



## Smart Start Academy

# Parent Handbook

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Jersey City NJ 07307*

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Jersey City NJ 07307*

*462 Central Ave  
Jersey City NJ 07307*

*552 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Hoboken Nj 07030*

*178-180 Newark Ave  
Jersey City NJ 07302*

*532 Jersey Ave  
Jersey City NJ 07302*

*102 Brunswick St  
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](http://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 \$325.00. At the commencement of each year all re-enrolling families will be required to submit an updated application along with the annual application fee of \$325.00 per student.

**First month tuition, and One Thousand, Five Hundred (\$1,500.00) Dollar security placement fee per student enrollee is required upon registration. Security Placement is non-transferable.**

### **Monthly Tuition Programs**

Tuition programs are categorized by age and program. Depending on your child's age and the program selected by your family, the applicable tuition rate will be due on the scheduled tuition date. The 1st of each month determines the tuition category for which your child is eligible. For example, if your child turns 19 months old on or before October 1st, the tuition rate for the 19-35month age group will apply for the month of October.

### **Monthly Tuition Payments: Blackbaud Tuition Management**

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

### **Summer Camp Policy (July & August)**

Summer camp tuition (July & August) is due in full during the months of April and May each year. All tuition payments are non-refundable and non-transferable, without exception. Only sibling discounts are applicable for Summer Camp sessions. Summer camp payments received after May 31st may incur additional summer camp fees. If a family is unable to attend a pre-register summer camp session, payment for said session will be forfeited.

### **Payment & Fee Policies**

- Processing Fee: A 5% processing fee will be applied to all payments made by credit or debit card at any of our centers. This includes, but is not limited to, payments for tuition, uniforms, backpacks, key fobs, backup care, and other applicable fees.
- Tuition: In the event of any tuition adjustment, credit, promotional rate, or special pricing is applied, such adjustments may not be combined with any other offer or rate reduction.
- Returned Check: A \$40.00 service fee will be charged for any check returned by the bank as non-payable. After the first occurrence, all future payments must be made in cash.
- Late Fees: A \$25.00 daily late fee will be applied if payment is not received by the due date. *Tuition due dates are subject to change. Advance notice will be provided if any changes occur.*
- Fees: Fees are not eligible for any discounts, credits, promotions, or tuition reductions, including but not limited to Security Placement, Application, Smart Sitter, SSA Apparel, Late Fees, App Fees, and any special or extracurricular program fees.

### **Withdrawal**

The **Security Placement Fee** is non-transferable and non-refundable in the form of cash or check; it may ONLY be applied toward tuition. No discounts, credits, promotions, or any tuition reductions apply. If a family chooses to withdraw for any reason, no tuition will be refunded. The Security Placement Fee will be applied only to the final month in which the child is enrolled, provided Smart Start Academy receives **written notice** of withdrawal at least **two full months** in advance. The 1st of the month is considered the beginning of a full month. If written notice is submitted after the 1st, the following month will be considered the first full month of the required notice period. **Summer Camp Sessions (July and August) do NOT apply toward the two-month withdrawal notice requirement stated above (These are prepaid sessions due in April and May).** No additional discounts, credits, promotions, or tuition reductions shall apply once the Security Placement Fee is applied to the final month's tuition. The final balance due will be calculated as the standard tuition amount minus the Security Placement Fee.

### **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.

If a family's start date is deferred by up to 30 days, the tuition already paid will be credited toward the following month. Said credit can **only** be applied in the form of **tuition**, and **no refunds** will be issued if withdrawing. Any changes or delays to the agreed-upon start date must be communicated in writing to SSA 30 days in advance. Failure to do so will result in the forfeiture of any prepaid tuition.

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*).

### **School Policies**

- **Meals**: For students 12 month and up SSA provides a fully balanced breakfast, lunch, and light dinner in accordance with the Department of Agriculture, Division of Food and Nutrition. If your child has food allergies, please inform the school director and teacher. For severe allergies, parents will be required to bring in all meals for their child. Smart Start Academy is a nut-free school; peanuts, tree nuts, and any nut products are strictly prohibited. For safety, glass containers are not allowed at any time.
- **Uniforms**: Uniforms must be worn at all times and before dropping off. During the school year (September-June), only the polo shirt (short/long sleeve) should be worn. SSA t-shirts are permitted only during the Summer Camp months (July-August). *Additional uniforms available for purchase.*
- **School Bags**: School bags are essential for ensuring your child's belongings are kept together and returned daily to the correct child. These bags must be brought to school daily, even if they are empty. These are the only bags allowed at the center.
- **Strollers**: Indoor stroller storage is provided upon request. We kindly ask parents to be courteous and allow the stroller area to be primarily for infants and toddlers, as spaces are limited.
  - Infants ages 0-12months can bring in their traditional stroller.
  - Waddler/Toddler 12months-24 months can bring a standard umbrella or travel sized stroller. (*For example: Babyzen YOYO<sup>2</sup>, GB Pockit, UPPAbaby Minu*)
  - Preschool/Pre-k 24-months and up at this time due to space constraints, only a compact travel/umbrella stroller will be accepted if necessary.

***Double Strollers***: Siblings requiring a bigger stroller are allowed to bring in a double umbrella stroller only (*For 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

Sign in/out is required at drop off and pick up daily. *Times may vary depending on center location:*

- **Smart Pick-Up Service:** Pick up times are between 6am-7:30am. Subject to Director/Manager's approval.
- **Half-Day Session:** Parents may drop off their children between 7am-9am. Pick up time is 12pm.
- **Academic Session:** Parents may drop off their children at any time between 7am-9am. Pick up time is 2:30pm.
- **Full Day Session:** Parents may drop off their children at any time between 7am-9am. Pick up time is from 5:30pm-7pm.
- **Social Enrichment:** Parents may drop off their children at 2:30pm. Pick up time is from 6pm-7pm.

**Please note:** If you are late for pick up, you must notify the school. A **late fee** will apply for any pick-ups after the designated time.

For the safety of all children, anyone authorized to pick up a child must be listed on the child's emergency contact or pick-up authorization form. Valid photo identification is required at the time of pick-up. No exceptions will be made. (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 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.***

## Birthdays and Special Celebrations

Our school shares your desire to make your child's day special; however, celebrations can be over stimulating, and we ask that some limitations be observed. Parents may provide nut-free snacks for the class. 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 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, they 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 due to a contagious illness, written permission from a doctor is required for their return. If medication needs to be given at school, parents must complete an authorization form. We will not dispense Tylenol or Vitamins. For a full list of reasons a child may be sent home, please refer to our General Health Policy for Children below.

## **General Health Policy for Children**

If a child is sent home with a communicable disease, they can only return with a note from their physician. This note must 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, they will be isolated from the other children, and the parents will be contacted. **Parents must pick up their 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

SSA 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 child, in 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) 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.