

Sturbridge Early Learning Academy

Sturbridge Early Learning Academy

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Parent Handbook

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Dear Families,

Welcome to Sturbridge Early Learning Academy!

We wish to extend a warm welcome to you and your child. We look forward to a cooperative adventure in fostering your child's growth and development in these important years.

We value your opinion and request that you take an active part in your child's program.

Please use this handbook as a reference, it should clarify any questions that you may have. Our director is always available to discuss any concerns or further questions.

Sincerely,

Sturbridge Early Learning Academy Staff

Sturbridge Early Learning Academy

Statement of Purpose

Sturbridge Early Learning Academy exists to provide child care for all children ages two months to eight years of both genders in the greater Sturbridge area. Our ultimate goal is to offer these children a safe, healthy, environment where they feel secure, comfortable, and happy.

The program is child-centered with an emphasis on socio-emotional development. This is a structured program where through instructional technique and well-planned curriculum the child will foster in their development of social skills, self-esteem, language, creative and cognitive thinking.

Sturbridge Early Learning Academy shall not discriminate in providing service to children and their families on the basis of race, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, marital status, disability, national origin, sexual orientation, or potty-training status.

We are licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care with a specific license designed for the care and development of preschool aged children. If you ever have questions and/or concerns about the quality of your child's care and you feel the center has not addressed these adequately you can contact our licensing agency at (413)-788-8401 located at 1441 Main St. #230 Springfield, MA 01103.

Parents have the right to contact the Department of Early Education and Care for information regarding the program's regulatory compliance history.

- The teachers are screened to see that they do not have a criminal record.
- Teachers are certified in CPR and First Aid.
- We follow a strict Health Care Policy, to ensure the health and safety of your child.
- Fire drills are done monthly.
- Teachers expand their professional development annually to keep up with current changes in Early Childhood Education.
- The teachers are lawfully and morally obligated to report anything unusual with your child or anytime they suspect your child is being abused or neglected.

Child Intake Procedure

When a parent calls to inquire about one of our programs, they are given information over the phone. They are then encouraged to set up an appointment with the director. During this meeting parents are given a copy of all the center's policies and procedures to keep and/or directed to them on the school website. The director goes over every one of these policies giving the parents opportunity to ask questions.

The parent is then encouraged to observe in the program and if possible, they are introduced to the teacher(s). They then receive the Enrollment Forms and are asked if they have any further questions.

On the child's first day of school, we encourage the parent(s) to stay as long as it may take for the child to adjust to their new environment.

Transitions and Separation Policy

Successful transitions have enormous benefits for children, including enhancing self confidence, allowing them emotional security, helping with their ability to bond with caregivers and to trust other adults and children.

Transitioning into the center:

All our teachers realized the importance of the child bonding with the caregiver and will make sure to give your child the comfort, security and time they need for a healthy transition. However, at times some children need more. If you or your child's teacher notice that your child is having difficulty with separation, then the director will be notified. The director will discuss with parents and teachers' ideas and techniques to try here and at home to help the child.

Transitions to a new program within the center:

When parents and/or teachers feel that a child is developmentally ready to move to another classroom, a discussion with the parent, director, and teacher will take place. All must agree that they feel the child is ready. We allow for these children time to meet the new teacher by having the teacher visit the child's current classroom. The child will also have time to visit the new program for a couple hours a day. We will slowly transition the child into the next program over a week or two and then assess the child's adjustment. Children can always stay in the program they are in regardless of age if they are not emotionally, socially, or cognitively ready. Readiness will be determined in collaboration

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with the parent, teacher and director. When a child moves into the next program, their file and evaluations will move with them so that the new teacher can continue with the child's next educational goals.

Transitions out of our center into new setting:

Parents are encouraged to sign a release of the child's file so that the new setting has information about the child's educational goals, etc. We will allow the child time to say good-bye and we will encourage them in a positive way about their "new school." We will assist parents and children anyway we can to help the child's transition into their new setting.

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Tuition Schedule - 2026

We do not accept children for more than 9.5 hours per day.

