



THE ACADEMY OF ART & LEARNING PARENT HANDBOOK

Welcome to the Academy of Art and Learning family! We are pleased that you have chosen us to care for your child. We take great pride in providing a safe, clean and nurturing environment for children to flourish and grow in. We recognize that each child has unique and different strengths, which we use to aid in their physical, mental, social and emotional development. It is important to us, that you as a parent, feel secure leaving your child in our care. We provide daily reports and encourage communication between parents and staff members. The health, safety and development of your child is our number one priority.

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VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Mission Statement:

It is our mission to create and maintain a loving and nurturing childcare center, where children can develop physically, socially and emotionally through play and learning.

Vision:

We strive to be a childcare center where children and their families are valued for their unique individual qualities. The staff is valued for their kindness, caring, knowledge, and passion to teach and help our children learn and grow each and every day. The staff creates a welcoming environment that enables children to develop positive and caring relationships, learning through a child's ability to wonder, explore, and reach for the stars. The staff enjoys spending time with the children and take pride in the children's triumphs. The children receive constant support to aid in each child's individual needs. The parents are valued as their child's first advocate and will receive support in their role as parent. We encourage parents to enthusiastically promote their child's hands-on approach to learning through play. The families and staff will work together as a team to ensure positive relationships, strong social and emotional skills, and learning through play, in a loving and nurturing atmosphere.

Philosophy:

The Academy of Art and Learning has developed an effective program that has been created to meet the social, emotional, mental, physical, and creative needs of children of all ages. The classroom environment is essential in encouraging children to develop trust and become independent. The staff focuses on developing strong relationships with the children and encouraging positive relationships between their peers to aid in the development the child's self concept, and self-discipline in a positive and supportive way. There are a lot of early childhood research shows that young children learn primarily through play. Play is an essential part of childhood that offers the freedom children need to try out new ideas, practice developing skills, and imitate adult roles. It allows children to learn social skills and develop friendships.

A strong foundation helps children build upon their prior knowledge and apply it in new and different situations. Play-based activities encourage children to explore and discover; guess and question; which overall encourages the children to make new concepts and develop 'readiness' skills. The staff encourages individualized and constant development of each child through allowing them to be independent. This independence allows and encourages the children to gain self-confidence and a sense of mastery in a developmentally appropriate atmosphere.

Relationships are essential for children to maintain a successful foundation for future growth, additionally staff and parent collaboration is necessary to sustain a strong foundation. Our staff not only teaches, but actively participates in forming positive, caring, and cooperative relationships through interactions with peers and adults. Children will successfully learn how to communicate and get along with others. Children will develop everlasting social skills through early childhood play experiences. These experiences will positively affect learning and personal

growth through the ability to communicate thoughts and feelings, and by accepting responsibilities for their actions. The classrooms, and play areas are designed to encourage a stimulating and positive environment that supports the whole child's growth socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively.

We strongly believe that children learn best when they are participating in interactive hands on involvement using a variety of materials, equipment, and developmentally appropriate activities. When children participate in active play, the child's mind, body, and emotions will develop a one of a kind valuable and meaningful learning experience. The staff will utilize every opportunity to create a positive learning experience, including encouraging children to be independent in their basic care routines, which proves to be equally as meaningful as experiences provided in areas of interest in the classroom.

CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Locked Door Policy:

The Academy of Art and Learning has locked doors at all entry points facilities. The Keypad secured door is the primary entrance at each center location. Other doors should not be opened for any person, except in case of emergency. Parents, children, and team members should enter and exit through the front keypad door. Unidentified persons should be screened at the door before being allowed entry to the building. Any unknown person must present proper photo identification before being allowed access to the building. If a person were to force their way in the children should be evacuated from the point of entry, emergency help should be called for, and if needed; the building should be evacuated along the fire route or safest route available.

First Aid:

First aid services are provided as needed by certified staff members. Proper emergency medical protocol will be followed. Minor incidents will be reported to parents via call or through "Ouch Report". The report will detail the accident, time, and medical attention given.

COVID19 policies and procedures:

We will Implement Basic Infection Prevention Measures to protect workers and children.

