confirm a specific day/time with the parent. The meeting will be scheduled based on the availability of both the teacher and the parent.

Health Forms

Every child must have an A-45 and Universal Health Form completed and signed by a physician and kept on file in the center. We must also have a copy of all the up to date vaccinations given to the child. These documents are required to be updated yearly.

Sick Policy

When a child is dismissed from school because of a contagious illness, a doctor's written permission is required for your child to return to school. If medication is to be administered, an authorization form will have to be completed by the parent. We will not dispense Tylenol or Vitamins. There are many reasons why a child may be sent home from school, and they are listed in our **General Health Policy for Children Sheet** displayed below.

General Health Policy for Children

If a child is sent home with a communicable disease, he/she can only return with a note from their physician. This note has to state that the child is no longer contagious and may be safely involved in-group activities. If a child displays any of the symptoms listed below, he/she will be isolated from the other children and the parents will be contacted.

YOU MUST PICK UP YOUR CHILD WITHIN ONE HOUR OF THE CALL

Symptoms of special concern are:

- Diarrhea
- Severe Coughing
- Difficult or Irregular breathing
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Pink eye (eye does not necessarily have to be pink but may be discharging mucus.)
- Sore throat
- Unusual Spots or Rashes
- Vomiting
- Severe itching of body or scalp (lice/insect bites)
- Fever of 101.5 degrees or over

S.S.A. will require a note from your child's pediatrician indicating that he/she is in good health and able to return to school.

School Safety

The safety of all children at our school is our primary focus and we do everything in our power to ensure that we provide a hazard free environment. In order to do so, we have established the following policies:

- Always have an adequate number of adults to supervise every group of children, whether in the classroom or at the playground. No child is ever left alone without supervision.
- Every classroom and playground area is inspected regularly to eliminate or correct any equipment or situation that may cause injury to the children.
- When a child is involved in an accident requiring medical intervention, the parent or guardian will be notified promptly. If the parent is unable to come to the center to transport the child, a staff member will accompany the child to the medical facility indicated on the child's information form. If help is needed immediately, the nearest response team will be called.
- An incident report form will be filled out by the attending teacher and the director. One copy will be placed in the child's file and the other given to the parent. The director and staff will review the incident and determine whether some preventive actions need to be taken.

Reasons for Dismissal

Our school is committed to the wellbeing of each and every child, order to provide a safe, loving and stimulating environment; we expect a certain degree of cooperation from each child and parent. At SSA, we use a positive approach to discipline our students. We focus on solutions rather than punishment. By providing opportunities to help the child and using effective communication, we believe that any issue is solvable. Unfortunately, there are sometimes reasons we have to expel a child from our program, either on a short term or permanent basis. We want you to know we will do everything possible to work with the family of the child(ren) in order to prevent this policy from being enforced. The following are reasons we may have to expel or suspend a child from this center without a refund of any paid tuition and/or security deposit.

Causes for Expulsion

- Child is at risk of causing serious injury or other children or himself/herself
- Parent threatens physical or intimidating actions toward staff members
- Parent exhibits verbal abuse to staff in front of enrolled children

Parental Actions for Immediate Child's Expulsion

- Failure to pay or habitual lateness payments
- Parent's Failure to comply with SSA Policies
- Failure to complete required forms including the child's immunization records
- Habitual tardiness when picking up your child
- Verbal abuse to staff/Enrolled Families

Child's Actions for Expulsion

- Uncontrollable tantrums/angry outbursts
- Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children
- Excessive biting
- Other

10:122-6.5 Policy on the release of children

(a) The center shall maintain on file and follow a written policy on the release of children, which shall include:

1. The provision that each child may be released only to the child's parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s), as specified in N.J.A.C. 10:122-6.8(a)3, to take the child from the center and to assume responsibility for the child in an emergency if the parent(s) cannot be reached;
2. The provision that, if a particular noncustodial parent has been denied access, or granted limited access, to the child by a court order, the center shall secure documentation to this effect, maintain a copy on file, and comply with the terms of the court order;
3. Written procedures to be followed by staff member(s) if the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s), as specified in (a)1 above, fails to pick up a child at the time of the center's daily closing. The procedures shall require that:
 - i. The child is supervised at all times;
 - ii. Staff members attempt to contact the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parents; and
 - iii. An hour or more after closing time, and provided that other arrangements for releasing the child to his or her parent(s) or authorized person(s) have failed and the staff member(s) cannot continue to supervise the child at the center, the staff member shall call the Department's State Central Registry Hotline (1-877 NJ ABUSE/1-877-652-2873) to seek assistance in caring for the child until the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the child's parent(s) is able to pick up the child; and
4. Written procedures to be followed by a staff member(s) if the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s), as specified in (a)1 above, appear to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgment of the director and/or staff member, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released to such an individual. The procedures shall require that:
 - i. The child shall not be released to such an impaired individual;
 - ii. Staff members attempt to contact the child's other parent or an alternative person(s) authorized by the parent(s); and
 - iii. If the center is unable to make alternative arrangements, as noted in (a)3ii above, a staff member shall call the Department's State Central Registry Hotline (1-877 NJ ABUSE)/1-877-652-2873 to seek assistance in caring for the child.