



## **Bright Start Learning Center**

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## **Parent Handbook**

Bright Start Learning Center is a full-day preschool program, serving children ages 2-5. Our hours of operation are Monday-Friday 8:00-5:30. At the center of our philosophy is the understanding that young children experience the world and begin learning through their play. Noted developmental psychologist Jean Piaget stated “Every time we teach a child something, we keep him from inventing it himself... that which we allow him to discover by himself will remain with him.”

At Bright Start we are building the foundation for later learning by allowing children the time and opportunity to play and discover the world around them. We are constantly working to create an atmosphere of childhood self-discovery, personal independence and individual uniqueness. Every day we promote feelings of self-worth and positive self-esteem, joy in creating and learning, respect of other people, plants and animals. We offer a program designed to facilitate the physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development of children. We are staffed by professionals who are trained to facilitate the children’s play so that basic concepts required for later learning are being mastered. Although we are not an “academic” preschool in the traditional definition, we do cover academic basics that contribute to a very high success rate in Kindergarten. The environment at Bright Start contains the following materials to aid in the children’s mastery of basic skills:

1. Child-sized equipment to promote the children’s comfort and ease of movement within the school and to let them know that this is a place for children
2. Sensory materials to facilitate the growth of tactile, visual, olfactory and auditory skills
3. Fine-motor materials to promote the growth of hand skills and hand-eye coordination which will aid in writing skills
4. Gross-motor materials to facilitate the development of large muscle group skills
5. Language arts materials to promote listening, speaking and prewriting skills
6. Social studies materials to promote self-recognition and awareness of family and community, social skills and nurturing behaviors
7. Premathematics materials to facilitate knowledge of numbers, time, sequence, measurement and shape
8. Materials for creative expression (art, music and drama) to promote creative self-expression and appreciation of the creativity of others.

## **Programming**

Bright Start is a child-centered rather than an adult directed program. The program is based on sound principles of child development and early childhood education. The significance of child-centeredness is that the children, and their development and individual needs, provide the basis for planning the daily program, for scheduling, and for the content of the curriculum. Each month we have a theme in which we base the month's activities upon. The theme will be taken into account when planning art projects, dramatic play, story time and all other aspects of the daily program. A monthly calendar of activities will be given to the parents each month. This calendar will show one planned activity for every day, but it must be understood that many activities are occurring every day, but they are coming from the children. As the staff plans for children, the following are among the considerations:

1. The status of the individual child's growth and development
2. The general developmental level of each group of children
3. The interests of individual children and of children in this age group
4. The material and equipment available in the classroom and outdoors
5. Upcoming holidays and special events, and their significance to the children and their families
6. The season of the year, prevailing weather conditions, and how these affect children
7. The mood of the children on a given day
8. The activity level of the children during various seasons and at different times of the day
9. Skills and special interests of the staff
10. Available community resources
11. Special concerns of and goals that parents have for their children
12. Skills children will need for success in later school experiences.

## **Goals and Parent Communication**

Our main goal at Bright Start is to create an environment that is safe and healthy and that promotes learning for young children. We also work with each individual family to develop goals for each child. We also expect the parents to be a part of the Bright Start community. We ask that you read the operating procedures in this handbook and read supplemental notes and newsletters we may send you from time to time. Communication is essential for a quality early childhood program. The tools for consistent communication with parents are daily sign-in sheets, daily verbal contact, family events, parent bulletin board and our monthly calendar. Remember there is space for parents' comments on the sign-in sheet as well; we encourage daily comments from parents. At Bright Start we respect you and your child's development, so we will always be completely honest regarding your child's day on our sign-in sheets. Our daily sign-in sheet comments will always be an honest evaluation of your child's day and progress. Our hope is that parents will also treat the staff to the same respect in that parents will voice concerns directly to the school. Conferences with the director and/or staff members are encouraged. The staff assures parents that parent/teacher disagreements will not affect teacher/child relationships. Our goals, as parents and teachers are to work together for the children and to assist children in feeling whole, healthy and happy with themselves.

## Parent-Child Separation Procedures

For most children, starting at Bright Start will be their first experience away from Mom and Dad and this can be frightening and overwhelming to a child. We ask that you discuss separation in the home in advance and discuss where family members will be while the child is in school. Perhaps even a visit to Mom and Dad's office will help the child visualize where Mom and Dad are during the day. When a child is enrolled, we require that a family member stay with the child a minimum of three ½ days at Bright Start. This will greatly ease the separation for both the child and the parent. During these three days, we ask the adult to choose a spot to sit and verbally assure the child that they can venture out and explore the environment and the adult will stay in the same spot. The child can then explore and when feeling insecure or frightened, he/she will know that adult will be where the adult said he/she would be. When it is time for you to leave, the teacher will help you to decide when it is the best time. It is very important though, that when you say goodbye, you must leave, no matter how hard it is. The more consistent and routine your goodbyes are, the easier it will be for your child.

