



Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc

Where Curious Minds Discover & Grow!

Parent Handbook

PLEASE READ THIS HANBOOK ENTIRELY BEFORE YOU ENROLL YOUR CHILD INTO OUR PROGRAM.
Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. reserves the right to modify center policies and tuition rates when necessary.
Copies are available at the office, upon request.

Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc.

VISION STATEMENT

To stand out as a leader in exceptional early childhood education

MISSION STATEMENT

To ensure every child thrives!

CORE VALUES

1. We instill a solid social emotional foundation!
2. We believe every child can learn!
3. We celebrate each person's unique gifts!
4. We are solution focused!
5. We are lifelong learners!
6. We build strong partnerships with families!

EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. is a full day learning center that is committed towards providing top-rated child-care services coupled with a high-quality activity-based learning curriculum. Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. is dedicated to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all children. Parents will feel comforted knowing that their child is spending his/her day in a place where he/she is encouraged to grow and learn at his/her own pace.

Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. is dedicated to providing an exemplary early childhood program and committed to fostering the continued growth and development of each child on a cognitive, physical, emotional, and social level. Since children learn best through active involvement. Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. provides an enriched, stimulating, and safe environment that encourages exploration and experimentation. Children are guided to question, hypothesize, solve problems, and express themselves creatively. The teachers at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. both respect and understand the uniqueness of each and every child and differentiate instruction to meet those individual needs. Children are continuously growing and developing in many ways every day.

The programs at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. are designed to meet the needs of all children by providing many experiences for them to practice and build upon the skills they already have, while incorporating new knowledge. Our primary goal is to provide access to opportunities that promote school success at the same time as recognizing and supporting each child's individual differences.

We believe that all children can learn; it is our job to create a setting where children's natural *Approaches to Learning* (Curiosity, Initiative, Engagement, and Creativity) are encouraged and built upon. We believe that children learn best by doing. A facilitated, activity-based setting provides children with opportunities to learn about their world through hands on experiences. Activities at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. encourage exploration and development of children's innate curiosity.

We consider Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. a small community; a safe place where children, staff, and families work together as partners; a place where everyone feels a sense of belonging; a place where everyone is respected and celebrated for their diversity as well as their common bonds.

OWNER BACKGROUND

Erin Medlar holds a Dual Master's Degree of Science in Literacy/ Special Education from the University at Albany. She is certified in New York State to teach in the following areas: Elementary Education (1-6), Early Elementary Education (B-2), Special Education (1-6) and Literacy (B-6). In August 2022, she earned her Certificate of Advanced Study from Suny Brockport in School Building Leadership and School District Leadership. Erin has over ten years of public and private school teaching experience, working with children from diverse backgrounds with a variety of needs.

Married and a mother of two boys, Erin understands the unique challenges that families face in today's society. She is continuously building relationships with children and their families, as she believes that it is those partnerships that empower children to reach their fullest potential.

For Erin, being a teacher is not just a career; it defines who she is. Every day, she is amazed by the children she works with and inspired by their innate curiosity.

Ultimately, Erin is grateful to have the opportunity to work with young children and for the chance to be a positive role model in their lives.

HISTORY OF IMAGINATION CHILDCARE ACADEMY, INC.

Prior to relocating to the Rochester area, Erin and her family lived in Scotia, NY. When her son, Nicholas, was four months old, he was placed into the Schenectady County Early Intervention Program, because he was not tracking objects and had difficulty learning new concepts.

At first, a special education teacher came to Erin's house and worked with Nicholas on a weekly basis. After a few months, his teacher suggested that he should work with a physical therapist, as he was having sensory issues and had difficulty learning to crawl. Then, a few months passed and his teachers recommended that he have a speech pathologist work with him, as he was delayed with his speech patterns. A few more months passed by and the teachers, Erin and her husband decided that Nicholas needed more exposure to all of these skills on a daily basis in order for him to progress.

The teachers recommended a preschool that was fully integrated with all children. The program consisted of a two hour daily preschool program, which included a special education teacher, a speech therapist, and an occupational therapist. After the pre-school program, parents could opt to have wrap-around daycare included.

This school was incredible. Every day Nicholas and Erin walked into those doors, he was greeted by name, with love and excitement by every staff member he encountered, including the secretaries and the custodian. He was excited to go to school, making mornings a breeze. Every moment of the day was purposely planned for developmentally appropriate learning. Every time Erin walked in, regardless of the time of day, the children were learning. Even in the morning, with Nicholas being the first child to walk in the door, there were planned fine motor activities on the table (ex. different color bears, with tweezers and color-coded bowls for them to sort the bears) waiting for the children to explore. Nicholas attended this

program for about six months, and then he tested out of the Early Intervention Program, though he continued to attend the school until Erin relocated to Rochester.

Shortly after moving to Rochester, Erin's husband and her began looking for a daycare that was close to home that would provide Nicholas with the same experiences as his old school. Erin and Mike were saddened to learn that these schools are few and far to come by on the West Side of Rochester.

Erin and Mike visited several daycares and found most to be more focused on free-play, rather than inquiry based facilitated learning. Many times, Mike and Erin observed the staff sitting next to each other talking, rather than interacting with the children and promoting language building opportunities. Inside the facilities, there were few spaces where children could go to move around, in cases of inclement weather. Some facilities prided themselves in the fact that they offered a writing curriculum for three-year olds, including oodles of worksheets.

A few months later, Erin had the amazing opportunity to visit the Strong Museum of Play. She was amazed. This place provided natural learning experiences for all age groups to discover and explore. Literacy opportunities were in every direction: books, paper, writing utensils, words all over the walls to explain what's happening in the environment (up, down, in, out, loud, quiet). There were multiple opportunities for children to use imaginative play: The Wegmans, the restaurant in the Bernstein Bears section, the helicopter, Sesame Street, and Giant's land, the assembly line, etc. There were multiple exhibits that encouraged children to explore with science, math, music and art. Erin left the museum that day thinking...wow...what an amazing place for kids to go and learn.

She began to think...what if she created her own learning center, which incorporated all the things she loved about Nicholas' old school, some of the concepts from Strong Museum, and some of her own ideas:

- A warm, nurturing environment where all children would feel respected and loved
- A full day of purposefully planned hands-on experiences that promote explorations in literacy, science, math, social studies and technology
- A large indoor gross motor space where children could move around safely and use imaginative play (bakery, restaurant, grocery store auto mechanic)
- A place where parents are considered to be experts on their own children and encouraged to work as partners with the teachers and staff
- A facility that is designed to nurture children's imaginations, helping them discover and grow
- A place where literacy is integrated throughout all parts of the daily routine

This is how Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. was born! The name encompasses all they stand for. The staff at Imagination Childcare Academy want children to use their imaginations to learn about the world around them. They create an environment that facilitates this learning by modeling and by providing the children with the tools they need to be successful.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES (Listed Alphabetically)

ABSENCES

- Tuition is prorated for the school year, from September (including the first week of school) through June (last week of school). We do not provide tuition refunds for absences due to illness or any other reason, given that the centers' operating expenses remain constant.
- Please email to notify us if your child will be absent for the day.
- If your child is absent more than two days with an illness, we will need a letter from the doctor stating the child is able to return to daycare.

ALLERGENS

- Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. cannot guarantee an environment free of any allergens, including peanuts, peanut oil and peanut dust. It is impossible to control the peanut residue that can linger on children's hands, on classroom furniture, or on items that children bring from home. However, we do attempt to minimize the risk of allergen exposure by:
 - Prohibiting the sharing of food or utensils
 - Requiring store bought treats/food items with ingredients listed
 - Washing and sanitizing tables where meals are served
 - Encouraging frequent hand washing by all staff and students, including washing hands before and after meals are served.
- Parents of children with allergies should consult with their physician and with the Center Director to properly assess the child's needs, and his/her ability to participate in the Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. program. Students with allergies must have an 'Allergy Action Plan' on file.

ANAPHYLAXIS PREVENTION POLICY

Upon enrollment and whenever there are changes, parents/guardians will be required to provide the program with up-to-date information regarding their child's medical conditions, including any allergies the child may have and any emergency medications prescribed for potential anaphylaxis. The parents/guardians will work in conjunction with the program and the child's physician to complete the documents required for any allergy that the child may have. These documents will guide all staff in the necessary actions to take during an allergic or anaphylactic reaction. The program will keep these documents and any emergency medications in a designated area known to all staff members as outlined in the program's healthcare plan and will ask for updated paperwork when necessary. Additionally, if a child without a known allergy and/or without medication on site has signs/symptoms of anaphylaxis during program, staff will call 911 and follow the instructions provided by the 911 dispatcher.