Infant Program (2 months to 15 months)

- Full Week - 5 days (~\$9/hour)
 - Max 7.5 hour daily schedule \$355
 - Max 8.5 hour daily schedule \$380
 - Max 9.5 hours daily schedule \$420
- Per Day
 - Max 7.5 hour daily schedule \$80
 - Max 8.5 hour daily schedule \$85
 - Max 9.5 hours daily schedule \$95

Toddler Program (15 months until transition to preschool, no sooner than 2 years 9 months)

- Full Week - 5 days (~\$8/hour)
 - Max 7.5 hour daily schedule \$335
 - Max 8.5 hour daily schedule \$360
 - Max 9.5 hours daily schedule \$375
- Per Day
 - Max 7.5 hour daily schedule \$75
 - Max 8.5 hour daily schedule \$80
 - Max 9.5 hours daily schedule \$90

Preschool Program (2 years 9 months until they start Kindergarten)

- Full Week - 5 days (~\$7/hour)
 - Max 7.5 hour daily schedule \$265
 - Max 8.5 hour daily schedule \$285
 - Max 9.5 hours daily schedule \$305
- Per Day
 - Max 7.5 hour daily schedule \$65
 - Max 8.5 hour daily schedule \$70
 - Max 9.5 hours daily schedule \$80

School-Age Program (children who have already started Kindergarten)

School Year

· Before School Care \$18, After School Care \$25, Before and After School Care \$35

Summer, Vacations and School Closings

- Full Week - 5 days (~\$7/hour)
 - Max 7.5 hour daily schedule \$265
 - Max 8.5 hour daily schedule \$285
 - Max 9.5 hours daily schedule \$305
- Per Day
 - Max 7.5 hour daily schedule \$65
 - Max 8.5 hour daily schedule \$70
 - Max 9.5 hours daily schedule \$80

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Payment Policy

All children are on a weekly set schedule. Payments are expected in full each week; regardless, if your child attends or not; no discounts for illness, holiday closure, snow, or unavoidable emergency closures. No discounts for more than one child. Deposits are non-refundable if you change your mind.

All payments are expected in full, for the week on Monday through ACH withdrawal.

If payment is received more than 7 days late, a \$25 late fee will be applied.

If payment is more than 21 days late, your child will be terminated for non-payment without notice. You will be billed for services rendered with accrued late fees.

All ACH withdrawals returned for insufficient funds will be a \$25.00 additional fee. If your payment is returned you must pay for the tuition in cash including the \$25.00 service fee within two days of us receiving the returned payment.

All payments will be withdrawn from the ACH account given on the auto-pay form at enrollment each Monday or Tuesday if there is a Monday holiday.

No discounts for vacation weeks unless:

- 1. The child has been enrolled for at least 5 months.**
- 2. The child is full time year round and is paying full time tuition.**
- 3. Have no outstanding balance due.**
- 4. Notify us at least three weeks prior.**
- 5. It must be taken during the summer months.**

NO EXCEPTIONS!

If the above applies, and the child does not attend for the week, you will receive one week, tuition free, each calendar year.

Tuition will increase approximately 4+% annually beginning the first full week of March, due to the rising minimum wage schedule, cost of living and the cost of doing business (ex. major increases in salaries, business and corporate taxes, family disability contributions, etc.)

A two-week notice must be given prior to your child's withdrawal from the program or if there is a decrease in services. If a two-week notice is not given you will be required to pay.

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Hours of Operation

We are open year-round from 6:45 am to 5:30 pm - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Arrival time for the morning is no earlier than 6:45 am.

Dismissal time is no later than 5:30 pm. We close at 5:30, no exceptions.

When registering you will sign up for a schedule for your child. This is the time you need to adhere to. We will staff to stay in ratio and charge according to this schedule. You may drop off after your scheduled time (we ask that all children arrive by 9:30 a.m.) and you may pick up before your scheduled time, but you must stay with-in your schedule that was signed up for. With a two week notice; this schedule can be altered if there is availability.

We will be closed on the following days (tuition is still due for these days):

- New Year's Day (close early New Year's Eve)
- Memorial Day
- Fourth of July
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving (close early the day before Thanksgiving)
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas (close early Christmas Eve)
- 2 Professional Development Days per Year Date TBD - Typically held in March and August

Snow and Inclement Weather Policy

We will be closed if the State of Massachusetts, for this area, declares a "state of emergency" or if 10 or more inches of snow is due to fall during that work day. If and when bad weather is a factor, the center will try to email or text you in advance. If you are not planning to bring your child when we are open, as always, please call the school to let us know.

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Late Policy

If a parent is later than 5:30 pm in picking up a child, and the parent does not contact the center the following procedures will be followed.

Note that the length of the tardiness has an impact on the procedures.

The teacher would try to get in touch with the parent(s) either at work or at home.

If the parent(s) cannot be reached, the teacher would refer to the emergency care, or child's file. She would then try to get in touch with the people listed on the form to have them come and get the child.

If none of these people can be reached after several attempts, and the parent does not call, then the teacher would get in touch with local agencies, such as, Police Department, Emergency Rooms, etc. to locate the parent(s).

If by 7:00 pm the teacher has still not made contact with the parent(s) or someone on the emergency list, the Department of Social Services will be called to pick up the child.

