



Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc

Where Curious Minds Discover & Grow!

Universal Pre-Kindergarten

Parent Handbook

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!

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 the 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 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)

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 and whenever changes are made.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE; PICK-UP AUTHORIZATIONS

- Your child must be escorted into the classroom every morning and signed in. Parents are responsible for settling the child in (removing jackets, putting on sneakers, and washing your child’s hands).
- Your child will be released only to the persons 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.
- We require that you personally let a staff member know that you have arrived to pick up your child before removing the child from the classroom.
- 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 persons authorized to pick-up the child. If a mutually agreeable list is not provided, Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. will allow parents, step-parents 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 AND/OR THE DIRECTOR FOR LENGTHY CONVERSATIONS CONCERNING YOUR CHILD.
- Our parking lot can be a busy place. Please hold your child’s hand at all times and be sure to drive slowly in our parking lot. Please DO NOT leave your car running, as it could be extremely dangerous.
- **NO CHILD WILL BE RELEASED TO ANYONE NOT LISTED ON THE PICK-UP LIST UNLESS PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE BY THE PARENTS WITH THE DIRECTOR. IN ADDITION, INDIVIDUALS ON THE PICK-UP 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
ASSESSMENT

- A daily observation of your child's participation in classroom activities 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.
- Observations are recorded and kept in your child's individual assessment portfolio. This file is available for your review at any time.
- We use The Work Sampling System in Prek/UPK and the COR Advantage in Junior Pre-k to evaluate your child's academic progress so that we can use that information to help us drive our instruction. We assess children three times a year using these tools. The tool assesses all areas of development, including social emotional, cognitive, and physical.
- We use the Brigance for our developmental screening tool, screening every child by the end of the month of September. Results are shared at parent teacher conferences.
- We ask that in September, each family complete an Ages and Stages evaluation to monitor each child's development and growth. Results of the screening are shared shortly after screening and activities and suggestions are shared at parent teacher conferences.
- Progress reports & parent teacher conferences are conducted at least bi-annually (October and May) 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 on a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner and in the family's home language.
- Interpreters are attained through the child's school district as needed.

ATTENDANCE

- All UPK classes are in session five days per week, Monday through Friday, in accordance with the Gates Chili Central School District calendar.
- Daily student attendance is expected.
- If your child is absent due to illness, a written note is required upon his/her return.
- Excessive absences from school have a negative impact on student learning. In addition, there is high demand for this publicly-funded program within our community.
- To support development of positive school attendance patterns:
 1. Parents / guardians of any student who has 5 or more absences will be contacted by the classroom teacher to discuss reasons for absence and impact on learning.
 2. Parents / guardians of any student who has 10 or more absences will be contacted by the program supervisor to discuss reasons for absence and impact on learning.
 3. Parents / guardians of any student who has 12 or more absences will be required to attend a conference with the building administrator and program supervisor. Conditions for continued participation will be discussed and documented for the family and student file.
 4. Parents / guardians of any student with an excessive pattern of absences that does not improve with the steps listed above will be notified that their child can no longer participate in the program. The available seat will be filled by a student on our waiting list.

Beginning Our Day Together - Timely Arrival to School

- Timely drop off at 9:30AM is expected on a daily basis.
- A tardy arrival within the UPK program is defined as arrival any time later than 9:40AM.
- **Tardy** arrivals are required to sign in at the main office before coming to the classroom.

- To support development of positive school arrival patterns steps 1-4 (see above) will be followed should a student arrive late to school 5, 10, 12, or more times.

Ending Our Day Together - Timely Pick-Up

- Timely pick up at 2:30 PM is expected on a daily basis.
- A late pick-up from UPK is defined as pick-up any time later than 2:35 PM.
- UPK teachers and teaching assistants are assigned additional job responsibilities within their buildings after 2:30 PM.
- There is **not** supervision available for UPK students after 2:30PM, unless after care has been arranged in advance. There is a \$10 charge for every ten minutes that a child is picked past 2:40pm.
- Should a late pick-up occur:
 1. Parents / guardians of any student who is picked up late will be contacted by the classroom teacher to discuss reasons for late pick-up.
 2. Parents / guardians of any student who is picked up late 3 times will be contacted by the program supervisor to discuss reasons for late pick-up.
 3. Parents / guardians of any student who is picked up late 5 times will be required to attend a conference with the building administrator and program supervisor. Conditions for continued participation will be discussed and documented for the family and student file.
 4. Parents / guardians of any student with an excessive pattern of late pickups that does not improve with the steps listed above will be notified that their child can no longer participate in the program. The available seat will be filled by a student on our waiting list.

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.

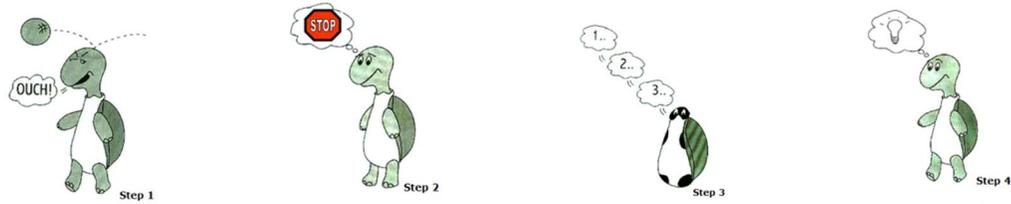
Children learn through observation. As teachers, we model the behaviors that we want our students to exhibit. We use kind words, share with others, and cooperate with all children and adults. By doing this, we teach children how to hear, listen, understand feelings, apologize, and to interact appropriately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

If behavior does not significantly improve after those two weeks, call a meeting with parents to go over the data and what modifications have been done. Discuss further intervention that may be necessary (CPSE) and brainstorm more ideas that may be helpful.