Documents

- Any child with a known allergy will have the following documents on file when applicable:
 - NYS OCFS form 7006 - Individual Health Care Plan for a Child With Special Healthcare Needs or approved equivalent
 - NYS OCFS form 6029- Individual Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan or approved equivalent
 - NYS OCFS form 7002 – Medication Consent Form or approved equivalent

These forms will be completed by the child's parents in conjunction with the program and the child's physician. In the event of an anaphylactic reaction, staff will call 911 and follow the instructions outlined in these documents.

Staff Training

- All staff members will be trained in the prevention, recognition and response to food and other allergic reactions and anaphylaxis upon hire. A number of staff will also maintain certifications in CPR & First Aid and medication administration. If a child with an allergy requires the administration of Epinephrine or other emergency medications, the parents will be required to train any staff member caring for that child on the administration of the prescribed medication.

Strategies to Reduce the Risk of Exposure to Allergic Triggers

- Each classroom will have a posting with a list of individual children's allergies that is visible to all staff and volunteers caring for the child. All staff will take steps to prevent exposure to a child's known allergy, including but not limited to reading food labels. Handwashing, cleaning and all other regulations related to allergies and anaphylaxis as outlined in the OCFS Childcare Regulations will be followed by all staff and volunteers.

Communication

- Upon enrollment of a child with a known allergy, all staff and volunteers will be made aware of the child's allergy and associated medication needs, as well as ways to reduce the risk to exposure to said allergen. In addition, all parents and children will be made aware of any allergies in the classroom, as well actions being taken to reduce exposure. Confidentiality will be maintained when discussing any child's allergy with parents and other children.

Annual Notification to Families

- Families will be given a copy of the program's Allergy and Anaphylaxis Policy upon enrollment. This policy will be reviewed and updated annually. Families will receive an updated copy of this policy annually whenever changes are made.

ANNUAL ENROLLMENT

- Annual Enrollment is required for our programs.
- All spots are held on a first come first serve basis.
- After submitting the Enrollment Contract, if you decide not to begin fall enrollment, your **registration fee and last week's tuition will not be refunded.**

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE; PICK-UP AUTHORIZATIONS

- Parents and/or caregivers must bring their child directly to the classroom each day.
- Your child will be released only to the people specified on the signed parental agreement form. No person under the age of eighteen, including family members, may pick up your child from the center.
- At pick up time, once a child is greeted by a parent, that parent is responsible for his/her child and preparing that child to leave the center.
- In shared custody or divorce situations, parents should provide a mutually agreeable list of people authorized to pick up the child. If a mutually agreeable list is not provided, Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. will allow parents, stepparents and grandparents to pick up, unless otherwise noted by the court of jurisdiction.
- Parents are responsible for keeping the pick-up authorization cards up to date. The center must also be notified in writing if someone other than those authorized will be picking up your child from the center.
- Arrival and pick-up times often become very busy. Please make an appointment with your child's teacher for lengthy conversations concerning your child.

- Our parking lot can be a busy place. Please always hold your child’s hand and be sure to drive slowly. Also, please DO NOT leave your car running in the parking lot when you come in to drop your child off or pick him/her up.

NO CHILD WILL BE RELEASED TO ANYONE NOT LISTED ON THE PICKUP LIST UNLESS PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE BY THE PARENTS WITH THE DIRECTOR. IN ADDITION, INDIVIDUALS ON THE PICKUP LIST, OTHER THAN THE CHILD’S PARENT, MUST HAVE WRITTEN APPROVAL FROM THE PARENT FOR EACH PICKUP, OR WE MUST BE ABLE TO OBTAIN A CONFIRMATION OVER THE TELEPHONE FROM THE PARENT/ PICTURE IDENTIFICATION WILL BE REQUIRED WHEN SUCH ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE. THIS RULE IS STRICTLY ENFORCED!

ASSESSMENT

For a full explanation of the assessments we use, you can view our PowerPoint presentation located on the parent information section of our website at www.imaginationchildcareacademy.org.

FORM OF ASSESSMENT	DESCRIPTION	NAME OF TOOL	TIMEFRAME FOR USE
Developmental Baseline	A type of pre-assessment that provides a thorough evaluation of skill level, abilities, and/or knowledge that a child possesses prior to the beginning of formal instruction. With the results from a developmental baseline assessment, teachers can make informed instructional decisions. The baseline also serves as a comparative measure to determine the amount of student growth throughout the school year.	Brigance Inventory of Early Development	Completed within three weeks of a child’s start date into our program.
Screening	Screening is intended to identify children who may need further assessment. When needed, there should always be referrals for further assessment. Screening instruments must be valid and reliable. Staff administering screenings should be sufficiently trained. Screening results, alone, do not provide enough information to determine children’s strengths and needs.	Ages & Stages (ASQ) Ages & Stages: SE (ASQ:SE)	Completed within three weeks of a child’s start date into our program
Progress Monitoring	The National Research Council defines progress monitoring as “assessment conducted to examine students’ academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress is monitored on a regular basis by comparing expected and actual rates of learning. Based on these measurements, teaching is adjusted as needed.” ² Progress monitoring must be closely aligned to a standards-based curriculum to ensure validity. Therefore, one assessment tool may not be appropriate for assessing a wide range of learning areas.	COR Advantage Observation/Anecdotal Notes	On-going throughout the year
Summative Assessment	The National Research Council defines summative assessment as “assessment that typically documents how much learning has occurred at a point in time; its purpose is to measure the level of child, school, or program success.” ² The same tool that was used to establish a developmental baseline would be suitable for a summative assessment.	Benchmark Assessment which includes Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)	Once in the fall and once in the spring.

- Progress reports are sent home three times per year, December, March and June
- Parent teacher conferences are conducted at least bi-annually (Fall and Spring) for all students enrolled in our preschool programs. Please make sure to set up a day and time to meet with your child's teacher to review your child's progress.
- All assessment data is kept confidential and only shared with staff who work directly with your child. All information is stored in your child's classroom file cabinet.
- Accommodations will be made to ensure that all assessments, screenings and parent teacher conferences are conducted in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner and in the family's home language.
- Interpreters are attained through the child's school district as needed.
- Proven valid and reliable by HighScope Educational Research Foundation, COR Advantage is an observation-based early childhood assessment for children from birth to age six. Daily observation of your child's participation in classroom activities using the COR Advantage provides our faculty with insight about your child's developmental growth and guides the teacher's future instructional decisions. Specifically, our faculty documents your child's demonstration of age-appropriate behaviors and characteristics as a means of assessing his/her progress. This tool includes all areas of development, including social emotional, cognitive, and physical.
- We use COR Advantage on the Kaymbu online system to collect and organize observations. We use these observations to analyze and track learning trends, build developmental portfolios, and create individually tailored lesson plans.
- You can download the free app, Kaymbu for Families, on your mobile device to receive updates about your child's development and access your child's progress report!
- Privacy and security is a priority for the Kaymbu platform. Kaymbu serves thousands of early education programs. You can find privacy and security information at <https://kaymbu.com/privacy-policy/>

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Imagination Childcare Academy uses the Pyramid Model framework as a guide to develop social emotional competence in young children.

The Pyramid Model builds upon a three-tiered approach to providing universal supports to all children to promote wellness, targeted services to those who need more support, and intensive services to those who need them.

We depict our tiered approach as a pyramid with a:

- **Yellow Foundation:** The foundation for all of the practices in the pyramid are the **systems and policies** necessary to ensure a workforce is able to adopt and sustain these evidence-based practices.
- **Blue Tier : Universal supports** for all children through nurturing and responsive relationships and high quality environments.
- **Green Tier : Prevention** which represents practices that are targeted social emotional strategies to prevent problems.
- **Red Tier: Intervention** which is comprised of practices related to individualized intensive interventions.



Encouraging Children To Get Along With Others

Imagination Childcare Academy is committed to providing a safe, loving, and stimulating environment for all children. Our ultimate goal is to help children achieve self-regulation skills and to teach children how to solve their own problems.

The staff will be supportive, firm and consistent in their approach to maintain a positive learning environment. Some techniques the staff will use to encourage the children to solve their own problems are; providing choices, redirecting a child to an alternate activity, encouraging children to talk about their feelings by using active listening, and by modeling appropriate behavior when speaking and interacting with children and adults.