***If a parent shows up to get their child after 5:30 pm, regardless of which steps the teacher is involved in, an additional \$1 per minute late fee will be immediately expected as compensation for care during tardiness.**

Late Arrival Policy

As we are not a drop-in service, if your child is not at school by 9:30 a.m., your child will be marked absent and unable to attend for the day. If your child arrives after 9:30 a.m., and the Director allows them to stay; a \$5 charge will be added to their billing for every ½ hour late.

Exceptions to this policy include being notified by message, email or phone call that your child will be late, or a scheduled late arrival approved by the Director. However, even with a notified late arrival, we will NOT be able to take a child past 11:30 a.m. You are welcome to drop your child off in the morning, pick up for an apt. and bring them back after; however, if they have not been at school yet, 11:30 is the latest they may arrive.

Please remember that circle time, centers and the bulk of their learning is happening in the morning. **If you know your child will arrive at school after 9:30 a.m. please call or email to inform us.**

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Philosophy

It is the philosophy of Sturbridge Early Learning Academy Inc. that the environment is safe, healthy, and emotionally secure, which invites learning and affirms individuality and a child's self-worth.

We believe that the children are our main purpose for being here and should set the tone for activities which are prepared by the staff.

We would like for all the children in our care to grow up to be optimistic individuals who are responsible, honest and have self-integrity. We would like our children to be creative problem solvers who care for, respect, and show fairness and empathy for others. It is important to us that they grow to be confident, well-educated and well-versed adults, but most importantly we want for our children to have happiness, health and love throughout their lives.

We would like our children to demonstrate security and comfort here throughout the day. We want children in our care to form a loving, trusting bond with their teacher so that they will feel secure with themselves. We want them to explore and learn through their senses. We want them to feel capable and comfortable with their own abilities. We want our children to grow and steadily improve their skills socially, cognitively, creatively, physically and emotionally.

For them to achieve these high goals, all of the people in their lives must work together assisting, guiding and teaching. We do advocate for families. We know that you are the most important teachers in your child's life and we respect this.

We believe that each child learns at his/her own pace, and that they should be taught that this is appropriate and unique to them. We believe that children should not be pushed to increase their cognitive development at the expense of emotional security.

We believe that health and safety are our primary responsibilities, that when those conditions are provided we may teach social skills and emotional health, and that only when this is accomplished should we be concerned with cognitive skills.

We believe that children should have a non-competitive environment here, and that their accomplishments should not be compared to those of other children. Each child is unique and is to be valued for his/her unique characteristics.

We believe all children should be provided with instructions and activities that are fun, interesting, challenging, and rewarding.

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We believe that the work of the child is play, and that children learn best through play activities.

We believe that if children cannot learn the way we teach, then it is our responsibility to teach the way they learn.

We believe that children should be encouraged to display their full range of emotions. That there are times when excitement, silliness, joy, fear, and anger are appropriate, and that it is all right to cry. Also, that there are appropriate ways to deal with emotions.

We believe that sexism is inappropriate, that by limiting activities according to gender, we limit both boys and girls in their fulfillment of their potential.

Finally, we believe that children have a right to be here, that we are to treat them just as if their parents were present, and that we bear a great responsibility to children in care and their families.

Our job here is to allow our children the freedom and time to explore, to make choices, to try new things and to fail. We understand why they do things a certain way, except it, and build on it. We are non-judgmental and optimistic, making sure that we laugh and relax with them. We encourage them to speak and question them often. We provide them with an environment which is safe, healthy and emotionally secure, which invites learning and affirms individuality and a child's self-worth.

At our center, we feel it is important for children to freely express their full range of emotions. We listen to them and give them space to grow. We feel that uniqueness and differences are assets. We believe that children learn best through play. We allow for them to get messy and explore while trying new things. We notice and observe all that they do and use it as a learning experience. We are knowledgeable of their development and appreciate their egocentrism. We provide them with a non-sexist and non-competitive environment.

We provide them with activities that are appropriate for their age and development. The activities are fun, interesting, and challenging. We expose them to language and literature. We are excited about reading and we read to them often. We sign and laugh with them. Our rules are fair, clear, and consistent. We follow a schedule and routine. We act as a model and emphasize the bright side to things and point out the wonder of nature. We listen and explain and allow them to give reasons and answers. We value all they say and do. We show approval, acceptance, and we encourage and give praise. Finally, we respect our children and care for them unconditionally. **They are the main reason that we are here, and we bear this great responsibility to our children.**

The Program

Developmental Approach

Programmatically, the Center is structured to allow children time and opportunity to grow cognitively, socially, creatively, physically, and emotionally. The child has a choice of many varied activities, group and individual, designed to allow his/her own pace and to experience education as a successful, ego-developing endeavor.