BIRTHDAYS

- Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. does celebrate children's birthdays. However, our company policy prohibits homemade treats. As we are a peanut free-nut free facility, all contents must be properly labeled and checked with director 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.

Below is a list of nut free/peanut free snacks that you can bring in that are safe for all of our children.

- Popsicles
- Fruit snacks
- Nut Free/Peanut free brownies and cookies (can be found at Topps in bakery section—ask attendant)
- Little Bite Muffins (Chocolate chip, rainbow chip, brownies, blueberry muffins)
- Oreos
- Chips Ahoy

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

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.

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.

CLOTHING & ITEMS FROM HOME

- Please keep a complete set of labeled clothing at school. If you bring home a soiled set of clothing, please replace the extra set the following day.
- 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.

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 have children who speak Spanish, Arabic, Polish, Bulgarian and Filipino. We 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 is 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 accommodations 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.

CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITES

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

CONFIDENTIALITY

- Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. respects the right of each family to privacy and confidentiality. Information relating to your child and family will not be released unless written authorization is provided by a parent or legal guardian or as directed by a court order or other law.
- If your child is involved in an altercation with another child, Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. will not reveal the identity of the other child.

- In the event of suspected child abuse, Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. will share information regarding the child and family with the appropriate agencies, as required by various federal and state statutes and regulatory rules. All faculty members participate in ‘Identifying and Reporting Child Abuse and Maltreatment’ training and are therefore identified as Mandated Reporters.

FIELD TRIPS

- On-site field trips complement our educational program for all ages, and include visits from local cultural organizations as well as magicians, puppeteers and other entertainers.

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.

You agree to inform the program if your child, or any family member, has tested positive for COVID-19 so that the program can take necessary mandated steps. Your child's identity remains confidential.

Out of respect for the other children, families and staff members, failure to abide by our policies or failure to disclose COVID-19 exposure or positive test of your child or family member may result in immediate termination from this program.

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
Pinworm.....	After treatment is completed
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 Epiglottis.....	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.
- Benadryl Policy from 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 State-Issued 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 State-Issued Medication Consent Form must be completed for each type of medication administered.
 - All State-Issued Medication 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.

HOURS OF OPERATION

- The program runs from 9:30am to 2:30 pm, Monday through Friday.
- Please pick up your child promptly at 2:30pm, unless your child is registered in our wrap-around program, as we will not have the staff available to care for your child unless he/she is registered in our program.
- Our UPK program follows the Gates Chili School District Calendar. However, for families who participate in our wrap around program, we do have care available over breaks and conference days for an additional cost.

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.
- After lunch we encourage children to brush their teeth, as a way to promote dental hygiene.

INTERNET USE

- We have implemented the use of the Internet at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. 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 licensor Christina fitzgerald (238-8540)
- Our license, the current OFCS regulations, and our approved health care plan are displayed on our parent information board, located in the preschool classroom.
- Any violations that are classified as an "imminent danger" by the Office of Children and Family Services will be corrected immediately.

MEALS & SNACKS

- Our company policy prohibits homemade treats. If you opt to bring in a store-bought treat, please let us know. We ask that you only bring in treats that are nut free and peanut free, ensuring that these items have been made in a nut-free/peanut free facility.
- Gates-Chili offers breakfast and lunch on a daily basis to families for an additional charge.

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 or other sturdy, rubber soled shoes.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- 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.
- We encourage participation in your child's daily experiences here at Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. Parents have free access to their child at all times 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 have lunch together. Unannounced visitations are always welcome.
- We encourage parent volunteers and can always use a pair of extra hands in the classroom day to day activities! To volunteer, please see your child's classroom teacher.
- We have a Parent Teacher Association that meets three times a year to discuss policies, procedures, fundraising and special events. All parents are welcome to attend.
- Three times a year 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 but these classes are an excellent way to network with other families.

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 are 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

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 relation site is Holy Ghost Church. 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. We will notify you prior to these drills so that you can talk with your child about these emergency situations and what to expect.

SECURITY

- Imagination Childcare Academy, Inc. is equipped with a security entry system that prevents unauthorized or undetected entry.

- Each parent will use a four-digit code to gain access to the building.
- When entering the building we ask that you 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.
- We also ask that you do not share your code with your child, as this jeopardizes the safety of all of the children in the building.

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 REQUIREMENTS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- The center is staffed during operational hours with a director/teachers and teacher assistants
- 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 teachers hold either an Early Childhood Teaching Degree and/or NYS Certification in Early Childhood Education
- All teacher assistants are required to have years of experience working with children.
- 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

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

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. We follow the Gates-Chili School District. If they are closed due to inclement weather, we will be closed as well.
- 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.