- Parents will not be permitted to enter the daycares whenever possible. For the time being will be instituting curbside pickup and drop off.
- Any adult will be required to wear a mask upon entering the daycare.
- All Children from the same family will attend the same daycare whenever possible.
- Children will be screened by staff upon arrival, and they will have their temperatures taken as well and then 2 other times during the day.
- Staff members will be required to wear masks and gloves while caring for children.
- Staff will have their temperatures taken upon arrival and during the day and will not be permitted to work if the temperature is over 100 degrees.
- Children will have limited contact with other children, no more than 10 children in contact with each other throughout the day. As per OEC guidelines.
- The children will have limited contact with the staff as well, the schedule will be made so the child's classroom teacher is there by 6:30 to greet their children. Each group of kids will have contact with the same members throughout the day/week whenever possible.
- We will Promote frequent and thorough hand washing, including by providing workers, customers, and worksite visitors with a place to wash their hands. If soap and running water are not immediately available, provide alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol. We will utilize timers in each classroom where children and staff will be reminded to wash hands every half hour, in addition to the typical handwashing occasions which include immediately upon arrival, after touching face, after toileting, before and after serving or preparing food, after returning from break, before and after diapering, after wiping children's nose and face, etc.
- Encourage/ insist workers to stay home if they are sick.
- Encourage respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes with a disposable tissue or into the elbow.

- Children and staff members will not be allowed to enter the building with a temperature of 100+ degrees or shows signs of illness. Staff will be sent home immediately if they develop symptoms during the day. Children that have developed symptoms will be isolated from the other children until they can be picked up.
- Enhanced cleaning practices have been implemented for execution throughout the day, as well as additional cleaning at night and weekend cleaning.
- We will not be taking any field trips until further notice.
- To mitigate the spread of the virus we will have the children outside as much as possible (weather permitting). With the extra outdoor playtime this summer please be sure to send in bathing suits, towels, and water shoes (or old shoes that can get wet for the summer) for water play. We do provide sun block and bug spray for the children. We have treated all playgrounds for ticks at each daycare.
- OEC is requiring parents to bring a change of clothes for them regardless of age of child.

Harassment:

NO verbal, physical or emotional harassment is ever acceptable! As a diverse group of team members, there are lots of things that differentiate us and there are certain things that bring us together. We are all role models and examples for the children to look up to. There is NEVER an acceptable time to threaten violence, curse/swear, hit or make derogatory or racial commentary. If there is ever a violation of this policy, it may result in progression through the tiers of employee disciplinary plans or termination.

OPERATING POLICY 19a-79

Days and Hours of Operation:

- The center is open Monday through Friday 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., year round. Tuition is due weekly regardless of any absence, including sick days. The Academy is closed on the following days:
 - ✓ Memorial Day
 - ✓ Good Friday
 - ✓ President's Day
 - ✓ Labor Day
 - ✓ Thanksgiving
 - ✓ Black Friday
 - ✓ Christmas Eve
 - ✓ Christmas Day
 - ✓ New Year's Eve
 - ✓ New Year's Day
 - ✓ Independence Day

Admission:

- Our program serves children of all ages. A \$50.00 non-refundable registration fee, along with one week's tuition is due upon registration. Tuition's payments are to be made weekly, and due the Friday before the week of care. A \$15.00 a day late fee will be added after 5 days and your child may not return until payment is made in full.
- Each child entering the center must have an updated physical form, signed and dated by his/her pediatrician, including current immunization documentation. Children, who are not school age, must have their physicals updated yearly. Children who are school age, are required to have a physical upon entering Kindergarten and then as they enter sixth grade.

Agreements with Parents:

- Please call and let a staff know if your child is going to be absent for any reason. It is also acceptable to text Pauline at (860) 604-0356.
- An adult must accompany your child to their classroom.
- Please leave at least 2 spare outfits in your child's cubby labeled with their name on it. Parents must supply diapers, bottles and wipes. We provide one type of formula generic to Enfamil with Iron. If breastmilk or another formula is preferred, it is to be provided by the parent.
- Toys are not to be brought from home except on specified days.
- Parents are to supply bedding for cots. We supply sheets for cribs.
- Any changes in address, phone number, employment, etc. must be given to the Director in writing.
- In case of inclement weather, please watch channel 3, WFSB, for closings or delays.

IMPORTANT POLICIES

Supervision of Children:

The staff/child ratio is 1 staff for every 4 children under the age of three years old and/or 1 staff for every 10 children over the age of three years old. At no time should the group size exceed 8 children under the age of three years old and/or 20 children over the age of three years old, even if ratios are being observed. Group size shall be observed in the classroom, gym, bathrooms, and outside. Children must be supervised by sight and sound at all times including nap time and during transportation. Staff shall position themselves to see as many children as possible. When there is a mixed age group, the lower required ratio and group size for the age of the youngest child shall prevail.

NO CHILD/CHILDREN SHOULD BE LEFT ALONE FOR ANY PERIOD OF TIME.

It is crucial to maintain ratios at all times. The staff does head counts numerous times throughout the day.