We emphasize three important aspects of our program:

Emotional Security – Our goal is for children to develop a positive self-image, so that they feel secure and comfortable with their own abilities. Also, that children enjoy school, learning, and experiencing new things.

Social Skills – Our goal is for children to develop self-help, following direction, listening, vocalization and problem-solving skills. We would also like them to feel comfortable and enjoy being in a group, sharing, and working with others.

Academic Exposure – Through hands-on, fun, and interesting activities, we would like for children to develop STEM and literacy concepts, ultimately preparing them for the next step in school, Kindergarten.

Curriculum Plans

We use “The Creative Curriculum for Preschool and Infants/Toddlers” and “The Massachusetts Department of Education Curriculum Standards and Guidelines for Preschool, Infants and Toddlers” to guide our curriculum planning and evaluation. The program is planned weekly by the teachers of the program. The teachers consider any special needs of the classroom as well as individual needs and the individual goals of the children. We use our assessment and documentation to help guide and determine these goals and areas where children need to be learning and growing. Weekly lesson plans are posted in each room and you will receive messages containing the curriculum as well.

Evaluation and Progress

Assessments and screenings will be performed by lead teachers that have been trained. Growth and development is measured in a multi-facet way. We have an optional meeting with parents one month after the child begins the program to discuss mutual goals for the child for the future. Children are assessed within the classroom setting daily through using observations, checklists, rating scales and work sampling. We document and observe children on going and adjust curriculum plans for optimal individual growth. Teachers and parents will set up conferences to establish mutual goals based on their child and their development.

Formal evaluations are completed on each child, every three or six months.

Should we feel that your child has a special need, an educational plan will be set up by you and your child's teacher. If necessary, referrals for testing or additional services will be discussed with you so that together we can make the best decisions to meet your child's needs.

Parents are always encouraged to discuss their child's progress daily and to schedule meetings when they see a need.

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Sample Daily Schedule – may vary by classroom

6:45-7:30	Arrival, breakfast (provided by parents if needed), and quiet activities
7:30-8:30	Activity choices – quiet learning centers
8:30-9:00	Music and Movement
9:00-9:20	Circle Time (calendar, weather, story, finger plays, etc.)
9:20-9:45	Morning group snack
9:45-11:00	Learning Centers with planned activities around themes including STEM, art, etc.
11:00-12:00	Outside time (weather pending)
12:00-12:30	Lunch
12:30-1:00	Story, bathroom, group games
1:00-2:30	Rest time
2:30-3:00	Wake-up, bathroom, and story
3:00-3:20	Group games at circle
3:20-4:00	Learning centers with a snack choice
4:00-5:00	Outside time
5:00-5:30	Group games and parent pick-up

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Parental Rights

As a parent, you have the right to:

Visit and view the programs and our center prior to your child's admittance and **anytime your child is in our care.**

Have a meeting with the director prior to admittance; at which time you will receive all our center's written policies and be given time to ask questions about them. They are posted on our website.

Give input in the development of the center's policies and programs. We shall provide an explanation in writing to you within two days, when suggestions made by you are not adapted.

Receive a written report of your child's progress at least once every 6 months; infants and children with special needs at least once every 3 months.

Have staff bring special problems or significant developments to your attention as soon as they arise.

Have staff available for individual conferences at your request.

Have your child's records be confidential. We shall not release information contained in your child's file to anyone without written request from you. Your child's file will be allowed to be viewed by the Department of Early Education and Care and/or anyone at our center who is directly involved in implementing your child's program only.

Due to the licensing process, upon request of an authorized Department of Early Education and Care employee who is involved in the regulatory process, the Director can and shall make your child's records and other materials listed required by the regulations available to them.

Authorized employees of the Department of Early Education and Care shall not remove identifying case materials from the center premises and shall maintain the confidentiality of individual records.

To be notified if records are subpoenaed.

Have free access to your child's records immediately upon request.

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Have your child's records transferred in whole or in parts to you or another party. However, for the transfer of originals or copies, you must give a written request. Also, the party they are being released to must sign a log maintained by the center. Note: We need to keep all the originals while your child is in our care. Copies will be given at no cost.

Add to any of the information contained in your child's records.

Have an individual conference with the Director if you feel information contained in your child's file should be amended or deleted. Then, within one week have a written response from the Director as to whether the information can be deleted or amended and the reasoning for that decision.

Parent Involvement

As a parent, you have been responsible for the early teachings of your child and will always be the most important teacher in your child's life. Here are a few ways in which you can help your child here, and then later in the public schools.