Children learn through observation. As teachers, we model the behaviors that we want our students to exhibit. We use kind words, share with others, and cooperate with all children and adults. By doing this, we teach children how to hear, listen, understand feelings, apologize, and to interact appropriately with others.

Responding To Difficult Behaviors

Our goal is to create an environment that minimizes the need for disciplinary action and increases every child's social emotional competency. We facilitate this goal in two ways: Using the Pyramid Model approach to behavior management (foreseeing and redirecting potential problems before they arise) and providing engaging developmentally appropriate instruction.

As children engage in inappropriate behaviors, teachers will

- 1st- Try to specifically praise others for engaging in the appropriate behavior.
- 2nd- The teacher will give the child a gentle reminder of what the appropriate behavior is by pointing to the visually displayed classroom rules.
- 3rd- The teacher will redirect the child by providing alternative choices.
- 4th- Tucker Time



Our teachers will have children take time in the thinking spot (a place within adult supervision but away from group activities) where children are encouraged to take as long as they need to reflect on how they are feeling and how those feelings affect their behavior.

- 5th-When children feel they are calm and ready to return to the group, the teacher briefly discusses the inappropriate behavior and brainstorms with the child some suggestions for a replacement behavior. Then, when the child feels he/she is ready to return to the group, he/she may.

Example:

A child is refusing to help pick up the toys that he/she was playing with.

- 1st-Teacher observes other children picking up and praises them for their cooperation.
- 2nd- Teacher asks the child to help her pick up (the teacher places a few items in the bin).
- 3rd- Teacher provides the child with a choice: (once you put these toys away, we can move on to the next fun activity)
- 4th- Tucker Time (Stop, Tuck, Think) Go sit down in the thinking spot, and as soon as you are ready to put the toys away, let me know and I will help you. (Teacher attends to the other child and engages in the next activity).
- 5th- Once the child complies, praise the child for the specific behavior (I see you picking up the toys...Nice work). Then talk about what happened and what could have been done differently. Remind the child that you are proud of him/her for making a good choice.

Helping Children Solve Their Own Problems

We use the Pyramid Model approach to conflict management, which encourages children to think of their own solutions to problems and to consider what the consequences of those solutions will be. We teach a variety of solutions to children, so that when conflict arises they are more prepared to handle those situations. The solutions we teach are as follows:

1. Get a teacher
2. Ask Nicely
3. Ignore
4. Wait and Take Turns
5. Share
6. Play together
7. Say "Please", "Stop"
8. Trade

For example, a child is upset because another child took his/her toy. The child comes up to a teacher crying and says "Tommy took my toy."

Step one: Show Empathy:

- "I bet that made you sad huh?" (*Then, listen to what the child says*)

Step Two: Send the "Power Message."

- "What do you think you should do about it?" (*Have the child brainstorm suggestions. If the child has difficulty coming up with some appropriate solutions, offer some alternatives*)

Step Three: Offer choices.

- "Would you like to hear what other kids have tried?"

At this point, offer a variety of choices that range from bad to good. It's usually best to start out with the poor choices. Each time a choice is offered, go on to step four, forcing the youngster to state the consequence in his/her own words. This means that you will be going back and forth between Love and Logic steps three and four.

Step Four: Have the child state the consequences.

➤ "And how do you think will that work?"

Step Five: Put ideas into practice

➤ "Good luck. I hope it works out."

Step Six: Follow up

➤ "How did it work"? So, next time if this happens you'll know just what to do."

Setting Up The Classroom To Encourage Acceptable Behavior

The classroom will be broken up into learning areas: building, writing/art, reading/ listening, dramatic play, science & technology. All areas of the classroom will have ample amounts of toys and supplies for children to support their emotional development. Children will be shown how to use materials appropriately and given multiple opportunities to practice using these tools. There are also visual expectations posted throughout the classroom.

We seek to build children's self-esteem by helping them develop self-control and responsibility for their own actions. Since our goal is to help each child achieve self-regulation skills, we set a few simple, understandable guidelines that set the limits of behavior for the safety and protection of all children. We show children what they should do, rather than tell them what they shouldn't do. Our center rules, that all staff and students are expected to follow are: Be Safe, Be Kind, and Be Responsible.

We show children what each rule looks like. For example, to be safe, we practice walking through the classroom, holding the railing down the stairs and washing our hands properly. To be kind we practice saying kind words to get what we want, taking turns, doing things for others. To teach responsibility we practice putting toys away, hanging up our belongings, and finishing things we have started.

Varying Discipline Techniques for Different Developmental Levels

Some children may need more assistance with problem solving than others. Each child will be given the appropriate amount of scaffolding from adults to help them reach their fullest social/emotional potential.

What to do when a Child Needs More Support (Behavior Support Team Process)

1. Discuss concerns with parents. Let them know that we will be working as a building team to see if we can come up with some strategies to help improve the problem behavior. If after we have tried various strategies and the child is still having difficulties, we will meet to discuss other options.
2. Bring concerns to the internal team (behavior specialist, Director, classroom teacher).
3. Classroom teachers collect data using ABC chart (Date, Time, Setting, What Happened Before, Problem Behavior, Consequence)
4. After two weeks, meet again with internal team to read through data to determine the function of the behavior and to brainstorm some intervention strategies to replace the behavior.
5. Classroom teachers implement suggested strategies in the classroom, and collect data for four weeks.

If behavior does not significantly improve after four weeks, child may be dismissed from the program.

BIRTHDAYS

Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. does celebrate children's birthdays. However, our company policy prohibits homemade treats. As we are a peanut/tree-nut free facility, all contents must be properly labeled and checked with your child's teacher prior to entry into the facility. If you intend to supply a treat, please let us know ahead of time so that we can plan accordingly. Also, feel free to ask your child's teacher about some peanut/tree-nut free options.

We encourage families to bring in healthy treat options, such as fruits and vegetables. Below is a list of nut free/peanut free snacks that you can bring in that are safe for all of our children.

- Sugar free Popsicles
- Yogurt
- Smoothies
- Fruit Tray

Please do not bring in cake or cupcakes from Sam's Club, Wegmans, Topps or Walmart as these items are not made in a nut free peanut free facility.

PLEASE **DO NOT** BRING IN GOODY BAGS AND/OR TOYS FOR THE OTHER CHILDREN AS MANY FAMILIES CANNOT AFFORD TO DO THIS!

BITING POLICY

- Our faculty strives to minimize biting incidents by providing a safe, supervised environment and by empowering children to use more acceptable means of communication. However, despite our best efforts, it is possible that your child may be bitten at some time.
- When a biting incident occurs, our faculty's first priority is tending to the needs of the child who has been bitten. To help the child who bit better understand his/her actions, the teachers often include him/her in their efforts to comfort the child who was bitten (i.e. giving a hug, apologizing, and/or offering an ice pack or cold compress). We will also document the incident on our center's Biting Report, which is shared with both sets of parents.
- We do maintain confidentiality in all biting incidents, so the report will not include the name of the other child that was involved.
- If your child bites, our faculty will work with you to try to correct the problem. However, if the behavior does not improve in a reasonable amount of time, termination of enrollment may be necessary.

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to create a safe and inclusive environment within our school-age program, where all participants can thrive without fear of bullying, harassment, or intimidation. This policy aims to prevent and address incidents of bullying promptly, effectively, and in accordance with the best interests of the individuals involved.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying refers to any intentional, repeated, and harmful behavior, whether physical, verbal, or psychological, that is directed towards an individual or group of individuals with the intent to hurt, intimidate, or humiliate. Bullying may include, but is not limited to, actions such as physical

aggression, verbal insults, teasing, spreading rumors, social exclusion, cyberbullying, and coercion.

Prevention Strategies

To prevent bullying, our school-age program will:

- Foster a culture of respect, empathy, and kindness through regular discussions, educational activities, and modeling positive behavior.
- Promote inclusivity and celebrate diversity, ensuring that all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or any other characteristic.
- Encourage open communication and provide opportunities for participants to express concerns or report incidents of bullying safely and confidentially.
- Establish clear expectations and rules regarding behavior, emphasizing the importance of treating others with respect and addressing conflicts peacefully.
- Provide training and educational materials for staff, parents, and participants on recognizing, preventing, and addressing bullying behaviors.