## Drop off and Pick up Policies

At Bright Start, much planning has gone into your child's daily schedule, including drop-off and pick-up times. An extra amount of time is made in our day for the transition of separating from family to school and from school to family. To ease this separation, we ask parents to stay approximately ten minutes in the morning to allow the child to adjust. It is also very important to be sure your child knows that you have said goodbye. It is a good idea to have your child look at your face while saying goodbye so that you know that they have heard you. We ask that you never sneak out without saying goodbye, even if your child is upset. We will work through your child's emotions and we will always call you if there is a problem beyond the realm of a "sad goodbye". Children may not be dropped off after 11:00am. We ask for children to arrive before 9:30am. If you arrive while your child's class is having circle time, please stay outside with your child and wait until this important morning meeting time is over. It is very disruptive to the class when children arrive at this time.

Pick up time should be handled with the same respect. Time is needed to allow the child the finish, clean up and work through feelings of departure. Please be aware that when your child has seen you at pick up time and is with you, the parent is then responsible for his or her own child. It is extremely disruptive and difficult for the teacher when children come in and out of the class once a parent has arrived. The teacher will be responsible while the child is in the room, but once the child leaves the room and goes with his/her parent, that parent must watch their child. Please note on your admission application, there is a late fee charged for parents picking up their child after 5:30. The fee is \$1.00 per minute after 5:30. Consistently late parents will be asked to withdraw from Bright Start. Pick up time is 12:00(noon) for the children in our morning program, once again, consistently late parents will be asked to work out other arrangements or withdraw from Bright Start. It is required by state licensing that parents must sign-in and out with a full signature and the time, every day (no initials). Sign-in and out sheets are located by the front door, they are separated according to your child's group and are alphabetized by your child's first name.

## Diapering and Toilet Training

Children do not have to be potty trained to attend Bright Start in our youngest group, but they must be potty trained to move onto the 3-4 year old class. We believe that potty training should be handled with respect to each child's individual needs. We do not pressure children to use the toilet. We do offer lots of encouragement to the child who wishes to achieve this new skill. We ask that parents work with their child's teacher to develop strategies for potty training that will be consistent between home and school.

Diapering is also handled with respect at Bright Start. The children get their diapers changed on a routine basis as well as whenever needed. This part of your child's day is used as an opportunity for interaction with his/her teacher or teacher's assistant. The child is involved in the process and what is being done to him/her is discussed with him/her, so the child has some one-on-one time with his/her caregiver.

## Nutrition

The children at Bright Start eat approximately every 2 hours. They receive a hot breakfast, 2 snacks and eat lunch from home. We believe in building a foundation of good nutrition during the early childhood years. Much knowledge and time is spent on the selection of foods we serve. Snacks are well balanced and portioned for young children with a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, grains, protein and carbohydrates. We serve low fat milk at snack time and filtered water is available at all times. We ask that the same care go into preparing your child's lunch. Your child's lunch should contain a bread, a protein, a fruit and/or vegetable. For your child's health we ask you not to provide chips, candy, cookies, soda or other "junk" foods. To reduce the risk of choking (and to follow American Red Cross guidelines) we ask you not to provide nuts, raw carrots, popcorn or any food that requires lots of chewing and/or could be easily choked on. Hot dogs and grapes are only permissible if cut in half lengthwise.

## Rules of Discipline

As stated in section 101323.1 in the Manual of Policies and Procedures of the Child Care Centers, Division 12: any form of discipline or punishment which violates a child's personal rights, shall not be permitted.

A child's personal rights are outlined in Section 101223:

1. To be accorded dignity in his/her personal relationships with staff and other persons
2. To be accorded safe, healthful and comfortable accommodations, furnishings and equipment to meet his/her needs.
3. To be free from corporal or unusual punishment, infliction of pain, or other actions of a punitive nature, including but not limited to: interference with the daily living functions, including eating, sleeping or toileting; or withholding of shelter, clothing, medication or aids to physical functioning.

At Bright Start we treat children with respect and we operate on the premise that young children are never "bad". Inappropriate behavior that requires discipline is usually the result of the child's level of development. We believe in working with the child to understand that the behavior is bad not the child. We always take extra steps to help a child understand the concept of rules and consequences. We do not use "time out" at Bright Start instead we try to give the children the tools to work through problems on

their own. But a teacher is always available to help sort out differences. If a child needs to be removed from a situation they will sit down with a teacher who will help him/her to calm down and to figure out solutions to the problem.