Confidentiality:

At the Academy we work with the whole child to aid in their development regardless of any challenges or special needs that our children may have. Personal information is extremely sensitive and confidential. Staff will receive information on the children on a need to know basis. Sensitive information must not be shared in any public area of the childcare center or any other areas outside the center. When working with children that have challenges it is essential to maintain a positive attitude.

Special Health Needs:

For each child with special health needs, an individual care plan would be put in place. This could include, but is not limited to children with the following: blood disorders, asthma, PKU, epilepsy and more. The plan would be reviewed by our RN/Health Consultant and signed off prior to the child's start date. If there is needed special training that is required, the staff will all be trained prior to the child's start date.

Termination of a Child from the Academy:

The Academy is a family. We work hard with each child to help them be successful both in and outside of our program. When a child is showing signs of distress, or behavior that causes an unsafe environment, we will put a plan into place after meeting with the parents or guardians, which will work towards successfully correcting the behaviors shown. We will also work with parents to provide outside resources that may help to correct unsafe behaviors. However, if the behavior is unsafe and endangers the child, other children, team members, or visitors to the facility; we are a private corporation and we reserve the right to terminate a child for any reason with or without advanced notice. We will provide copies of all written documentation such as incident reports, behavior sheets and injury reports and send them home at the time of termination.

It is essential to keep all children in the facility safe. It is unacceptable to discuss incidents or termination of children among the staff or with other parents. It is a violation of our privacy policies. All children and their families are entitled to privacy and respect!

Access to Health Information:

The facility may request to receive faxes of the child's medical information needed for proper record maintenance in the facility. The facility may be involved in early intervention programs, such as B23, and would need releases to work with the children and the outside support source. In a minor medical emergency, the facility may attempt to consult with the child's physician and or dentist.

BILLING AND PAYMENT POLICIES

Attendance Schedule

- ✓ Full time (Monday thru Friday) — Weekly tuition rates below apply.
- ✓ Part time (less than 5x/week) - Prorated weekly tuition rates apply.
- ✓ Drop-in (as needed) — Daily drop-in rates apply and will only be approved if space allows.

Any changes in schedule must be made in advance, preferably in writing, to insure adequate staffing and will only be approved if space allows. State licensing determines the capacity of each classroom and we cannot exceed those limits.

Price List

• Infant thru Preschool

Age Group	Age	Weekly Tuition Rate	Daily Drop-in Rate
Infants	Less than 1 years old	\$240	\$55
Toddlers	1-year olds	\$235	\$55
	2-year-olds	\$225	\$55
Preschoolers	3 — 5-year-olds	\$210	\$50

• School Age (including Preschoolers who attend Vernon Public Schools)

Type of Care	Weekly Tuition Rate	Daily Drop-in Rate
Before and After School	\$145	\$30
Before School	\$80	\$17
After School	\$90	\$19
Summer Vacation	\$210	\$45
School Holidays and Snow Days	\$200	\$40 *
Early Dismissals		\$25 *
Delayed Openings		\$20 *

*Your normal tuition is included in the holiday, dismissal and delay rates listed above. Your account will only be billed for the amount that goes above and beyond your normal fee for that day.

• Late Pickup Fees

The Academy of Art and Learning closes at 5:30 pm. Parents will be charged \$1 extra for each minute they are late in picking up their child(ren).

Payment Schedule:

Tuition payments are due on Fridays for the upcoming weeks. Tuition is due regardless of any absences, including sick days. One vacation week is allowed per year, where no tuition will be charged for absences. Drop-in payments are due the day of attendance. A \$15 a day late fee will be added after 5 days and your child may not return until payment is made in full. Hardship exceptions may be made on a case by case basis. See Pauline if you need to work out a payment plan.

Payment Options:

Tuition payments may be made by any of the following means:

- Cash - Cash payments should be submitted in an envelope marked with the name(s) of the child(ren) and/or guardian, the date of payment and the amount of the payment to insure that your account is credited correctly.
- Check (personal or bank) — Please include the week(s) covered by the payment in the memo section (e.g. w/0 12/10 or 12/10-12/14).
- Money Order — Please include the name(s) of the child(ren) and/or guardian and the week(s) covered by the payment (e.g. w/0 12/10 or 12/10-12/14).
- Credit Card — For your convenience we offer automatic credit card payments as well as individual, manual card swipes.

Care for Kids:

Financial Assistance is available through Connecticut Care for Kids. Applications may be obtained from our daycare staff or downloaded from the Links page of our website www.academyofartandlearningvernon.com. Once you have completed the application, Pauline will submit it to the state for consideration. Once your level of care is determined, any Care For Kids payments will be deducted from your tuition. Parents are responsible for paying any portion of their tuition not covered by Care for Kids.