Reporting and Response Procedures

- **Reporting:** All participants, staff members, and parents/guardians are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying promptly. Reports can be made to any staff member, through a designated reporting system, or by using anonymous reporting methods if available.
- **Investigation:** Upon receiving a report, the program's designated authority will promptly and thoroughly investigate the incident while ensuring the safety and privacy of all parties involved.
- **Support:** The program will provide necessary support to the individuals who have been affected by bullying, which may include counseling, mediation, or other appropriate interventions.
- **Consequences:** If an incident of bullying is substantiated, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the severity of the behavior and the program's policies. Consequences may range from verbal warnings and parental involvement to temporary suspension or expulsion, depending on the circumstances.

CELEBRATIONS & HOLIDAYS

- Our students are a diverse community of learners. We embrace opportunities to introduce the children to customs, traditions, holidays and other celebrations that are important to their peers.
- You are encouraged to share your family's experiences with your child's class, and are always invited to participate in our celebrations and events.

CENTER DAYS & HOURS OF OPERATION

- Our center is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm
- Children must be picked up by 6:00 pm. A late fee of \$10.00 is assessed for every 10 minutes, beginning promptly at 6:00 pm.
- The center is closed on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the day after, Christmas Day and the day after, as well as Veteran's Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which will be used for in-service training days.

CLOTHING & ITEMS FROM HOME

- Please keep a complete set of LABELED clothing at the center. If you bring home a soiled set of clothing, please replace the extra set the following day.
- Please provide a sheet and blanket for rest time, making sure to launder the blanket and sheet on a weekly basis. Make sure that these items are able to fit inside a 15 quart bin. No large pillows please.
- During rest time, a favorite stuffed animal is allowed; it should be small enough to fit in your child's cubby space.
- Please provide outdoor clothing that is appropriate for each season.
- We use messy art supplies every day to produce our masterpieces. Smocks are provided, but please dress your child appropriately for craft activities. Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. is not responsible for damaged clothing.
- Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. is not responsible for lost items.
- Other items from home will NOT be permitted without the classroom teacher's approval.

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. welcomes, celebrates, and promotes respect for all people! In our commitment to diversity, we embrace people from all backgrounds, and we seek to include knowledge and values from many cultures in our program. Our commitment to work toward an environment that values diversity requires that we create, promote, and maintain activities and programs which further our understanding of individual and group diversity. We promote values that discourage intolerance and discrimination.

We intend to incorporate diversity into every aspect of the Imagination Childcare Academy culture: including the curriculum, teaching, programs, staffing, personnel training practices, and special events!

Imagination Childcare Academy is a true reflection of our community, in that there is a multitude of diverse cultures represented. We celebrate this diversity by hosting an annual multi-cultural night (families are encouraged to share their traditions, including food and celebrations with our school community). Upon arrival, staff are expected to greet all children and their families in their home language, making them feel welcome.

Imagination Childcare Academy Inc. is committed to providing equal access to and participation in employment opportunities and in programs and services, without regard to race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, ancestry, age, veteran status, or disability. Imagination Childcare Academy Inc. complies with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and other applicable laws providing for nondiscrimination against all individuals. Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. will provide reasonable accommodation for known disabilities to the extent required by the law.

This policy covers nondiscrimination in employment and in access to educational opportunities. Therefore, any member of our school community, guest or visitor who acts to deny, deprive or limit the educational, employment, social access, benefits and/or opportunities of any member of our school community on the basis of their actual or perceived membership in the protected classes listed above is in violation of Imagination Childcare Academy's policy on nondiscrimination. When brought to the attention of the Executive Director, any such discrimination will be appropriately remedied immediately.

COMMUNICATION

Parent partnerships are our number one priority, as research has proven that strong connections between home and school, particularly through parental involvement, significantly benefit students, leading to

improved academic outcomes, higher attendance rates, enhanced social skills, and better overall well-being. You are your child's first and most important teacher. We value your input and want to work as a team to help your child along his/her journey. To do this, daily communication is essential.

In addition to our quick chats at drop-off and pick-up and our bi-annual parent teacher conferences (fall and spring), we also use the ProCare app to communicate daily with families to keep you informed about your child's learning journey. We send you photos of your child, as well as keep you in the loop on upcoming events and time-sensitive information. Prior to your child starting our program, you will receive an email from Procare with a unique 10-digit code and instructions on how to download and log into the app. Please make sure to check the app daily so that you can stay up to date on important information.

CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITES

- Individual parent-teacher conferences are held bi-annually (Fall and Spring).
- Additional individual conferences with your child's teacher and/or the Director are always available upon request

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. recognizes and respects the importance of privacy and confidentiality as an individual right and as a basis for building partnerships. Our organization requires personal information from its families, employees and volunteers to provide appropriate and responsive childcare services. This policy has been developed to comply with the highest standard in the protection and preservation of privacy and confidentiality.

Goals – What are we going to do?

We will:

- maintain private and confidential files for our families, employees and volunteers
- continue to improve systems for the appropriate use, storage and disposal of records
- ensure the information in these files is used only for the provision of services by Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. , and only shared with relevant organizations as defined in this policy.

Collection Statement

Strategies – How will it be done?

Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. aims to meet these goals through the adoption of this specific Privacy and Confidentiality policy statement which will guide our practices in this area.

Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. will:

Collection of Information

- Ensure that its families, employees and volunteers have access to our privacy collection statement that includes details about how they can access their personal information, have this corrected as needed, make a complaint about a breach of privacy, if one occurs.
- Ensure each employee and volunteer's information is correct in personnel and other files. This includes information on qualifications, criminal history checks, staff entitlements, contact and emergency information, health and immunization information, and any relevant medical and legal information. This would include any other relevant information collected by the service.
- Ensure that information collected from individuals is maintained in a private and confidential manner at all times.

- Ensure that such information is not divulged or communicated (directly or indirectly) to another as follows:

To the extent necessary, for the provision of services by Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc.

Staff will:

- Maintain individual and service information and store documentation according to this policy at all times.
- Not share information about the individual or service, management information, or other staff, other than as allowed in this policy or as per legislative authority.
- If confidentially procedure has been breached. Individuals can make a complaint to the Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. CEO if they believe there has been a breach of their privacy in relation to the Privacy principles. The breach will be assessed by Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. within 14 days. Where the information collected is incorrect, the information will be corrected. Where a serious breach of privacy is found, appropriate actions will be negotiated between the CEO and the individual to resolve the situation, in line with the complaints procedure.
- Will ensure information provided by individuals, staff and committee members is only used for the purpose it was collected for.
- Ensure each individual's information is correct in organizational records. This includes information on immunization updates, income and financial details (credit card or bank information), contact details of family and emergency contact information, and any medical or legal information.
- Provide individuals and services with details on the collection of personal information collected: This information will include:

Methods

We keep two kinds of records on children attending our setting:

1. Developmental records
 - These include observations of children in the setting, samples of their work, summary developmental reports and records of achievement.
 - They are usually kept in a file cabinet in the child's classroom and can be accessed, and contributed to, by staff, the child and the child's parents.
2. Personal records
 - These include registration and admission forms, signed consents, and correspondence concerning the child or family, reports or minutes from meetings concerning the child from other agencies, an ongoing record of relevant contact with parents, and observations by staff on any confidential matter involving the child, such as developmental concerns or child protection matters.
 - These confidential records are stored in a file cabinet and are kept secure by the person in charge in an office or other suitably safe place.
 - Parents have access, in accordance with the access to records procedure, to the files and records of their own children but do not have access to information about any other child.
 - Staff will not discuss personal information given by parents with other members of staff, except where it affects planning for the child's needs. Staff induction includes an awareness of the importance of confidentiality in the role of the key person.

Other records

- Issues to do with the employment of staff, whether paid or unpaid, remain confidential to the people directly involved with making personnel decisions.
- All volunteers are advised of our confidentiality policy and required to respect it.

Access to personal records

- Parents may request access to any records held on their child and family following the procedure below.
- Any request to see the child's personal file by a parent or person with parental responsibility must be made in writing to the director
- The setting commits to providing access within 14 days - although this may be extended.
- All third parties are written to, stating that a request for disclosure has been received and asking for their permission to disclose to the person requesting it. A copy of these letters is retained on the file.
- 'Third parties' include all family members who may be referred to in the records.
- It also includes workers from any other agency, including social services, the health authority, etc. It is usual for agencies to refuse consent to disclose, preferring the individual to go directly to them.
- When all the consents/refusals to disclose have been received these are attached to the copy of the request letter.
- A scan of the complete file is taken.
- The director goes through the file and removes any information which a third party has refused consent to disclose. This is best done with a thick black marker, to score through every reference to the third party and information they have added to the file.
- What remains is the information recorded by the setting, detailing the work initiated and followed by them in relation to confidential matters. This is called the 'clean copy'.
- The 'clean copy' is photocopied for the parents who are then invited in to discuss the contents. The file should never be given straight over, but should be gone through by the director, so that it can be explained.
- Legal advice may be sought before sharing a file, especially where the parent has possible grounds for litigation against the setting or another (third party) agency.

ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

NO CHILD MAY BE ACCEPTED AT THE CENTER UNLESS THE CENTER HAS BEEN FURNISHED WITH THE FOLLOWING:

- The deposit to hold your child's spots is non-refundable and includes both a registration fee (\$100) and the last week's tuition.
- A completed registration application and signed contract
- A signed affidavit stating that the parent has read and understands the procedures and policies of Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc.
- Evidence that the child has received a health examination, conducted by a physician, physician's assistant or nurse Physical exams must be within one year of enrollment.
- A written statement signed by a physician, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner stating that the child is free from contagious or communicable disease and can participate in child day care.
- A certificate of immunization prepared by a physician or other authorized person who administered the immunization which specifies the products administered, the date of administration and the physician-verified history of measles, mumps, and other diseases, or
- The official State immunization record card completed by the administering physician or health care facility, or

*All medical forms (documenting the physical examination and immunizations) must be on the OCFS Written Medical form OR an equivalent from the pediatrician's office as long as the non OCFS form has all the required information. Many pediatricians have invested in software that produces a form very similar to OCFS which they expect parents to use.

*The immunization certificate or record card shows that the child has received age-appropriate prophylaxis. This must include immunization against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, rubella, Hepatitis B, Pneumococcal disease, (if born on or after 1/1/2008) and Varicella (chickenpox).and Haemophilus Influenza Type B (HIB) except where there is a medical contraindication and a physician, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner has completed and signed the medical exemption section of the Department of Social Services physical examination of day care child form.

HEALTH POLICIES: ILLNESS

- Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. is committed to providing quality childcare to the children who attend our programs and to provide such care on a consistent basis that parents can rely on. We believe that in order to provide such consistency, it is essential to adhere to a health policy which provides specific health criteria which must be met for a child to be cared for at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. Finally, we believe that only a team effort between staff and parents can maximize a healthy environment for all children to the fullest extent possible.
- In the event that your child becomes ill while at the center, you will be notified immediately, and expected to pick up your child and bring him/her home as quickly as possible.
- We are a center for mildly ill children. A child who meets any of the following criteria is defined as “mildly ill” and can attend our program:
- The child has symptoms of a minor childhood illness which does not represent a significant risk of serious infection to other children.
 - The child does not feel well enough to participate comfortably in the usual activities of the program but is able to participate with minor modifications, such as more rest time.
 - The care of the mildly ill child does not interfere with the care or supervision of the other children.

A CHILD WHO IS NOT WELL DOES NOT BENEFIT FROM OUR PROGRAM AND CAN ADVERSELY AFFECT THE HEALTH OF THE OTHER CHILDREN.

- In the event that any of the following occur, we ask that you keep your child at home:
 - Temperature of 100° or above
 - Any fever accompanied by:
 - A deep cough,
 - An earache or draining ear,
 - Spasms of cough, or
 - Sore throat
 - Diarrhea or vomiting (your child must be free from these symptoms for 24 hours before returning to the center)
 - A rash of any kind until diagnosed, treated or declared harmless by a physician.
 - Red, runny or matted eyes—which may be Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis)
 - Severe Colds with excessive discharge from either the nose or the eyes
- Re-admittance is always based on the child’s ability to participate in regular Center activities and do not require more care & supervision than can be given based on teacher-student ratios.
- A copy of our Health Plan is available in the office upon request.

Our priority at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. is to ensure the health and safety of the children and staff that come to our center every day. We will not be successful without your help! Our

new health guidelines are based on recommendations set forth by our local licensing agency, recommendations made by our Health Care Consultant, which were based on The Center for Disease Control. These practices are subject to change as needed.

HEALTH POLICIES: MEDICAL STATEMENT

- Your child must have an up-to-date medical form, which requires a yearly physical and updated current immunization records. Your pediatrician must use New York State OCFS approved ‘Daycare’ forms (available at our center)
- Children with asthma and/or allergies are required to have the appropriate ‘Action Plan’ on file (available at our center).
- It is the parent’s responsibility to notify the center in writing immediately of any changes concerning allergy and health issues

CHILDHOOD ILLNESS CHART	
Illness	Your Child May Return When Approved by a Physician or:
Chicken Pox.....	24 Hours after lesions have crusted
Conjunctivitis.....	24 hours after start of treatment
Croup.....	After illness subsides
Diarrhea-Gastro Enteritis.....	24 hours after last loose stool
Impetigo.....	24 hours after start of treatment
Fever.....	24 hours after temperature returns to normal
Influenza.....	24 hours after symptoms subside
Measles.....	At least 4 days after onset of rash
Lice.....	24 hours after start of treatment
Whooping Cough.....	At least 5 days after therapy is begun
Roseola.....	After illness has subsided
Strep Throat.....	24 hours after start of antibiotic treatment
Poison Ivy.....	After lesions have dried up
Pinworm or Ringworm.....	24 hours after start of treatment
Pneumonia or Epiglottitis.....	Written note from physician
Mumps.....	5 days after swelling begins

HEALTH POLICIES: MEDICATION & TOPICAL OINTMENTS

- All medications must be checked in with the Director, who will ensure their immediate and proper storage in a designated lock box or refrigerator.
- Over the counter topical ointments such as first aid creams, sunscreen or insect repellent may be applied to your child with written parent permission. The ointments must be in their original box and labeled with your child’s name on it.
- Medications, ointments, bug spray and sunscreen must not be expired;
- All paperwork needs to be completed and turned into the office in a timely manner to stay in compliance with OCFS. Not doing so could jeopardize continuity of care
- Benadryl Policy for children 18 months and older: In an emergency situation, Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. must first receive verbal consent from the child’s parent before we administer Benadryl. Please keep your telephone numbers and physicians’ information up to date.
- All other medication, both prescribed and over-the -counter, will only be administered according to the following policies, with no exceptions.

- The child’s parent and physician must both complete and sign the Medication Consent Form or equivalent prior to administering medication. Attached notes or scripts cannot be substituted for information which is required to be written on the form. We will not accept verbal consent.
- Separate Medication Consent Forms must be completed for each type of medication administered.
- All Medication Consent Forms must be updated at least every six months (including “as needed” medications such as EpiPen, Tylenol, Motrin, cough syrup, and inhalers).
- All medication, both prescribed and over-the-counter, must be supplied in the original packaging and must be accompanied by the original packaging insert or printed pharmacy instructions. These instructions must indicate the correct method for administering the medication, dosage, restrictions, potential side effects, and any other pertinent information.
- Prescription medication must indicate your child’s name on the pharmacy label. Over-the-counter medication must be labeled with your child’s name on the original packaging.
- We cannot exceed the dosage indicated on the prescription label and/or State-Issued Medication Consent Form.
- The exact name on the medication must be written on the consent form, i.e. if the consent form specifies Tylenol, you must provide Tylenol, not the generic equivalent.
- Parents, grandparents, and relatives of a child of the parents or step-parents of a child may administer medication at the center without the need for the State-Issued Medication Consent Form. However, a note from the parent authorizing the relative to administer the medication is required.
- Our medication policy is consistent with the regulations provided by the Office of Children and Family Services. There are absolutely no exceptions to this policy.

HYGIENE

- Children need to develop good health habits. We encourage hand washing upon arriving at the center, before and after meals, after toileting, after coming into the classroom from the playground, and other times during the day as necessary. This hand-washing policy helps prevent the spread of germs and reduces the possibility of triggering allergy reactions.

INITIAL REGISTRATION

- Upon registration, your account will be billed a non-refundable deposit which includes a registration fee (\$100) and your child’s last week’s tuition. Payment of the total amount due is required to secure your child’s enrollment in our program.
- If you decide not to begin enrollment, your registration fee and last week’s tuition will not be refunded.
- Our program follows a typical academic calendar, from Labor Day through the last week in June. Specific dates are published on the school calendar. Summer Camp is available for the months of July & August. See the Summer Camp Enrollment section for more information.
- Upon registration and throughout enrollment, parents must notify the center, in writing, of any special needs, including but not limited to allergies, medical conditions, dietary restrictions, and disabilities; such knowledge is necessary to provide proper care for your child.