- At your convenience, visit the program and observe.
- Give input to the development of the program and its policies.
- Attend and request parent conferences.
- Read and answer all notes attained in emails and in the "cubbies" promptly.
- Keep up with what is happening in the program.
- Read bulletins that are posted on various boards throughout the center.
- Talk with staff members about ideas and suggestions.

Parent Grievances

We are dedicated to always improving our program. If you ever have a concern with any aspect of the center; curriculum, behavioral methods, safety issues, teachers, administration, etc. we need to know to be able to address it and fix it.

There are several ways that parents can discuss grievances:

- You may always call the Director or a classroom teacher during the day between 9 am -4:30 pm. If they cannot speak to you then, they will schedule a time to meet that is convenient for you.
- An email can be sent to the Director at any time with any suggestions, comments, or concerns.

All grievances are confidential, appreciated, and respected. You will be provided with an explanation of how things were handled and how things can be changed to ensure the problem does not arise again. This will be done with a phone call or in writing to you within three days.

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Expectations

Parents can expect from Sturbridge Early Learning Academy:

- To be welcomed every day.
- To be respected as a member of the center's community.
- To have all staff treat their child in a positive manner.
- To have well planned activities for their children each day, which emphasizes their individual needs and differences.
- To be confident that their child's concerns are the primary ones of the staff.
- To be assured of leaving their child in a safe environment.
- An immediate verbal report of any concerns staff may have about their child.
- To give allowances for the child to grow and learn at their own pace.

Teachers will expect parents:

- To share information about their children to help staff know them better.
- To have completed all required forms and update them as needed.
- To be willing to participate in the program in whatever manner is best for the family.
- To inform staff of any suspected illness or signs which indicate a difference in a child's routine (sleepless night, fever, change in bowel movement, etc.).
- To keep a complete set of clothing at the center and to remember to replace items which are used.
- To pick up a child before closing time.
- To respect staff as important people in their child's life.
- To keep lines of communication open between home and school, developing a sense of community support.

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Lines of Authority

The Board of Directors incorporated with Sturbridge Early Learning Academy Inc. hold overall responsibility for the operation of the center. Day to day responsibility for the operation of the Sturbridge Early Learning Academy will be as follows:

Jessica Pillsbury (co-founder/executive Director of all locations/Director at SELA East) and Patricia Shevory (co-founder) shall be responsible for business management and record keeping; agency representation in all forms, including parent contacts; staff hiring, firing, supervision, development and training; personnel matter; staff files; social service referral; and policy follow through and changes. Jennifer Palmer is the Director for SELA West; she is responsible for parent contacts, staff files and management, social service referrals, enrolling new families, etc. Kylie Toppin is the assistant Director at the East location who shares appropriate Director responsibilities.

All other responsibilities will be shared by Jessica Pillsbury, Jennifer Palmer, and Kylie Toppin and the teacher in charge of each program, including but not limited to, program and curriculum planning which will also include children with disabilities when needed; parent involvement; field trips; child files; and daily program functioning.

SELA East:

In the absence of Jessica Pillsbury, Kylie Toppin or Patricia Shevory will assume responsibility for the above listed duties.

SELA West:

In the absence of Jennifer Palmer, Jessica Pillsbury, Kylie Toppin or Patricia Shevory will assume responsibility for the above listed duties.

In the absence of Jessica, Jennifer, Kylie and Patricia, a lead teacher will assume administrative duties.

Lead teachers are directly responsible for the teacher assistants within their classroom.s are directly responsible for the teacher assistants within their classroom.

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Toilet Training

The staff shall toilet train children in accordance with the request of the parent, the center's philosophy, and consistency with the child's physical and emotional abilities.

Only the use of positive reinforcement, encouragement, and care will be used during this process.

Bathroom Plan

On a regular basis, children will be accompanied to the bathroom prior to:

- Morning Snack – approximately 9:30
- Lunch – approximately 11:30
- Nap – approximately 1:15
- Afternoon Snack – approximately 3:15

Children will be accompanied to use the bathroom outside of the above times as needed.

Children who wet or soil themselves will be treated respectfully as a staff member assists the removal of the wet or soiled clothing. No form of humiliation for poor toileting habits is permitted. Staff members will be supportive of the children to ease potential embarrassment.

Wet or soiled clothing will be put into a two layered plastic bag, securely sealed and placed in the child's cubby for the parent.

The staff members and children will wash hands thoroughly.

All children and teachers are to wash their hands with soap and running warm water, after toileting. Individual towels must be provided for drying hands.

A change of clothing for any child, if needed, can be found in the bathroom. A complete set of extra clothing must be provided by the parents.

