

SMALL STEPS ACADEMY

PARENT HANDBOOK



*"Teaching young minds,
preparing young hearts"*

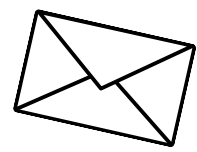


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A HELLO FROM PASTOR JEFF



Greetings in the name of Our Savior – Jesus Christ!



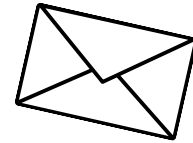
He indeed is Our Savior! And for that reason, the Christians gathered here at this church to identify us with the name Our Savior's Lutheran Church. And it is this congregation of believers that is very excited and supports the early childhood ministry known as Small Steps Academy.

Jesus, during His ministry here on earth, and still today through His living Word, shows the value and importance of children and caring for them. "But Jesus called the children to Him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these'" (Luke 18:16). He cares for them and gives us this admonition for caring for them ... "If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

We at Our Savior's and Small Steps Academy take the privilege and honor for caring for these little children very seriously. We know that children are a blessing from God and we care for these blessings and are very thankful and appreciative that you have entrusted your little ones to our care during their time here with us.

As the Pastor at Our Savior's, along with my wife Stephanie, we are very excited to get to know all the children that will be a part of Small Steps and their families. We are very happy to be here at Our Savior's and Small Steps and a part of the Port Orange Community. To God be the Glory!
In Christ's Service,
Pastor Jeff & Stephanie Heitsch

A HELLO FROM DIRECTOR EMILY



Welcome, dear families!



We are excited to have you as part of Small Steps Academy! We view all children as unique and special gifts from God. Your child is very important to Jesus—and to us! We feel blessed to offer early care and education in a Christian setting.

Throughout the years many directors gave something unique back to the school and the community while they served. I started my career here in 2006 as a three-year-old teacher. From 2006 until 2020, I continued to teach three-year-olds. I have worked and learned under each of the directors. When the pandemic hit, I became the new director at Small Steps Academy. This school continues to have a special place in my heart.

I am passionate about early childhood education; the way children learn and how I can support my teachers to create top-notch classrooms. Our core staff are a wonderful group of women who support and encourage one another. They are committed to offering your child the best experience at Small Steps.

This handbook is intended introduce you to Small Steps Academy, our program, goals, and best practices. Our programs are designed to make certain that each child receives the best education and early learning experience possible.

We are looking forward to getting to know you and your child. We continually pray for the Lord Jesus to guide our efforts and help us serve you with a quality care and education that stays with your child for a lifetime!
Blessings,
Emily Foess, Director

WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT?

**Our mission is to
“grow and go to God’s
people with God’s
Word.”**

Christ Centered Mission-

Small Steps Academy is a ministry arm of Our Savior’s Lutheran Church. As such, we exist to create an outreach opportunity to share the Gospel message with children and families in our community that may not yet know Jesus as their Savior from sin.

Our mission is to “grow and go to God’s people with God’s Word.”

We will work with children to assist them in their spiritual, intellectual, physical, and social-emotional development. We consider ourselves partners with parents in the training and education of their children. Our teaching is done from a Christian perspective that encourages all children with the Word of God (meaning, the Bible – both Old and New Testaments).

We will share basic truths through Bible stories and devotions with your children and how it applies to their daily living. At the simplest level, children will learn the basic truth that Jesus is their best friend and Savior from sin.

Scriptural Basis-

We look to God by studying God’s Word and praying for strength and encouragement in what we do at Small Steps Academy.

·Matthew 19:14 – Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

God wants every child born into this world to be His child through faith in Christ.

·1 Timothy 2:4 – God wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. God has given every child an immortal soul and it is His desire that everyone spend eternity in heaven with Him.

·2 Timothy 3:14-15 – But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

A child can best learn to live their faith when instruction from the Word of God is a part of their daily life through prayer, worship, and devotion.



THE SMALL STEPS LEARNING EXPERIENCE



A LITTLE SOMETHING EXTRA



Family Relationships

We believe that strong relationships between children, teachers/caregivers, and families is the base for providing quality care and early childhood education services.

Because children learn best in secure relationships, our program promotes the hiring of credentialed staff with Christ-like, loving hearts and a passion for teaching young children. Our administration strives to keep God's Word and grace always in mind when making decisions. Looking to the Lord helps us maintain joyful and forgiving hearts for the families we serve.

We want to be a source of support for families. At Small Steps Academy, families will be honored and seen as essential participants in our program.

Families provide invaluable information about their children to teachers and center staff. Teachers will communicate with families and welcome you into your child's classroom. Additionally, Small Steps Academy organizes several events throughout the school year that include family members. See school calendar.

Finally, if you find yourself in need of pastoral services or experience overwhelming difficulties, please know that we and Our Savior's Lutheran Church stand ready to offer assistance.

Teachers and Classrooms

Our campus is made up of quality environments that offer enjoyable experiences and are comfortable for children and adults.

Every classroom atmosphere promotes children's feelings of security and competence. The physical arrangement of space and choice of equipment, whether indoors or outdoors, is adaptable and supports meaningful interactions between adults and children during caregiving routines and play. All classroom environments, including space and furnishings for infants and toddlers, offer opportunities for children to safely experience a sense of freedom, adventure, exploration, learning.

We seek to be very intentional in our staff and teacher hiring practices.

Teacher education, experience, and ongoing professional development promotes the teacher's ability to address the unique needs of young children. Responsive teachers take cues from each child and know when to expand on their initiative, when to guide, and when to intervene. Nurturing teachers respond to signs of stress in children and provide comfort and security as needed. Teachers promote the child's emerging sense of self, help them build relationships with others, and model acceptance and respect for all children. Teachers who are attentive and knowledgeable follow detailed procedures and quality standards that maintain safe and healthy classroom environments for young children.