INTERNET USE

- We use the Internet at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. occasionally to take advantage of the vast number of educational resources available to children. With the Internet comes a need for appropriate content monitoring and filtering through the use of hardware and software.

- Software blocks access to thousands of websites, web pages, email addresses and chat rooms which may display or contain offensive language, sexual explicitness, hate themes or physical violence.
- Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. has also taken additional safety precautions by blocking children's access to all chat rooms, newsgroups and email servers.
- Even with all the security measures that we have implemented, we cannot guarantee 100% safe access to the Internet. We believe that the chance of exposure to inappropriate material is minute; however, we must inform you of the possibility.
- You may request in writing that your child be excluded from Internet use at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. If you do not express your desire to exclude your child from such use, you agree to discharge Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc., its employees and its affiliates, from any responsibility or claim resulting from the use of the Internet.

LICENSING

- Our center is licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), and operated with OCFS regulations. Our license number is 588004.
- Our license, the current OFCS regulations, and our approved health care plan are displayed on our parent information board, located outside the office.
- Any violations classified as an "imminent danger" by the Office of Children and Family Services will be immediately corrected.

MEALS & SNACKS

- Our company policy *prohibits homemade treats*.
- We provide a nutritious breakfast and afternoon snack. All breakfast and snacks are prepared in our kitchen, which has been approved by the Health Department.
- All parents are responsible for providing a *nutritious* lunch for their child. We do have a microwave that can be used to heat food. We ask that you pack a cold pack in your child's lunch pal, as we do not have storage capacity for all children's lunches in our refrigerator.
- Our breakfast and snack menu has been approved by a licensed nutritionist and is posted on the parent's board in your child's classroom for your review.
- Our faculty will happily prepare a healthy alternative if health, cultural or religious considerations preclude your child from eating a particular menu item. Please contact the Director to arrange for these pre-planned menu substitutions.
- Please see our wellness policy below for more information

OUTDOOR PLAY

- Outdoor play is an integral part of our educational program, contributing to your child's health and development. Children remain inside when the weather is inclement (including extreme hot- above 90° or extreme cold- below 20°), but otherwise participate in daily outdoor activities.
- Please dress your child appropriately for daily outdoor play, including sneakers. NO SANDALS FOR THE PLAYGROUND! SNEAKERS ONLY!

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- We encourage participation in your child's daily experiences here at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. It is important to the staff of Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. that you feel connected to us and understand that we would like you to be a part of our decision-making process. We consider parents to be the experts on their own children. We work as partners with parents to provide developmentally appropriate educational

experiences. Please, feel free to make suggestions that you feel would benefit the Center as a whole. We pledge to you that all suggestions will be given careful consideration.

- Our teachers and director are always available to answer your questions, to review your child's progress or to discuss any concerns that you may have. We encourage you to speak with your child's primary teacher regularly, and to work together to identify the best possible time and method for daily communication.
- Parents always have free access to their child and are encouraged to visit the center at any time. You may participate in our classroom activities, play with your child on the playground, or even have lunch together.
- We encourage parent volunteers, as we can always use an extra pair of hands in the classroom! To volunteer, please see your child's classroom teacher.
- We have a Parent Teacher Association that meets *three* times a year to get feedback on our policies and procedures and to discuss fundraising and special events. All parents are welcome to participate in these meetings. If you cannot attend, we do usually video tape the meeting and share the notes with all families.
- We offer a Parent Enrichment Session titled Positive Solutions for Families that coincides with our Pyramid Model Social Emotional Curriculum. Not only do parents learn some great strategies about how to handle challenging behaviors, but these sessions are also an excellent way to network with other families.
- Parents can also volunteer to be the classroom liaison, who serves as the person who helps the classroom teacher organize events, reaches out to other parents for help and assists in the classroom as needed.

PAYMENTS

- ***Tuition is due in advance:*** Tuition may be paid weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly as long as it is in advance. Payment is due by the Friday for the up-and-coming week. If your payment is late, a late fee of \$10.00/ day will be automatically charged to your account.
- ***Checks:*** Please indicate your child's first and last name on your check. Checks returned unpaid from your bank will result in a \$45 Returned Item Fee billed directly to your account. Appropriate late payment charges will also apply.
- ***We accept cash and check. We also accept credit cards and online payments for a 3.5% additional fee.***
- **Account Receipts and Statements:** Please notify the director if you need printed invoices

PROGRAMS

- Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. is committed towards providing high quality child care and education for young children. The daily program at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. is structured so that your child will experience the security of routines he/she can easily master and that will contribute to a peaceful, yet active learning environment.
- Our center follows the guidelines of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). We fully support NAEYC's position that a major determinant of a quality early childhood program is the degree to which a program is developmentally appropriate. For a program to be developmentally appropriate, content and teaching strategies must be age and individually appropriate.
- Leading research in the field today suggests that play is the primary means by which children grow in the preschool years and even beyond into the primary years. In addition to its value in developing children mentally, play also serves important functions in children's physical, emotional, and social development. Therefore, a structured play environment is an essential ingredient in our educational curriculum.

- Children need years of play with real objects and events before they are able to understand the meanings of symbols such as letters and numbers. Learning initially takes place as young children touch, manipulate, and experiment with things, and interact with people. Cause and effect is a large part of children's early learning experiences. Therefore, learning materials at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. are real, concrete and relevant to the lives of children.
- Children at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. will have access to a variety of learning materials that support our view towards providing facilitated hands-on learning experiences. Such materials include: sand and water tables equipped with accessories, blocks, puzzles, manipulatives, dramatic play props, a variety of science investigation equipment and items to explore. Fiction and non-fiction texts are integrated throughout the day to promote literacy into children's real experiences. To build on children's creative expression, they will have continual access to popular children's books, recordings, paper, crayons, water-based paints, markers and the world of nature.
- Interaction with adults and peers is another essential ingredient to the development of children. They learn not only from direct experience, but also from validating their experiences with others. Teachers provide a variety of activities for the children, increasing difficulty, complexity and challenges as the children become more involved with the activity and develop understanding and skills. Our staff is trained to facilitate the children's learning process as they explore and inquire.

RESOURCES

There is a vast number of resources available to families here at Imagination Childcare Academy and within our community. In our lobby we have lots of brochures that include information on developmental milestones, community resources, Pyramid Model, etc. Please see the director for more information regarding:

- Financial assistance
- Support for families of children with special needs
- Academic resources
- Health care
- Tax Credits

REST TIME

- Children enrolled at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. need time during the day to rest and relax. Rest time for our classrooms is from 1:00 pm -3:00 pm.
- For children who do not take naps, teachers provide quiet activities (puzzles, books, games, art projects, etc.) for them to engage in at the tables.
- Teachers provide individual cots for the children and encourage them to lay down with a blanket and comfort item from home. Stories, soft music, and dim lights help the children with the transition to this rest period.

SAFETY

- The staff's first area of concern is for the health, safety and well-being of the children.
- Staff members receive First Aid/CPR/AED training bi-annually.
- Toys, play areas, eating areas, and restrooms are disinfected on a regular basis. We are dedicated to providing your child with the same clean environment that we would want for our own children.
- Indoor and outdoor safety is continually stressed with the children. Instruction is set up to integrate safety across the curriculum and throughout the year. In addition, we practice monthly fire drills that involve all the children and staff. Each classroom has immediate

exits available to the outside of the building, in the event that it becomes necessary to evacuate. In the event that we need to evacuate for an extended amount of time, we either relocate to the basement of Holy Ghost church or across the street to Walt Disney Elementary school.

- Emergency evacuation drills are conducted monthly, alternating exits that we use so the children are prepared for any emergency situation. In the case of an emergency where we are required to relocate to another building, our primary relocation site is our gym. Our secondary relocation site is Disney Elementary School.
- We are also required by law to conduct Shelter in Place drills at least twice a year. These drills are intended to be used as training for children and staff so they know what to do in case of an emergency such as an event happening in the neighborhood that would be too dangerous for us to be outside or in the event of inclement weather. If we do need to Shelter-in-Place, we have all children go to room 12, the school-age room. We will notify you prior to these drills so that you can talk with your child about these emergency situations and what to expect.

SCHEDULE CHANGES

- You may add additional days to your child's current schedule, provided that space is available and your account is paid up-to-date. Please call the Director as soon as you know that you will need childcare for an additional day. If you add a day, your account will be charged the appropriate tuition fee. Once your account has been changed, refunds will not be issued for any reasons.
- You may make permanent schedule changes with at least two weeks written notification and upon Director approval. The schedule changes may not be granted in instances when the new schedule conflicts with enrollment, waiting lists and typical enrollment patterns.