Feeding Plan

Infants and toddlers will be fed according to their individual needs.

All infants will be fed by their caregiver, held, spoken to, and cuddled with eye contact.

The child's lunch/food is brought in by the parents daily and stored by us until feeding times. Parents are asked to provide a nutritious lunch for their child with various choices. The lunch will be stored and prepared in a sanitary manner that is consistent with the parent's request. Unopened lunch options will be returned to you, so please pack different choices if you have a "picky eater".

Any uneaten lunch will be returned to you in their lunch box so that you know they did and did not eat. Infant feedings given, are written down in a daily note and placed in the child's bag.

If we ever have any eating concerns for your child, we will either call you or indicate it in writing in your child's lunch box.

If you ever have a concern with your child's food intake, make sure you let us know.

If at any time you would like for us to write down exactly what your child eats on a specific day, or every day we will gladly accommodate you.

Snacks are offered two other times a day. Snacks are provided by us and a daily snack schedule is posted in the room.

Toddler children do not always want to eat at a specific time and we do take this into consideration. We will never deny a toddler a nutritious snack if they request it at any time.

When a child is not developmentally ready to sit at the table they will be fed in a high chair.

Good Health Habits and Ideas for Nutritional Lunches

Good nutrition is necessary for healthy development in all small children. The key is for children to learn how to eat a broad, well-balanced diet. Here are a few suggestions:

- Set a good example – if you are seen enjoying a variety of foods, your child will learn to enjoy them. Don't expect your child to do otherwise if you snack on junk food or skip meals.
- Vary textures – serve soft, creamy, crunchy, chewy, mashed, and crisp foods. Use a variety of colors also to catch the child's interest.
- Provide a relaxing atmosphere – children are slow eaters, allow plenty of time for meals. Do not encourage or urge children to eat when they are tired, excited, or continuously hungry.

The staff provides all the suggestions mentioned above on a daily basis to your child through morning and afternoon snacks. It is up to you, the parent, to provide a well balanced meal for your child's lunch. Working together, we can be sure your child will develop good eating habits.

Nutritious Lunches

Children need a well-balanced lunch such as a sandwich, a piece of fruit, and some type of healthy snack. This helps the children maintain a level of energy and alertness. What isn't a "nutritional lunch" may surprise you. Did you know Lunchables, Beefaronis, and other processed lunches contain no nutritional value? Please refrain from sending these types of lunches with your child.

Breakfast Choices

- Fresh Fruit
- Muffins
- Bagels
- Unsweetened cereal
- Granola Bars
- Oatmeal

Lunches

- Cold meat sandwiches
- Salads
- Yogurt
- Left-overs from the night before

- Soups
- Heat-ups (must be prepared and placed in a Microwaveable container)

Snacks

- Fresh Fruit/Vegetables
- Dried Fruits
- Crackers and Cheese
- Applesauce
- Yogurt
- Granola Bars

Behavior Management

Discipline means more than making a child behave for the time being. It is the process by which a child develops a conscience and learns to make his/her own decisions about actions.

Similarly, discipline means more than controlling children. The goal of discipline is to assist and guide children in the development of self-control.

Child management is to be consistent and based on an understanding of the individual needs and development of the child. All discipline is to be directed toward the goal of maximizing the growth and development of the child and toward protecting the group and individuals within it.

Staff is to endeavor to provide a positive approach to child guidance by:

- Loving the children regardless of their actions.
- Teaching them what they need to learn.
- Protecting them when they need protection.
- Guiding them to make positive decisions, when they seem at a loss to do so alone.
- Helping them when they need help.
- Freeing them when they need freedom.

No child shall be subjected to abuse or neglect, cruel, unusual, severe, or corporal punishment including;

- Any type of physical hitting inflicted in any manner upon the body.
- Punishments which subject a child to verbal abuse, ridicule, or humiliation.
- Denial of food, rest, or bathroom facilities.
- Punishment for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
- Punishments related to eating or not eating food.

Staff is to use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, anticipation and elimination of potential problems, positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, or criticism. Consistent, clear rules will be explained to children and understood by adults.

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Health Care Policy for Parents

Emergency numbers are posted near each telephone.

Our nearest health care facility is Harrington Hospital, South Street, Southbridge., (508)-765-9771.

Our emergency procedure, depending on the situation, is to either call an ambulance and then the child's parent or to contact the parent and ask to come and get their child. If the parent cannot be reached, we will call the emergency numbers provided by you. Emergency contact is responsible for picking up the child. In the event that emergency contact cannot be notified in an emergency situation, your child will be transported to the hospital by ambulance.

No smoking shall be permitted.