What is HighScope?

HighScope is a quality approach to early childhood care and education which has been shaped and developed by research and practice over 50 years. ... The central

belief of HighScope is that children construct their own learning by doing and being actively involved in working with materials, people and ideas.



What is the role of the teacher in high scope?

In the HighScope curriculum the role of the teacher is to support and extend the children's learning by observing and listening, asking appropriate question and by scaffolding learning experiences.



What are the 5 ingredients of active learning?

Five "ingredients" go into the "recipe" for this type of learning: materials, manipulation, choice, child language and thought, and adult scaffolding. All of these ingredients work together to produce a setting in which active participatory learning can occur.



Is High Scope an emergent curriculum?

High Scope is the ultimate form of emergent curriculum. This type of curriculum is focused around the interest and play of the child where a theme can change, week to week, day to day, and even minute to minute



What are HighScope key developmental indicators?

Each KDI is a statement that identifies an observable child behavior reflecting knowledge and skills in the areas of approaches to learning; social and emotional development; physical development and health; communication, language, and literacy; cognitive development; and creative arts.

What is High Scope plan do review?

The heart of the HighScope daily routine is the plan-do-review sequence, in which children make choices about what they will do, carry out their ideas, and reflect on their activities with adults and peers.

Toilet Training

Toileting is an important personal skill that children learn at varying rates. Having the ability to toilet contributes to a person's self-worth, helps children integrate socially in school, is essential to personal independence, and reduces the likelihood of potential abuse. Yet, toileting independently is a complex chain of behaviors for young children. It requires the child's readiness, understanding, participation, communication skills, and motor skills.

What does it mean to be toilet trained? Children who are toilet trained can dress and undress with little or no help. They wear underwear day and night. They are urine and bowel trained. They have had fewer than three accidents in the last month. They wake up dry after naps and overnight sleep. They use the bathroom without a schedule or adult direction and can wipe themselves.

Our early care wing is set up to begin the toilet training process at school.

We know that a child's inability to toilet can be costly, stressful, and tiring to families. Our teachers are trained to help you and your child through the process.

Ideally, children in the preschool wing should be fully potty trained but we understand that children develop differently. Students who are not fully potty trained need to be actively potty training due to classroom set up.

Since accidents may occur, please make sure that your child always has Two or more changes of clothing in their cubby.



Toilet Training Continued

Children in the 1 or 2-year-old classes are not expected to be toilet trained. Parents are responsible for providing diapers for their children. Parents should bring in a pack of diapers to leave at school. You will be notified when the supply is getting low. Children who are working on being toilet trained should be in underwear. We do not recommend pull-up diapers because they are expensive and do not allow a child to feel as messy when accidents do occur. To be considered fully potty trained, the child needs to be accident free for about 30 days. If your child has more than two accidents per day or accidents are a daily occurrence, the teacher will discuss with you a revised plan.

When the transition is made from diapers to underwear, we ask that you send in several sets of clothing for changes the first full week. If after two weeks in underwear and we are experiencing two or more accidents per day, you will need to return to diapers for a little longer.

Toilet Training Transitions

Each program builds upon the previous program. As the child progresses to the next class the giving and receiving teachers meet to learn and discuss each student's progress with potty training. This way the receiving teacher understands the level of each student and can gear teaching techniques accordingly.



Discipline Policy

As a Christian program, you can expect us to treat your child with forgiveness, love, and respect. Children will be dealt with in gentle and loving ways by our dedicated teachers and staff. We seek to impart timeless Christian morals, values, and ethics to equip students to face an ever-changing world.

Our goal is to find solutions and to provide the very best environment for your child. Small Steps Academy expects parents to be involved and cooperative in all aspects of discipline.

Positive guidance is used by loving teachers in an enriched environment suited to the child's level of development. The staff wishes to promote desirable, acceptable and satisfying behavior. So, to be clear, discipline is helping the child learn self-control and direction.

Within Small Steps Academy we use the following guidelines to enhance positive behavior:

- Model appropriate behavior for the children.
- Teach the children what to do rather than what not to do.
- Avoid the question "why?" This type of question is detrimental to the child's self-image.
- Create a classroom environment that creates pro-social behavior.
- Understand developmental stages.
- Establish routines and pictures schedules to aid the child.
- Provide choices that aid the child in doing the right thing.
- Nourish the roots. Give love with warm eyes and a kind but firm tone of voice.
- Use buffers to stop aggression by stepping in before an inappropriate act begins.
- Teach communication skills.
- Ignore inappropriate behavior when possible.
- Teach children to express their emotions.

Discipline Policy

Time out is probably one of the most misused guidance techniques. Our technique is to redirect the child to sit in a safe place. It is not a fearful or threatening time, but a time for the child to be removed from the group to enable him or her to calm down. After the child has calmed down, the teacher will talk to the child about their feelings.

If your child has a known or diagnosed behavioral issue, please discuss this with your child's teacher.

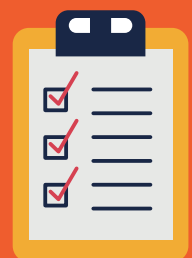
Whether behavior is appropriate or inappropriate, it occurs for a reason. When children smile, seem to enjoy the activities and are involved, we can be almost positive that the life is filled with contentment, that they have few emotional fears or upheavals and are altogether pleased to be in the world. On the other hand, when we see children who frown, cry, show distress to life's situations and act disturbed with people around them, we can assume that there is a cause or some reason for the discontentment and unhappiness in their lives. With proper home/school cooperation and communication, serious discipline problems will hopefully be minimized.