CACFP FOOD POLICY

What is CACFP?

CACFP is a federally funded food program that allows us to provide breakfast, lunch and snack daily.

Food Handling

- ✓ When preparing or serving food, the staff is required to wash hands before and after.
- ✓ When preparing or serving food, staff is required to wear gloves at all times.
- ✓ All food items need to be labeled with the name of the food and the expiration date.
- ✓ Milk is to be served with breakfast and lunch every day.
- ✓ A menu is written weekly and is to be followed.
- ✓ Meal count worksheets are to be filled out at the point of service.
- ✓ When meals are served, every component needs to be handed out. All components are of equal importance, including milk.
- ✓ We follow the first in, first out (FIFO) system to ensure all food is fresh and not wasted.
- ✓ All dishes and bottles are to be washed, rinsed and sanitized with the rest of the dishes after lunch and at the end of the day.

Food Storage

- ✓ Refrigerated items need to be kept at 40 degrees or lower.
- ✓ Food is to be reheated to 165 degrees for 15 seconds and cannot be hot held above 135 degrees.
- ✓ We need to log temperatures daily.

Infant Feeding

- ✓ Infants need to be held during bottle feedings.
- ✓ Any unused portions of formula need to be discharged.
- ✓ Parents must provide clean bottles that need to be labeled with the child's name.
- ✓ If jar foods are being served, the whole needs to be used.
- ✓ If solids are being served, they must be served from a plate or bowl.
- ✓ Infants are on individual schedules that are to be posted by the parents, please use these and update them as new foods are introduced.

Breakfast

- ✓ We provide breakfast following the guidelines put in place by CACFP.
- ✓ Breakfast is composed of three components: grain, fruit or vegetable and milk.
- ✓ Breakfast is served between 6:30 and 8:30 a.m.

Lunch

- ✓ We provide lunch following the guidelines put in place by CACFP.
- ✓ Lunch is composed of five components: milk, meat, vegetable, fruit and grains.
- ✓ Lunch is served at 11 a.m.
- ✓ If there is left over lunch, it is to be labeled with:
 - The name of the food item and
 - The expiration date

Snack

- ✓ We provide snacks following the guidelines put in place by CACFP.
- ✓ Snack is composed of two of the following components: meat, vegetable, fruit and/or a grain.
- ✓ Snack is served at 2:30 p.m.
- ✓ If there is left over snack, it will be labeled with:
 - The name of the food item
 - The expiration date

Supper (Academy TOO only during school year)

- ✓ We provide supper following the guidelines put in place by CACFP.
- ✓ Supper is composed of five components: milk, meat, vegetable, fruit and grains.
- ✓ Supper is served when the kids return to the Academy from school.
- ✓ If there are left over snacks, it is to be labeled with:
 - The name of the food item
 - The expiration date

Milk

- ✓ We provide whole milk for children two and under and 1 % milk for children over two.
- ✓ If children are required to drink a certain type of milk, it will be noted by their name on attendance under the allergy column. It will be served to them as indicated by the menu.

ILLNESS

It is our responsibility to work with the families of children to keep our environment in a good healthy condition and prevent the spread of contagious disease. The staff follows illness prevention practices in all daily routines; including proper handwashing techniques, proper toileting habits and disinfection of the center. While we do our best to prevent illness, germs still have the potential to spread and cause illness. If a child is ill, they are not to be allowed in the daycare facility. If a child is to become ill during the day, they may be sent home if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- ✓ A fever or 100.5 degrees or greater (oral/auxiliary)
- ✓ Infestation- Scabies, Head Lice
- ✓ Strep Throat
- ✓ Scarlet Fever
- ✓ Chicken Pox or Shingles
- ✓ Pertussis
- ✓ Mumps, Measles or Rubella
- ✓ Hepatitis A
- ✓ Diarrhea that becomes uncontrollable
- ✓ Vomiting
- ✓ Mouth Sores with Drooling, Rashes, Fever and/or Behavior Changes
- ✓ Thrush
- ✓ Difficulty Breathing
- ✓ Uncontrolled Coughing
- ✓ Lethargy
- ✓ Covid

The list above gives examples of symptoms that have the potential to lead to contagious diseases, which warrant exclusion, is not all-inclusive. The Academy uses guidelines set out by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the US Department of Health and complies fully with all health regulations set forth by the Connecticut Department of Public Health.