If a child is injured at the center, you will receive an accident report, stating the cause of the accident, who witnessed it, what happened and if any first aid was applied.

Mildly ill children will rest on mats in the office until parents arrive.

Children exhibiting symptoms for **infectious diseases**, will not be allowed to return to the center until 48 hours have passed or with a doctor's note.

If **communicable diseases** are present in one of the children at the center, a note will be emailed/sent home to all parents within 24 hours outlining the disease.

No children will be allowed to enter the center if they display any symptoms of an infectious or communicable disease.

For medication to be given, you need a written parental authorization or written order of a physician. Prescriptions that are current can be accepted as a written order of a physician. The dose of how to administer must be included. Medication must be in the original prescription bottle.

All children need to have updated immunizations and physical examinations prior to enrollment.

Emergency phone numbers and medical release forms must be submitted by the parents and include where they can be reached while the child is here. They will be kept here and must be updated by the parent as necessary.

Our Health Care Policy is posted in each room and a non-condensed version is available upon your request.

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Sickness Policy

When dropping off your child in the morning, please consider the other children. You would not appreciate your child being exposed to someone else's illness, so under the same consideration, please do not bring your child in if you suspect your child may be ill. Also, we are very aware of any physical or emotional changes in your child. It is very important that you keep us aware of the changes prior to dropping them off.

You will not be allowed to leave your child with us if they display the following symptoms upon arrival. Also, if we notice any of these symptoms throughout the day and **your child is unable to keep up with the classroom routines**, we will **call** you and **expect** you to pick up your child within **one hour**.

The following symptoms are:

- Inflamed or swollen eyes
- Fever above 100.0
- Persistent or croupy cough
- Red or swollen glands
- Earache with fussiness
- Sore throat without doctor's note
- Chills
- Severe headache
- Diarrhea (twice)
- Listlessness
- Nausea
- Unexplained skin rash
- Or any symptoms of an infectious communicable disease

From the time symptoms end whether at home, sent home from school, or a diagnosis is given by a doctor the child will be excluded from returning to the center for at least 24 hours and not able to attend the full next school day.

Example:

- **If your child threw up at school at noon, they still must be absent the entire next day. They are not permitted to return at noon the following day.**
- **If your child is diagnosed with any contagious illness, they need to remain out of school for at least 24 hours and be unable to attend the full next day. If a doctor advises they are okay to attend school prior to 24 hours, our policy does not permit this. They need to remain out of school until the allotted time is up and the full next school day.**

All children who have a communicable disease may not return without a doctor's note. Please refer to the current EEC COVID guidance in regards to COVID protocol.

If your child is mildly ill, a quiet area for them to rest will be provided. Also, books and other quiet playing materials will be given to the child. You will be informed that your child is not feeling well.

If a child is going to be absent, due to a sickness or other reasons, please call the center to inform them that your child will not be in and specify why.

TO AVOID ILLNESS, WE WILL STRICTLY ENFORCE THE PROCEDURES MENTIONED IN THIS POLICY.

Medication Policy

We will administer medication to your child under the following Department of Early Education and Care guidelines. There are no exceptions to these rules.

Prescription Medications

- We must have a medical consent form signed by the parent.
- The medication must be in the regular prescription bottle with the prescription still attached. It must include directions for administration, a current date, and the child's name.

Non-Prescription Medications, Non-Topical - These are over the counter medications that the child takes orally by mouth. These include Tylenol, Benadryl, Cough Syrup, Cough Drops, etc.

- We must have a doctor's note. This means that for teachers to give your child Motrin, you must have a doctor's note for Motrin (not Tylenol).
- These notes are good for one year and must be specific. They must include the directions for administration as well.
- If you would like for us to administer cough medicine, aspirin, etc. you must bring in a doctor's note and a bottle of the medication that has been verified by your child's doctor, so we will have it at the center on the occasion that your child needs it. We will label it with your child's name and store it until needed. Before administering the medication to the child, we will try contacting the parent at work for verbal consent.

Non-Prescription Medications, Topical – These are over the counter medications that are applied to the skin. These include sunscreen, insect repellent, petroleum jelly, ointments, etc.

- We do not need a letter from the doctor for these types of medications.
- We will apply these products with parental consent.
- The parent must purchase the product to be left or brought here when needed.
- We will label it and store it as needed.

Infant Sleep Health and Safety Policy

Infants under 12 months in age must always be placed on their backs for sleeping, unless the child's health care professional orders otherwise, documented in writing and signed by a parent, as well.

Each child must nap in an individual crib, with a firm, properly fitted mattress. Cribs must meet CPSC safety standards with slats less than 2-3/8 inches apart.