It is the desire of Small Steps Academy that every child and every situation can be handled in a safe, calm manner before an inappropriate act occurs. At times, a child can become physically violent or verbally abusive. When a child exhibits behavior such as hitting, kicking, pinching, biting, spitting, scratching, or throwing objects, we first look to what is happening in the environment or in the child's life that might prompt such an outburst. Parents are brought into the conversation early on, which is helpful to collectively determine a plan of action.

When a child continues to struggle with any of these behaviors, several other behavior management approaches are tried, including the possibility of giving the child a one-week break for the child or dismissal from the program, at the discretion of the Director.



THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS



THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Small Steps Academy is a private, religious-based, nonprofit program that offers early care and education services to all families living in the Port Orange, FL community and surrounding areas.



Enrollment

Only the parent or legal guardian may enroll a child in our program. Proof of custody may be required. During the school year, we accept children from ages 12 months to age 5. In the summer months, we expand eligibility to local elementary-aged school children, as a convenience to working families looking for summer camp care activities.

We do not accept subsidized childcare dollars for preschool. Our families are fully responsible for paying all tuition and fees out-of-pocket. Any exceptions to this policy, such as an employer or state-sponsored childcare, must be approved by the Director.

VPK Classes

Small Steps Academy contracts with the Early Learning Coalition of Flagler and Volusia Counties to provide free Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) services to children turning 4 before September 1st. This half-day program is offered during the school year in either morning or afternoon sessions. Our VPK teachers are highly experienced and hold bachelor's degrees in Early Childhood or Elementary Education.

Wait List

Our programs are usually fully enrolled. Waiting lists are maintained for each age group. We prioritize placement based on factors such as paperwork date, staffing needs, new baby arrivals among already enrolled families or returning families, and the length of time spent on the wait list. We try to estimate how long a family may have to wait, although an opening could happen sooner.

THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

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Forms

All forms provided to you upon enrollment must be completed before your child may attend Small Steps Academy. These forms are updated annually prior to the start of each new school year. All requested personal information is kept confidential. Parents are required to update all emergency data as needed, including home address; email; cell, and work phone numbers; and individuals authorized to pick up your child. Immunization and physical health forms must be submitted to the center upon enrollment and kept current. We must be informed of any shared, partial, or full custody situation in advance and will request that the proper paperwork (court orders, etc.) be in your child's file.

Parents will be required to comply with all state regulations and center rules as set forth in this Parent's Handbook.

Enrollment & Annual Registration Fees

Enrollment requires a registration fee due at the time of enrollment. Families with two or more children may enroll at a reduced rate. The supply fee is an annual charge due in August or at the start of each new school year. Families returning to our school after withdrawal from the program are required to pay the enrollment fee again. This fee helps defray administrative costs associated with paperwork processing and computer time to set up your family's attendance and billing.

We adhere to a policy of nondiscrimination in all our church and school activities and services that comply with the antidiscrimination requirements of 42 U.S.C. s. 2000d. This means we do not discriminate against a parent or child, including the refusal to admit a child for enrollment in VPK or any of our programs, in violation of the antidiscrimination requirements.



PARENT POLICIES



Days & Hours of Operation

Small Steps Academy is open weekdays only, Monday–Friday, 7 am to 5:30 pm. Parents should not bring children in the doors before 7 am, as teachers are still arriving, need to clock in and have a short preparation time in the classroom before greeting families. Thank you for your understanding!

Please consult our school year calendar for observed holidays and other days closed.



Arrival

Safety is a priority at Small Steps. Parents must accompany their child(ren) into Small Steps Academy every morning. Children will not be permitted in the building alone or prior to opening hours. Children should be taken directly to their respective classroom and physically handed off to a responsible teacher you know.

It is our responsibility to take over the care of your child once you have handed your child off to us.

Parents are required to sign every child in and out each day using your full name – no initials.

If you have more than one child, an individual signature for each child is required. Sign in/out sheets are in your child's classroom.

Signature



Departure

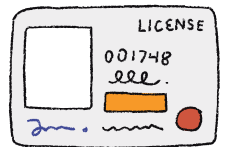
All children must be picked up by an adult or person approved by the parent and the center.

In the event anyone out of the ordinary is to pick-up the child, please alert the office prior to that time. We ask parents to call in addition to given written permission via email if an extenuating circumstance occurs and they need to have alternate person pick-up who is NOT on the pick-up list.

This is in addition to them being on the Pick-up Permission list. Anyone, including parents, who are to be allowed to remove the child from the center must be listed in the pick-up permission section of the enrollment form or approved in writing by the parent in advance.

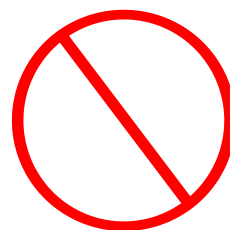
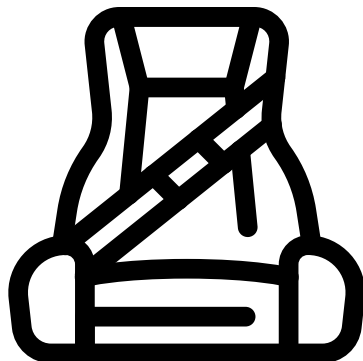
Please ask to speak with the director, if you have any questions or extenuating circumstances.