At Bright Start we work to create an environment that will enhance positive behavior in children and we work to give them tools to have the confidence to problem solve on their own,. When a child has the self-esteem to stand up for his/her self and the respect for others to listen to their peers, a lot of discipline problems are eliminated. But in order to reach this point; Bright Start's teachers are trained and required to:

- Give children a clear understanding of the rules prior to altercations occurring
- Create an environment in which children experience personal independence, build self-esteem and self-worth
- Set safe limits for children at all times
- Teach about relationships between people and all living things and the importance of compassion and understanding.
- Help children work through problems, not solve problems for the child, by giving them verbal and mental tools to help themselves.
- Help children gain self-control through relaxation, calming times, soft music, books, art and creative expression, and use of calmer more controlled words.
- Teach children anger management skills i.e. running, exercising, jumping, game playing, sports, or through verbal release.
- Use of constant positive reinforcement.
- Must have thorough knowledge of the cognitive, social and physical needs of young children.
- Never use punishment, only discipline and ask for help in difficult situation.
- Seek professional guidance to resolve all conflicts and/or resolving difficult situations when necessary.
- Teach children the importance of empathy and respect for others feelings.

## **What to Wear to School**

Children at Bright Start are learning through a hands-on approach; which means their hands will be on everything, paint, dirt, mud, water, flour, sand etc. Please dress your child in clothes that can easily be washed and possibly stained. Children should concentrate on their play, not on keeping clean. You should also provide clothes that are simple and free of complicated fastenings (belts, suspenders, overall etc), so the child can assert their independence by using the toilet without the teacher's aid. Please provide sweaters or jackets even on sunny days, it is easy to remove an unnecessary item. All shoes should be close toed to eliminate stubbed toes. Most importantly PLEASE label all clothing with your child's name, especially jackets and sweaters and rain boots!! Bright Start will not be held responsible for any belongings that are not labeled with your child's name. Please bring a complete set of extra clothing to keep in your child's cubby and update it as your child grows. We have a supply of extra clothing, but we prefer to use children's own clothing. We appreciate contributions of clothing, especially underpants, jackets and long pants.

## What to Bring to School

Every child at Bright Start will be given a cubby to keep all personal belongings, but please do not allow your child's cubby to become "overstuffed", please clean out all unneeded items. The following items should be provided by the parent:

- Your family picture for your child to keep at school for comfort.
- A photo of your child alone for our birthday bulletin board.
- A blanket and twin size sheet for nap time (full day children only). Even on warm days, please provide a small blanket. If your child needs a pillow it must be a small crib size pillow that will fit in your child's cubby (if it doesn't fit please don't bring it). All bedding **MUST** be taken home at the end of the week, washed and brought back on Monday.
- An extra change of clothes. If these are used when your child gets wet or dirty, a new outfit must be brought back the next day. Bright Start cannot be held responsible for clothing that is not labeled with your child's name.
- A healthy lunch (full day children only).
- All bottles must be labeled with your child's name and the current date. Unlabeled bottles will not be given.
- All diapers must be supplied by the parents, you will be notified when your child is running low, please check your child's cubby regularly.
- If medication is required for your child, you must fill out a medical release form and place it on the front of the sign-in sheets for your child's group. Medication will only be given if it is prescribed by the doctor (proof is required) and only if the medication is premeasured. Drug stores sell syringes with stoppers specifically for this purpose.
- Toys from home are only permitted on share days. Please try to encourage your child to bring a toy that is in accordance to the monthly theme. Toys brought on other days will be sent home or kept in the child's cubby or in the office.
- Earthquake Kit

In case of an earthquake or other natural disaster we require each child to have an earthquake kit at school at all times. Please bring the following items in a child-size backpack clearly labeled on the outside with your child's name, on the first day of school:

- Six (6) juice boxes
- Child-size bike helmet (strapped to the outside of the backpack)
- One small blanket
- Change of clothes (including a warm jacket)
- Small flashlight
- If your child uses a bottle or diapers, please provide an ample supply of these items
- Family photo
- Any other necessary items, stuffed animal, favorite small toy etc.

The school will provide food, water, a first-aid kit, radio, children's Tylenol, toilet paper, plastic bags, waterproof matches, can opener, utensils, plates and napkins.

Earthquake kits should be updated every year to be sure that the clothes still fit and to remove unnecessary items. All earthquake kits will be stored in a waterproof shed on the

outside of the building. Please remember that in the event that we have to move the children to our relocation site, the children must be able to carry their back packs on their backs, so please only supply what is necessary.