IF YOUR CHILD MISSES HIS/HER SCHEDULED DAY, SWITCHING DAYS CANNOT BE PERMITTED, AS IT THERE ARE OTHER CHILDREN IN THOSE SPOTS ON DIFFERENT DAYS.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Posting photos of any Imagination Childcare Academy child(ren) who are not your own social media platforms is prohibited.
2. Posting information that is deemed confidential or proprietary to Imagination Childcare Academy is prohibited.
3. Posting any material that could be deemed threatening, harassing, illegal, obscene, defamatory, slanderous, or hostile towards another Imagination Childcare Academy employee (current or previous) or an enrolled child or family (current or previous) is prohibited.
4. Posting personal information (including name, address, phone number or email address) of any enrolled child, family member, and/or employee (current or previous) is prohibited.
5. Staff are prohibited from friending or following current families on personal social media accounts. All digital communication must occur via program-monitored platforms, such as email KAYMBU or ProCare.

UPK WRAP AND SCHOOL-AGE ENROLLMENT

- ***Tuition & Vacation Policy***
 - If your child is enrolled in our Before & After School Program, tuition is billed weekly, regardless of your child's attendance.

-When school is not in session, whether or not your child attends, your contracted tuition is still due.

-If you need full day care for your child when school is not in session, there will be sign-up sheet in your child's classroom for you to indicate whether or not you need care. If you do not need care, you just pay the contracted tuition. If you indicate that you do need care, the private full day care rates will apply. You will be responsible for paying whatever you indicate on the sign-up sheet

- ***Elementary School Holidays, Recess and Early School Dismissal***

- Your child must be registered in our program prior to attendance, with up-to-date enrollment and medical forms.

- Please call if you need child care when your child's elementary school is closed for a holiday or recess.

- After such arrangements are made, we will bill your account the appropriate tuition amount. Refunds will not be issued if your child does not attend.

- ***Weather-Related and Emergency Elementary School Closings***

- Your child must be registered in our program prior to attendance, with up-to-date enrollment and medical forms.

- If your child's school closes, due to a reason other than weather, please call the center ahead of time to make sure that the center is open and that space is available for your child. Once we reach our licensed capacity, we can no longer accept additional children.

SECURITY

- Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. is equipped with a security entry system that prevents unauthorized or undetected entry.
- Each parent will receive a key fob gain access to the building. **PLEASE DO NOT GIVE THIS FOB TO OTHERS TO USE!** There is a \$7 deposit for each fob, and there is a two-fob maximum per family.
- When entering the building please do not hold the door open for anyone that you do not recognize. This will help us to ensure a safe environment for all of the children.

SPECIAL NEEDS, CHILDREN WITH

- All children are considered for enrollment at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. We believe in a least restrictive environmental setting and take pride in our staff's ability to ensure a positive and educational experience for the majority of children. We realize that in some situations, children are simply not ready for the structured environment of a childcare center. Should the Director determine that a child is not able to adjust to the Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. setting, Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. reserves the right give parents two weeks' notice to make alternate arrangements for the care of their child.
- Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. will provide reasonable accommodations for children with special needs, given that such care does not require specialized equipment or caregiver training.
- Should a child require additional equipment or one-to-one caregiver assistance, as deemed necessary by the Center Director, such additional costs shall be paid for by the parent or guardian.
- If you suspect your child may have an unidentified special need, please ask the Director for more information about the county's Early Intervention program. This program is free of charge, paid by the local school district, and is designed to help parents or young children identify needs and secure appropriate treatment.

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

When staff is updated, a letter is sent out to introduce new staff, which includes their educational backgrounds, qualifications and experience.

STAFF REQUIREMENTS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- The center is staffed during operational hours with a director/lead teacher and a teacher assistant.
- The director, teachers and teacher assistants are selected based on experience, educational qualifications, their ability to nurture all types of children, and a demonstration of intuitiveness to the physical, emotional and mental needs of children.
- All lead Universal Pre-Kindergarten teachers are required to have NYS Certification in Early Childhood Education and/or a related field.
- All prospective employees and volunteers are required to undergo a thorough interview process with the Director as well as a fingerprint clearance and a background investigation.
- The background investigation includes: a check from the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment, Criminal Background Check, Educational Background Check, Three References, and an approved physical conducted by a physician.
- All staff is required to attain 30 professional development hours every two years in order to be in compliance with the Office of Children and Family Services. This includes training in the following areas.
 - Appropriate supervision of children
 - Differentiating instruction to meet the individual needs of all children
 - Age-appropriate child development learning activities
 - Positive approaches to behavior management
 - Health, safety, nutrition and first aid
 - Collaborating with others effectively
 - Child abuse and maltreatment prevention

OFFICE OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES STAFF REQUIREMENTS

Director

Bachelor's degree including, or in addition to, 12 credits in Early Childhood, Child Development or related field AND one-year full-time teaching experience in a child day care center, family or group family day care home or other early childhood program AND one year of experience supervising staff in a child care program or a related field of work

Preschool Teacher

Associate's degree in Early Childhood, Child Development or related field OR Child Development Associate credential or other Office-recognized credential specific to the preschool developmental period AND one year experience related to caring for children OR 9 college credits in Early Childhood, Child Development or a related field, with a plan of study leading to a Child Development Associate credential or Associate's Degree in Early Childhood, Child Development or a related field AND two years' experience related to caring for children

School-Age Teacher

Associate's degree in Child Development, Elementary Education, Physical Education, Recreation or a related field

Assistant Teacher (all age groups)

High School diploma or its equivalent OR one year experience working with children less than 13 years of age

SUMMER CAMP REGISTRATION

- Our summer program runs for ten weeks from the last week in June through the Friday before Labor Day.
- We begin enrolling for summer camp in January. Spots are reserved on a first come first serve basis and require a completed contract and a deposit which includes a \$50 registration fee and the last week's tuition.
- Once you submit the Summer Camp Enrollment Contract, you are responsible for payment of the total contract, regardless of absence, withdrawal, or other decisions not to attend as the center's ongoing operating costs remain constant.
- Summer Camp tuition may be paid weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly as long as it is in advance. Payment is due by the Friday for the up-and-coming week.
- If you choose not to enroll in the summer program, please indicate this decision on the Summer Camp Enrollment Contract and return it to the director prior to April 30th. You may secure your fall enrollment by completing the proper form and providing the security deposit and first week's tuition, both of which are non-refundable.
- If you choose to withdraw your child from the summer program, you must provide at least a two week's notice before summer camp begins in order to cancel the contract. If you choose to withdraw your child after July 1st, the contracted tuition rates will continue to apply through the end of this negotiated contract, regardless of your child's attendance, as this is only a nine-week contract. The two weeks' notice will not apply!
- If you choose to withdraw my child from the summer program, you forfeit the deposit which includes the last week's tuition and the \$50 registration fee. They are non-refundable as that is our guarantee to hold your child's spot.

TERMINATION

- Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. reserves the right to give parents two weeks' notice to make alternate arrangements for the care of a child enrolled in the center. Notification may be immediate if it is determined by the Director that a child's or parent's presence in the center poses a threat to others.

TRANSITION POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of the transition policy is to:

- ensure that transitions are successful by building on the commonality between environments and supporting learning and development in ways that connect with a child and their family.
- create continuity that involves building on children's prior and current experiences to help them feel secure, confident and connected with people, places, events, routines and understandings.
- understand that all children are different and respect each child reactions to transitions.
- develop a range of practices and guidelines that actively support transitions from home to care, transition routines, room to room transitions, transition between child care centers, transition from child care to kindergarten and child care to school transitions.
- promote inclusive practices when dealing with families during transitions
- encourage all persons to communicate respectfully to families, children and educators about transitions.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Philosophy

The service's environment treats and respects people equally regardless of: gender, age, socioeconomic status, race, language, beliefs, additional needs, family structure and lifestyle

Children's needs:

- To be given an opportunity to grow and develop at their own rate with the support of staff and families during transition routines.

Parent's needs:

- To be reassured that their child will be encouraged and be supported during transitions.

Staff needs:

- To communicate to families and children about transitions and ensure transitions are successful.

Management needs:

- The service recognizes and values the transition for the children

Transition principles for children's services

1. Transitions occur in many different times throughout a child's life. Transition usually begins when children are very young. For example, a child moves from home to care environment, or from parent to grandparent, then as they move between child care services, room to room transitions, or for younger children from activities to another. As children get older they may attend kindergarten and then go on to school
2. Children's transitions impact on children, families and educators.
3. The center will be accessible and support the children and their families during the transitions.
4. Educators follow the room to room transition procedures in transitioning children from one room to another.