The person picking up the child must be an adult over 18 years of age and must show proper identification. If the adult does not have proper I.D. or the school has cause for reasonable suspicion, the parent will be called immediately to verify pickup. These regulations are in place for your child's safety.



No child will be released to any adult seemingly under the influence or incapacitated in some way.

No child will knowingly be released to a family lacking a child restraint or car seat. Florida law states: Children five years old or younger must be secured in a federally approved child restraint system. Children three years old and younger must use a separate car seat or the vehicle's built-in car seat.



Classroom Start Times

We ask that families be respectful to teachers by ensuring their children arrive before the classroom instructional times posted below. Something as simple as opening the classroom door is disruptive and robs the attention of children away from their teacher who has already launched the day's Circle Time activities.

Thank you for observing the "arrive no later than" column:
Classrooms Instructional Time Begins Arrive **NO LATER** Than



Ones, Twos 9:00am
Threes 8:30am
Morning VPK Classes 8:30 am



Tardiness & Absences

If your child will be late or absent from school, be sure to call the front desk to report this to us no later than 9 am each school day: (386) 756-7569. For families with VPK children, see VPK Attendance Policy.



Late Pick Up

Small Steps Academy closes at 5:30 pm sharp. Parents are asked to be mindful of how long it takes to sign your child out, speak with the teacher and collect their things.

Call the school at (386) 756-7569 and let us know when you are delayed.

Families arriving after close of business are given a warning the first time and after that are charged \$20 for pick-up after 5:30 pm. For each minute after 5:35 an additional dollar will be charged. While this fee may seem excessive, please realize that this requires two persons to stay.

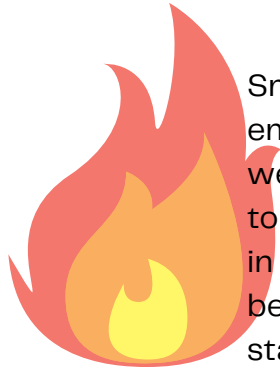
We understand that traffic can cause you to be late picking up your child, so please leave with plenty of time to accommodate delays. Only the Board can choose to waive late fees.

Weather Closures

During inclement weather events, please stay tuned to public broadcasting reports. Small Steps Academy will follow the lead of Volusia County Public Schools regarding weather-related closings.



Fire Alarm and Other Drills



Small Steps Academy conducts monthly drills for fire and emergency preparedness for situations such as inclement weather (tornadoes) or a necessary lock down of the facility due to an outside threat. Parents are always welcomed to participate in these drills. If you happen to be present during a drill, you will be expected to assist by following the lead and directions of staff.



No Smoking Campus

By Florida law, Small Steps Academy adheres to a no smoking requirement campus-wide. This is no smoking or vaping of any kind along with no disposal of cigarette butts anywhere on the property.



Parking Lot Safety

Please use extreme caution throughout our parking lot. We ask that you drive no more than 5mph. Please refrain from distracting activities, such as talking on your cell phone while driving through the lot.

DO NOT leave a child unattended inside a vehicle, as this is against state law whether the vehicle is running or not. You are also not permitted to leave a car running when no one is in it. Please adhere to these laws, as we are required to contact police, if any of these laws are not followed.



Personal Belongings



Your child should wear simple and comfortable clothing suitable for the weather and messy play. Girls must wear shorts or leggings under dresses.

- ALL personal belongings must be labeled with the child's first and last name prior to being brought into school.

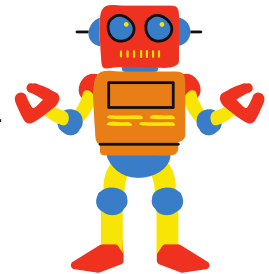
This includes:

Breast milk pouches, baby bottles, lunch boxes, water bottles, food containers, sippy cups, backpacks, extra set of clothes, etc.

We recommend any product like <https://mabelslabels.com/> for waterproof, dishwasher safe, and durable labels that are cute and stay put when laundered! If using Mabel's Labels, be sure to link every order to Small Steps Academy, and our school will receive a portion of your purchase.

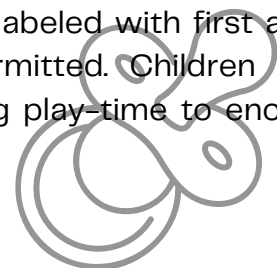
Toys

- Children are required to leave personal toys at home. This is necessary to eliminate disputes and avoid disappointment when toys are broken or lost. The only exception to this is a teacher-planned show-and-tell experience.



- Children may bring a comfort item for rest time. Be sure it is clearly labeled with the child's first and last name.

• If your small child uses a pacifier, it also must be labeled with first and last names. Clip on straps for pacifiers are not permitted. Children will be encouraged to keep pacifiers in their cubby during play-time to encourage proper development of language skills.



LUNCH AND SNACKS

Lunch & Snack Time

Hydration: All children should bring their own water bottle to school each day. It MUST be labeled with the child's first and last name, as this is a licensing requirement. Teachers will refill the bottles when needed. Parents should take them home daily to wash and refill.



Children in the 1-year-old program are required to use sippy cups. No bottles are allowed. Pursuant to DCF regulations, children are not permitted to lay down while drinking from a bottle or sippy cup.



Parents are encouraged to provide their child with healthy snacks and food. Some suggestions may be: Raisins, Muffins, Popcorn, Cottage Cheese, Cookies, Fruits, Meat or Sausage, Cheese, Granola or Fruit Bars, Yogurt, Hard-Cooked Eggs, Whole Grain Bread, Peanut Butter Crackers, Low-Sugar Cereals, or Trail Mix.

We require that each lunch box contains an ice pack PER DCF regulations.