Protocol Regarding Ill Children:

If a child is to become ill while at the Academy, the staff members will contact the supervisor and/or director to report the symptoms/findings of illness. The director/supervisor will then use careful consideration in determining if the child needs to be sent home. If the child is to be sent home, the parent will be contacted via the emergency medical care information provided in the enrollment packet. It is expected that the child will be picked up within one hour of notification. If Pauline or a Supervisor isn't available to contact parents, it is the classroom teacher responsibility to contact parent. All children's parent contact information is located in our classroom binders.

When a child is sent home, the child cannot return to the daycare facility until there is a note from the doctor with a diagnosis and a date they are cleared to return. The child needs to be fever-free and un-medicated for 24 hours and feel well. If the child is prescribed antibiotics, they must be under treatment for 24 hours before returning.

Parent Communication:

The staff will communicate with parents daily about their child's day. We are here to address any concerns, answer any questions, and help you help your child grow in every way possible. We may send home reports, requests for items, and reminders about community events. If a child is sick or injured, the parents will be notified during the day. The director or supervisor will contact the parent. If a supervisor is not available, the classroom teacher is responsible for contacting the parent.

DISCIPLINE POLICY 19a-79-

Goal:

The goal of discipline is to help the child develop self-control and move toward appropriate social behavior.

Methods:

Examples of developmentally appropriate methods utilized for resolving conflict are:

- ✓ **Positive guidance**

When disputes arise among children or between a child and staff, the staff will encourage a "talking out" process where the goal is to acknowledge feelings and find solutions using the children's ideas wherever possible.

- ✓ **Setting clear limits**

Staff will encourage and model positive behavior, positive reinforcement, the use of peer support and clearly defined rules.

- ✓ **Redirection**

A child who may be aggressive or who is disruptive or destructive of other children's work may be asked to make an activity choice in another area. Staff will continuously supervise children during disciplinary actions.

Staff shall not be abusive, neglectful, or use corporal, humiliating or frightening punishment under any circumstances. No child will be physically restrained unless it is necessary to protect the safety or health of the child or others, using least restrictive methods, as appropriate.

FAMILY EVENTS

All families will be provided a Family Intake Form during their interview. This form is to give pertinent and vital information to the staff regarding the children. It must be completed before the child's first day, so staff may review it and become knowledgeable about the child in order to help facilitate a smooth transition.

Community Events for Families:

We participate in and use a variety of community resources:

- ✓ Ready Set School Fair
- ✓ Kindergarten Orientation
- ✓ National Night Out
- ✓ Town Fireworks
- ✓ Special Library Events
- ✓ Jump Start
- ✓ Birth to Three
- ✓ Community Education Events

Open Door Policy:

We always encourage parents/legal guardians to visit the facility at any time, or schedule a time to visit. We invited parents to attend the following events:

- ✓ Preschool Graduation
- ✓ Holiday Celebrations
- ✓ Birthday Celebrations

GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS

The Academy of Art and Learning will ensure that all staff, children and parents will be presented with the following:

- ✓ We will, value and appreciate the opportunity to be heard;
- ✓ We will, promote conflict resolution in every way possible;
- ✓ We will, require cooperative partnerships, and an atmosphere free from discrimination and/or harassment;
- ✓ We will, ensure that conflicts and/or grievances will be handled fairly;
- ✓ We will, keep confidential, when possible, the information provided by any person involved with a complaint.

Definitions: Complaint: any verbal or written grievance from parents/guardians, staff, child, or person involved with the center.

- ✓ **Notifiable Complaint:** a complaint that alleges that the health, safety or wellbeing of a child in the center may have been compromised. If this is to come about, it **MUST** be reported within 24 hours.

What if I have a Complaint?

1. Step 1: Submitting a Complaint

We encourage any complaint to be submitted in writing to ensure that the complaint is clear, detailed and fully understood. When submitting a written complaint, it may be turned into the office or left in the black payment box. If submitting a complaint verbally, it may be done so to Pauline. If Pauline is unavailable, the complaint can be submitted to Breanna and/or Stephanie and they will communicate the complaint to Pauline in a timely manner.

2. Step 2: Assessment of the Complaint

The complaint will be assessed within 24 hours of being received, if the complaint is a notifiable complaint, the proper authorities will be immediately contacted. If it is a general complaint, it will be handled as soon as possible, no later than 48 hours after being submitted.

3. Step 3: Follow through of the Complaint

When a complaint is made, Pauline will evaluate the complaint and determine necessary actions. If any complaints made and assessed show that staff broke any policies or procedures, the appropriate disciplinary actions will be determined and put in place.

9" We encourage all children, parents and staff members to submit complaints at any time, with the knowledge that confidentiality will be maintained at all times. If there are any questions or concerns they may be directed to Pauline Fortier.