The lead teacher is responsible for:

- Identifying, if additional support is required for the children in transition (consulting with families) especially children with special needs
- Ensuring all information about the transitioning child is given to the next room leader.
- Organizing other educator to go with the transitioning child if necessary
- To plan and implement a program which incorporates transition process for the children, families and educators

Transition Policy

- Responding to parents/guardians needs, providing support and guidance, where appropriate.
- Providing support and guidance to other educators
- Encouraging a collaborative family-centered approach in implementing the program at the center.
- Ensuring that the transition program incorporates opportunities for regular review and evaluation, in consultation with all persons involved in the child's care and education.
- Ensuring that the parents/guardians are fully informed about the room to room transition procedures.

Room to Room Transition Procedures

Transitions between rooms will happen every September, modeling a traditional school approach.

Children move up to the next classroom with the other peers in their class, as opposed to moving up as soon as they have a birthday. This lessens the amount of transitions that children have to make throughout their time in the center.

Prior to transitioning, children will have several opportunities to visit their new classroom.

Prior to starting, children who are not currently enrolled have opportunities to come and visit the classroom with their parents and families as many times as they need to for them to feel comfortable in the new environment.

With parent permission, information is sent to the primary school of which each child will attend Kindergarten.

With parent permission, for children with special needs, teachers and administrators attend all CPSE meetings to ensure that each child is transitioning with the proper support and placed in a classroom which meets that child's individual needs.

All educators are responsible for:

- Working collaboratively with educators/parents/guardians/other professionals to implement the transition program provided for the child.
- Reporting and discussing any concerns about the transition process regarding a child with other educators
- Providing parents with research on attachment theory and separation anxiety as needed
- Ensuring the Confidentiality Policy is always complied with.

The parents/guardians will:

- Share information about their child and their child's concerns about the transition process within the center
- Raise any issues/concerns they have about their child's participation in the transition program to the educators and the Director.

TUITION RATES (2026-2027)

PROGRAM	5 DAYS	4 DAYS	3 DAYS	2 DAYS	1 DAY
PRIVATE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM RATES (AGES 3-5)					
Preschool (7am-6pm)	340	280	210	140	70
Preschool Half Day Rate (7am-1pm)	260	208	156	104	52
SCHOOL-AGE RATES (KINDERGARTEN-SIXTH GRADE)					
School Age (Am 7-9)	100				
School-Age (Pm 4-6)	100				
School-Age (Am & Pm)	200				
School-Age Half Day	200	180	120	80	40
School Age (Full-Day)	286	240	180	120	60
UPK WRAP AROUND RATES GATES-CHILI STUDENTS					
UPK (Am 7-9:30)	125				
UPK (Pm 2:30-6:00)	135				
UPK Full Wrap	260				

WEATHER AND EMERGENCY CLOSINGS PROCEDURES

- In the event of inclement weather or other emergency situation, every effort will be made to keep the center open. If the center must close, we will contact the following news agency:

NEWS10 NBC

- **We follow Gates-Chili School District in inclement weather situations.** If they close due to hazardous road conditions, we will close. However, if they are closed due to wind chill temperatures, we will remain open. We are not responsible for mistakes in the school closing announcements
- While it is impossible to anticipate every circumstance of a potential emergency, we do have the following general guidelines in place:
 - ***At all times:***
 - In the event of a utility outage (power, gas, and/or water) prior to 7:00 am, the opening of the center will be delayed.
 - If still without utility service at 11:30 am, the center will remain closed for the day.
 - ***During the winter months:***
 - In the event of a utility outage during normal business hours, the center will announce its' decision to close after 30 minutes.
 - Parents will be notified by phone and required to pick up their children.
 - ***During the summer months:***
 - In the event of a power outage during normal business hours, the center will remain open. Parents will be notified after 60 minutes.
 - In the event of a water outage during normal business hours, the center will announce its' decision to close after 60 minutes. Parents will be notified by phone and required to pick up their children.
- **If our center closes due to the weather, utility outage, or emergency situation, regular tuition charges will apply.**

WELLNESS POLICY

Mission:

Our students learn how to make healthy choices about food and physical activity as part of their daily lives – building a foundation for a lifetime. Our staff model healthy eating and physical activity. We strive to work with our parents to promote healthy habits for life.

To achieve these goals, Imagination Childcare Academy has adopted the following policies:

Nutrition & Physical Activity Education

- Lesson plans include learning experiences about healthy eating at least once per month.
- Teachers are required to plan a daily physical activity that targets a specific gross motor skill (ex. balance, throw, catch, pedal, etc.)

Food & Beverage Practices & Behaviors

- All meals and snacks for children include a variety of fruits and vegetables, especially deeply colored ones.
- Milk is offered at every meal.
- Safe, fresh drinking water is available and accessible for children to serve themselves at all times indoors and outdoors.
- Teachers avoid drinking sugar-sweetened beverages when caring for children.
- At mealtime, at least one teacher sits with children at the table and talks with the children about what they are eating.
- Teachers encourage children to serve themselves meals and snacks with supervision.
- Children help prepare the eating areas by helping to set the table and clean up after the meal.

Screen Time at Home

What does the research say about screen time?

DID YOU KNOW

Too much screen time can have harmful effects on children.

- During the first two years of life, a child's brain and body experience important growth and development, and exposure to screen time detracts from important social interactions with care givers.
- With continued exposure, including the preschool years, excess screen time is associated with language delays, obesity, attention problems and even aggression, especially if the content is violent.

Screen time includes watching shows and playing games.

- Screen time includes TV, videos, DVDs, computers, tablets, video games and handheld devices (e.g., smart phones).
- For children under 2 years of age, screen time includes any time spent watching shows or playing games (including active video games) on a screen.
- For children 2 years of age and older, screen time does not include teachers using e-books or tablet computers to read children stories, using Smart Boards for interactive instruction, or connecting with families through Skype or other videoconferencing programs.

Early childhood programs play an important role in limiting screen time.

- Most children watch television before and after attending childcare. Limiting or eliminating screen time in the childcare setting can help families come closer to meeting the recommended goal of less than two hours of screen time daily.
- Reducing screen time gives more opportunities for physical activity and more time spent with books, classroom exploration and interactions with others.

YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILDREN LIMIT SCREEN TIME

- Turn off the TV. Carefully plan if and when you will watch shows.
- Remove the TV from the areas where children spend time, or keep it out of sight by covering it with a cloth.

PARENTS AS TEACHER – MODEL HEALTHY BEHAVIORS

- Young children naturally want to do what you do. You can help your children develop healthy screen time habits, and being a good role model is where it begins.
- Do not use handheld devices while engaging with children.
- Turn the television off during mealtimes.
- Focus family time on physical activity instead of television shows.

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCREEN TIME?

- No screen time (TV/video/DVD) for children under the age of 2.
- No more than 1 to 2 hours per day of high-quality programming for children over the age of 2. This should be limited to no more than 30 minutes once per week in early childhood programs

Screen time policy at Imagination Childcare Academy:

To reduce the harmful effects of screen time on health, learning, behavior and sleep, Imagination Childcare Academy has developed the following screen time policy:

- For children ages 2 to 5, screen time is limited to no more than 30 minutes once a week of high quality educational or movement-based commercial-free programming.
- Screen time is prohibited for children under the age of 2 years.
- Screen time is never used during nap time and/or mealtime.

Other Activities

- Center staff is trained annually and provided resources related to nutrition and physical activity

WITHDRAWING FROM IMAGINATION CHILDCARE ACADEMY, INC.

- If you choose to withdraw from the program, all fees (last week's tuition and registration fee is non-refundable).
- If you choose to withdraw your child from the program between September-May, you must provide a two-week written notice of withdrawal and will be required to pay all tuition and fees for the next two consecutive weeks, regardless of your child's attendance.
- **After June 1st, if you choose to withdraw your child from the program, contracted tuition rates will continue to apply through the end of the negotiated contract. The two weeks' notice will not apply.**
- When your child is withdrawn, s/he will only be eligible for re-admission based upon space availability and all other enrollment criteria. If your child is selected for re-enrollment, you will be required to complete an entire new enrollment agreement and pay a new non-refundable registration fee at the current rate. If there is an outstanding balance, when your child is withdrawn, you will be required to bring your account current prior to re-enrollment.