Even snack and lunch times are learning times. The children are learning to say a blessing before each meal, to eat independently, interact with their peers in conversation, and use proper table manners.



For children in the 1 year-old classes, we encourage and promote independence in feeding themselves. This can be messy at times! If you would like your child to wear a bib during meal times, send in a plastic bib that can be wiped down with your child's first and last name affixed to it.

LUNCH AND SNACKS

Lunch & Snack Time

Our facility is not equipped to include food preparation, which means we do not have the capacity to heat or reheat any food items in a microwave.

If your child attends all day, he or she will need to bring 2-3 snacks and a lunch. Please pack a drink for your child as well.

If your child runs out of food or is about to run out of food while in our care, you will be contacted to immediately bring food or pick up your child for the day.



Allergies

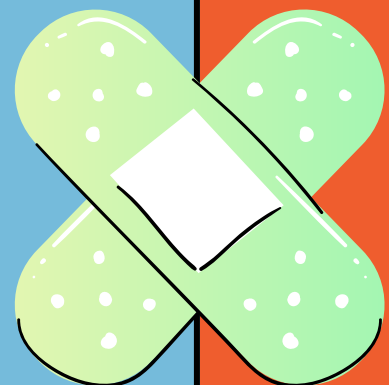
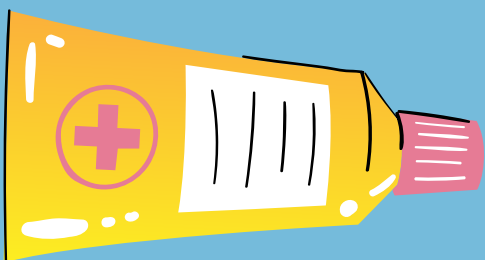
If your child has any food-related allergies, be sure to indicate specific allergies on the enrollment form, as well as discussing them with your child's teacher. If your child has a severe allergy we recommend filling out a FARE allergy form or an AMERICAN PEDIATRICS allergy form.

If a child has a severe allergy requiring a peanut/nut free classroom, parents will be given a letter at the beginning of the school year and will be asked to be mindful and to diligently check their child's lunchbox each morning. The family of the child with the allergy is extremely grateful to each and every family that helps out. When you check your own child's lunchbox, you are helping to protect the life of someone else's. With our kids being so little it is very hard to avoid accidents when the food is brought into the classroom. So the sacrifice you make for the year, has lasting benefits for the health and safety of the allergy child!





HEALTH AND SAFETY



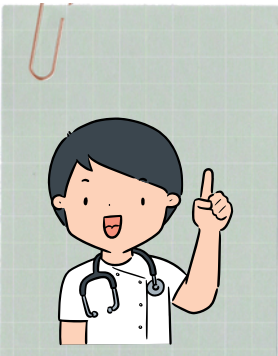
State Health Regulations

State law requires each child's immunization record and physical health exam form to be on file as part of each student's record.

NO CHILD MAY ATTEND PRESCHOOL WITHOUT HAVING THESE RECORDS ON FILE WITHIN DAYS OF ENROLLMENT.

If there is a medical reason for not completing immunizations, we must have a signed statement from your doctor.

If there is a religious reason for not having immunizations, we must have a notarized religious exemption form on file. The cooperation of the home with the school is a necessary part of maintaining good health standards.



**Whenever your child goes to the doctor
be sure to **DOUBLE CHECK** the expiration
dates on your child's physical and or
immunization!**

Daily Health Checks

Having a safe and healthy learning environment is a priority at Small Steps Academy for both the children and teachers. We require that all children have direct contact with a teacher or staff person upon arrival for early detection of any apparent illness, communicable disease, or unusual condition, or behavior which may adversely affect the child or group.

If any of these things are determined, the child must go home immediately. Happiness is contagious, but so are colds and the flu. Please do not mask symptoms in your child by giving fever reducers before coming to school. Parents can stave off disease by making sure your child gets enough rest. Sleep deprivation lowers the immune system's ability to fight off infection. A good diet and exercise also help ward off disease.

Medical Emergencies

Should a medical emergency occur, we will first contact 911 then the parents. Please remember to keep your contact information up to date. If the situation warrants transportation to the nearest hospital, the pastor, preschool director, or another school representative will follow the ambulance to meet parents at the emergency room.

Accident/Incident Reports

Safety is a priority at Small Steps Academy, yet there are times when children experience bumps, scrapes, and other minor accidents or behavior problems. If the accident/incident requires “more than a hug and a kiss,” our teachers will complete a report for you detailing what happened and the nature of the injuries.

If any first aid is administered, the treatment will be described to you. A copy of this accident report, signed by the teacher in charge at the time of the accident, will be provided to you and the original filed in the student’s record. We ask that you sign the copy provided to you and return at the front desk office to confirm that you were notified of your child’s injury. This system is aimed at ensuring communication at all levels.

If your child happens to be injured by another child, we ask you to please respect the child’s privacy by not asking us to reveal the name of the child, as state regulations do not permit us to divulge such information.

Mandated Reporters

Parents should be aware that the State of Florida requires all teachers and other professionals interfacing with children to be on the lookout for and report to Florida’s hotline all suspected cases of abuse to a child. Our role is not to investigate, but simply report. Failing to make a report has dire penalties and consequences for us, as individuals. Therefore, we advise our parents to daily make staff aware of any lingering bruising or other visible injuries to your child to minimize suspicion of possible child abuse or endangerment. Thank you for understanding.

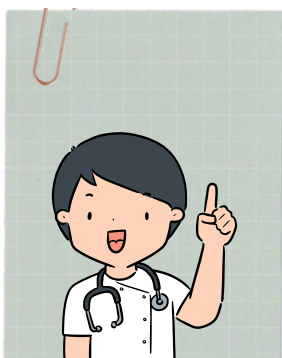
Sick Policy



When a child becomes sick, our policy is to isolate the child away from the classroom. Usually, this means placing the child under supervision with support staff. The parent will be called for immediate pick-up and be required to sign a form with procedures for returning to school. We ask parents to inform your child's teacher or the front desk at drop off, if your child received medicine in the morning prior to coming to school.

Symptoms or situations that indicate removal from the center is necessary include a sick child:

- With reportable illness or condition that the health department determines to be contagious and a physician determines has not had enough treatment to reduce the health risk to others
- With chicken pox until the child is no longer infectious or until the lesions are crusted over
- Who has vomited (until 24 hours after the last episode)
- Who has had diarrhea (until 24 hours after the last episode)
- Who has contagious conjunctivitis or pus draining from the eye
- Who has a bacterial infection such as streptococcal infection or impetigo and has not completed 24 hours of antimicrobial therapy
- Who has unexplained lethargy
- Who has lice, ringworm, or scabies that is untreated and contagious to others
- Who has a 100-degree Fahrenheit or higher temperature of undiagnosed origin before fever reducing medication is given
- Who has an undiagnosed rash or a rash attributable to a contagious illness or condition
- Who has significant respiratory distress
- Who is not able to participate in the child's program activities with reasonable comfort
- Who requires more care than the program staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children in the program.



Whenever your child goes to the doctor due to illness, provide the front desk with a doctor's note stating that they are cleared to return to school.

Medication & First Aid

Parents of children at Small Steps Academy may require us to dispense medication for a variety of reasons.

We prefer that parents give medications at home rather than at school.

If the child requires medication, parents should complete the "Medication Permission Slip" indicating the dates to start and stop the treatment and provide the medication to the front desk.

To prevent any errors, all dispensation of medications will be conducted at the front desk. All medications, or ointments must be in its original bottle or packaging, with the child's first and last name clearly visible.

As an absolute rule, we do not **initiate** giving medication to young children. The extent of our day-to-day first aid is strictly limited to taking temperatures, applying ice, and band aids.

If your child requires an inhaler, epi-pen, diabetic medication, or anti-seizure medication, discuss this with your child's teacher **AND** complete the "Medication Permission Slip" listing the dosage and times to administer each medication.

Instructions should be clearly printed on the medication as provided by the doctor's prescription or by the pharmaceutical company.

Any medication that has expired will not be sent home but will be purged.

Small Steps Academy reserves the right not to give medicines, if the dosage is questionable or not according to the label.

Parents can be assured that every Small Steps Academy teacher or staff member with direct responsibility to supervise children have been trained in giving CPR and First Aid.

No medication should be brought in a lunch, diaper, or book bag, including over-the-counter medication!





FINANCIAL MATTERS



Tuition Payments

Tuition is not based on attendance. Families agree to pay for the slot their child will have in our program. Tuition is charged for the slot claimed regardless of your child's attendance pattern.

Our fee structure for slots is based on a weekly fee that is published on the current rate sheet and accepted by families at the time of enrollment.

This arrangement may be adjusted from time to time as needed by either the parent or program with a two weeks' notice of intent to withdraw from the center or change services within our program. This is allowed at the discretion of the Board based on space availability.

Our rates for tuition already incorporate holidays or other days when the center is closed. As explained above, absences for sick or vacation time beyond the one free vacation week will not result in a fee reduction.

Weekly fees remain the same throughout the year with the following exceptions:

1) No tuition is due the week we close in the fall for in-service training prior to the week the new school year starts, 2) The annual vacation week and 3) Christmas break.

New student registration fees are charged within 6 months of a child's 1st day, returning students receive their returning registration fee during the first week of February. This applies to students returning for another year of school at Small Steps Academy. The supply fee is always charged in August. These fees are non-refundable. If parent wished to request a refund due to unusual circumstances, the Board would be notified and make the decision.

VPK

Students who are eligible for VPK services are not charged any tuition for VPK services, families are charged for after care tuition only.

Tuition Refunds

All tuition is non-refundable except for prepaid tuition that is over-and-above any additional charges, including the two weeks' notice of withdrawal. We do not issue refunds. In the event you have overpaid, the credit will be applied to your next week's tuition. In the event you have a balance after your child's last day, all applicable fees including the two weeks' notice requirement will be subtracted from any balance prior to a final refund being issued. Checks for this are cut monthly and will be mailed according to our monthly bill payment schedule.

Billing

Because tuition is a recurring cost that only changes when children change programs or advance to another age group, parents should be fully aware that they will be charged on a weekly basis, every Friday in advance of care. Currently, weekly billing invoices are sent via email on Fridays before the new week of tuition occurs. Parents may elect to pay monthly and in that case, tuition will be billed 3 days before the 1st of the month and due by the 6th. Tuition is always billed in advance of giving the service. Families have three business days (including the Friday the invoice is sent) to pay on time. All tuition is due Monday and considered late if not paid by close of business on Tuesday.

Vacation Week

Parents wishing to use their Vacation Week for a tuition break must submit the Free Week Request Form to Admissions a full two weeks prior to the week it is being applied to. Forms are available at the front desk.

Tuition Collection

Small Steps Academy collects tuition payments using our communication app, Bright wheel. As of August 15th, 2022 parents are required to use autopay in the Bright wheel app.

Parents that select weekly billing will receive a statement every Friday morning for the following week. Parents that select monthly billing will receive a statement on the 1st of every month. This bill will be calculated using the number of Mondays in the month. Because some months have 5 Mondays in the month, your tuition payment will vary at times. Tuition is due by the 3rd business day of the month and in advance of the service provided.

If you have any other questions, please refer to the financial payment plan you signed at the beginning of the year. A copy is placed in your child's file.

Bank Charges/Fees

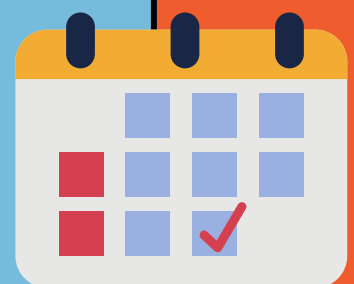
If Small Steps Academy is notified by its bank that your payment failed or was returned (insufficient funds, account closure, ACH-rejected, etc.), you will incur a charge for returned checks plus the unpaid payment amount. The full amount due must be received within five business days to avoid further action. Families usually know about banking problems earlier than we do, so we encourage you to alert us as soon as possible. Thank you.

Families that have a payment submission issue, such as a failed payment, must resolve that issue within three business days in order for their child to continue at Small Steps Academy. Any exceptions are at the discretion of the School Board.

TUITION



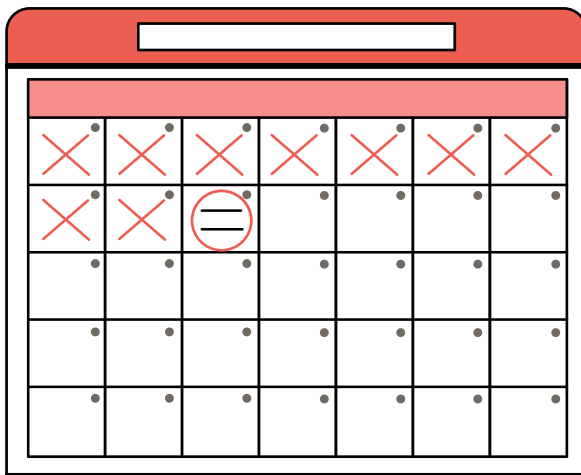
SPECIAL EVENTS



School Calendar of Activities

Our center publishes a new school calendar of activities each fall that clearly notes all holidays and other planned occasions including school closures. You will note that our calendar lists the Volusia County Public School calendar closings in order to help parents with older siblings.

Whenever possible, Small Steps aims to provide continuous care with a year-round schedule. It is also our desire that parents with children in the Volusia County School system are not over-burdened with scheduling issues between schools. Please use the yearly calendar as your guide for knowing when alternate care will need to be provided.



Save the Date

Please use the yearly calendar should you want to volunteer in the classroom or be present at school wide events. Small Steps is extremely thankful to have families that are involved in their child's preschool experience.

We hope you have just as much fun as your kiddos!





Church Singing

Families will be able to experience the joy of seeing children showcase what they have learned through music a few times during the school year during a Sunday Family Chapel time. The singing dates for 3 and 4-year old children are listed on the school calendar for the entire year. Please plan to make it possible for your child to sing during these special events.



Birthdays are special occasions that we want to celebrate with your child.

Sometimes, they can be complicated with so many different students. If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday at school, please arrange this ahead of time with your child's teacher. They will assist with the daily schedule, allergies, and other things you may want to know when planning your party.

Parents are welcomed to send store bought cookies or other special snacks. Please contact your child's teacher ahead of time to arrange this.



If you wish to provide invitations to a private party after school hours, we ask they not be distributed in the classroom unless every child receives an invitation.

Chapel Time

Small Steps Academy is passionate about teaching children to call on the name of the Lord in times of trouble and in giving Jesus all worship, praise, and thanks for being our Savior from sin. As an outpouring of that passion, we hold a weekly chapel time for children in addition to their classroom Bible lessons.

Going into the sanctuary gives children an opportunity to be with the Pastor, pray, sing songs to Jesus, and hear Bible truths tailored to them.

Chapel Time is scheduled every Wednesday. Check with your child's teacher for exact times, as Pastor Jeff warmly invites all parents to attend, too.

Every Sunday morning at 11:00am Pastor invites all family to attend a special church service for families. It is a special family chapel service geared towards little ones. The kids sing songs, answers questions and get to wiggle!





CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION



Communication with Teachers

Teachers enjoy talking to parents and family members to share information about your child's progress. This may happen daily in an informal way via Bright wheel or a quick conversation. When taking the opportunity to talk briefly, please remember that teachers are also responsible for the safety of children during school hours. This requires close and constant supervision. We appreciate you keeping that in mind when trying to communicate with your child's teacher during drop-off and pick-up times, as that may not be a good time for extended conversations.



For conversations that are urgent, please keep in mind that you are welcomed to call the front desk and we can transfer you to your child's teacher for a quick question. or the front desk can help you out.

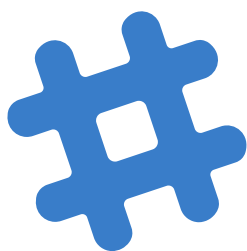


Parent Conferences

Our director and teachers enjoy meeting with individual families by parent request or teacher suggestion at any time during the school year for children in our 1 and 2-year old classes. Formal parent conferences for Preschool and VPK children are scheduled in the fall and spring. We encourage any parent to call and set up a conference anytime you feel one is needed.

Personal Information

While we do not encourage our teachers to exchange personal information, like cell phone numbers. We do, however, encourage our teachers to build a relationship with our families in a professional manner. When your child has graduated your teacher's class feel free to reach out for their contact information at that time. You can also make appointments through the school to meet with your child's teacher at any time when they are not in charge of children. You may also call the front desk and be transferred or send a bright wheel message.



Keep in mind that in today's society, connecting through social media platforms is very common. If you are going to connect with your child's teacher online, keep in mind that at Small Steps they are first and foremost teachers but on social media they are first an individual person.

Small Steps respects the rights of employees to engage in online activity on social media sites, personal web sites and blogs during non-work time as a medium of self expression and social communication. However, Employees understand that their actions captured via images, posts, or comments can reflect on Small Steps Academy. We ask all of our Teachers to be mindful that being on social media reflects on their job and their character.

The Bible reminds us that we should seek to Glorify God through everything we do, including social media.

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31

CLASSROOM

Open Door Policy & Volunteering



Small Steps Academy welcomes parents on campus and invites them to visit their child's classroom to observe classroom learning activities. This open-door policy allows parents and guardians to enter the classroom at any time unannounced.

We prefer asking parents to wait until about the 4th week of school before volunteering. This gives the children time to settle into classroom routines.

If you would like to help on a party day, help with a special project, or volunteer in your child's classroom, arrange this with your child's teacher ahead of time and always sign in at the front desk to receive a visitor's badge.

While we are committed to having an open-door policy and embrace our parent volunteers, we also have a commitment to the safety of all children as our first concern. Florida law is very specific about background screening and how it applies to volunteers or others visiting our classrooms. For this reason and because we cannot attest to the background of anyone that has not gone through our national database screening process, we cannot allow parents to spend extended periods of time in our facility without requiring them to fulfill the background screening and training requirements established by DCF for child care program volunteers.

Additionally, we ask that our volunteers avoid exposing children to any known or unknown communicable disease or other health concerns that could pose a threat to them.



Parent Code of Conduct



Our Academy is committed to ensuring that children feel happy, safe and secure, and have the maximum opportunity to learn. As members of the Small Steps Family parents and caregivers are required to conduct themselves in a safe and responsible manner that recognizes and respects the rights of others and the expertise, experience and qualifications of staff.

The Parent Code of Conduct Policy provides statements which serve as a reminder to all members of the Small Steps Family of their commitment to an excellent school experience.

This policy requires that everyone:

- Recognize that the education of each child is the joint responsibility of the caregiver and administration.
- Demonstrate that both caregivers and the Academy work cooperatively in the best interest of the child.
- Treat administration, staff, and others employed by Small Steps Academy, in a professional and respectful manner.
- Exhibit a good example for students in their conduct, language and behavior while on campus or at Academy sponsored activities.
- Refrain from negative gossip or unsubstantiated criticism that disparages the reputation of the Academy or its employees.
- Ensure that children attend school regularly and are dropped off and picked up on time.
- When visiting or volunteering at the Academy observe all rules of the school, including checking in at the lobby desk.
- All caregivers and visitors, as well as all staff of the Academy, deserve to be treated with respect.

State Licensing

As a faith-based early learning program that also pursues high quality care and education, Small Steps Academy has chosen to participate in Florida's child care licensing rather than take the option of being designated as "religious-exempt." We understand the importance of being accountable to a higher authority: Florida's Department of Children and Families. We are dedicated to maintaining strict compliance with child care licensing standards as one means of ensuring a quality environment for your children. Our state requirements cover standards for background screening, staff qualifications, facility, playground, health and safety regulations, and child/staff ratios. Our aim is to consistently meet and exceed those standards.

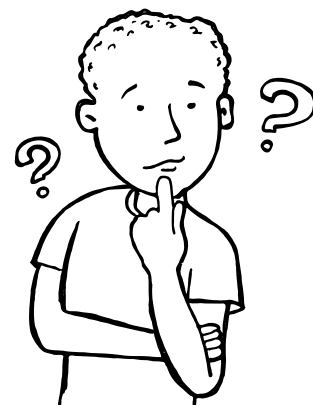
Questions or Concerns

Parents are encouraged to speak up whenever questions or concerns may arise. We value transparency and want to resolve all issues. For school matters, the following progression of actions is suggested when you have concerns:

1. Speak to your child's teacher(s) first to get clarification.
2. If a situation rises to a higher level of concern, do not hesitate to contact or meet with the director to have your concerns addressed.
3. As a last resort, in the rare event your issue is not fully resolved, you are invited to write an email describing the situation to our church's school board at board@smallstepsfl.org.

Additions/Changes

Small Steps Academy posts this handbook on our website at www.smallstepsfl.org. We reserve the right to edit or amend this document at any time. Parents will be notified of changes or additions to policies in this handbook at the time new or changed policies are made effective.





Now you're ready
to start...

First Day of School

A transition into any new environment can be challenging and cause anxiety for both the child and adult. Our staff is trained to be alert and aware of your child's reaction to their new environment and respond with sensitivity to their feelings. Separation anxiety is common. Your child may cry, and resist being left at school in the beginning. After several days, drop-off becomes easier, especially if you establish a reassuring and consistent routine.

After you walk your child into class, greet your teachers, and sign the attendance record each day, we suggest that you simply give your child a hug, remind him or her that you will return later – and then leave. Prolonging your departure could cause more anxiety for your child.

We encourage parents to call any time during the day to see how their child is adjusting. If needed, our director is happy to offer additional suggestions for a smooth and enjoyable transition into the school environment for your child and family. Coffee is available in the lobby if you would like to take a moment before you head out the door for the first time.

Welcome to the Small Steps Family

CONTACT US

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learn@smallstepsfl.org

DCF License #C07V00195