Children younger than six months of age at the time of enrollment **must be under direct visual supervision always**, including napping.

No child under 12 months of age shall be placed in a crib, containing; blankets, comforters, pillows, stuffed animals, wedges, positioners, bumper pads, or other soft, padded materials or toys.

Bottles must never be propped, and babies should never be left to suck on milk while sleeping.

Supervised awake tummy time is required daily.

Parents will be notified of SIDS risk reduction practices, sleep positioning policies, and arrangements for sleeping all infants on their backs at orientation prior to enrollment. Copies of this will also be posted in the infant room and on various parent boards throughout the center.

Alternate Infant Sleep Position is only allowed if:

1. We have written and signed physician's note explaining a medical reason why the baby sleeps in a position other than on his/her back.
2. We will keep the doctor's note in the child's file and we will post it by the crib.
3. All providers substitute and/or assistants will be informed.

Staff Compliances

All staff will document receiving this policy and review it with the director at orientation and once yearly.

All center employees, at orientation, will need to be trained in safe sleep practices, including viewing EEC's training; Reducing the Risk of SIDS in Child Care. All staff will need to renew every two years and keep a copy of the certificate on file.

The director will conduct random inspections of the infant rooms and sleep safety practices including documentation of the dates, times, teachers, number of children and what was observed.

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Social Service Referral Plan and Collaboration

The procedures for referring parents to the appropriate social, mental health, educational, and medical services for their child are as follows;

If a staff member identifies a need in which a child might be remediable through intervention, said staff member shall inform the director. She will then conduct an observation and assessment of the child, review the child's file, and contact the parent to schedule a meeting.

During the meeting, parents will be given copies of our assessment and an explanation of our concerns. They will also receive a program plan which outlines our efforts to better meet the needs of the child here.

If the director and/or parents feel it is necessary, the parent can contact our Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Coordinator in the town. She can assist them with receiving outside testing. This person can discuss with the parent which outside additional services can be accessed and how to go through the referral process. The parent will also receive a list of all agencies that can help.

Collaboration – Whenever a child displays a need, we collaborate with many agencies to help the child, the family and the teacher. We have access to behavioral specialists and special need consultants that can help the teacher in the classroom work with specific children. If a child referral is made, the center will assist the parents any way possible. We encourage Early Intervention to come to the center to service children under 3 and we collaborate with the schools to offer a link between them and us. We will attend IEP meetings and even hire a special needs advocate to assist the parent with determining the best placements for the child.

Once the child is being serviced, we will do whatever is necessary to better meet the needs of the child here.

If it is determined that the child is not in need of services from this agency, or is ineligible to receive services, the center will review the child's progress once every three months to determine if another referral is necessary.

All observations, evaluations, assessments and social service referrals, including parent conference results, will be maintained at the center by the director.

Termination and Suspension

To avoid termination and suspension of a child the center will:

1. Provide an opportunity to meet with parents to discuss options other than suspension or termination
2. Offer referrals to parents for evaluation, diagnostic or therapeutic services
3. Pursue options for supportive services to the program, including consultation and educator training
4. Develop a plan for behavioral intervention at home and in the program.

If the previous actions to avoid termination and suspension from the program are unsuccessful, a child may be terminated or suspended from the center under the following circumstances:

- Continual or repeated instances of serious disruption
- Physical abuse of other children or staff - **we have a no tolerance policy for physical violence. The above steps do not need to be taken when physical violence happens - immediate termination may occur.**
- Damage to center equipment
- Physical, emotional, psychological situations or a developmental need in which the center is not equipped to handle
- Continual, repeated or serious instances of parental non-cooperation
- Non-payment
- Tricky situations which arise as a result of parents fighting
- Other situations which impair the health, safety, emotional well-being or education of others in the center
- The health and safety of the child cannot be assured, or when the child poses a risk to their own safety

All incidents will be documented by the classroom teacher and put into the child's file. Incidents of a serious (or potentially serious) nature will be documented on an incident report, placed in the child's file, given to the parent and discussed with the parent. Repeat offenses or a very serious incident may result in the parent being called and required to remove the child from the center for the day and/or a day suspension. Repeated offenses will finally result in termination of the child from care, with written reasons to be given to the parent(s). If receiving a voucher, CCR's termination policy as far as absence will be followed.

If a child is terminated, effort will be made by the agency to refer the family to appropriate social service agencies.

Any child who is terminated will be terminated consistent with the child's ability to understand.

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Reporting Child Abuse

We at the center, document every mark that we see on a child in their file. No-one has access to your child's file without your written permission or unless there is a court order.

As your parental right, you may have access to your child's file at any time if requested by you to the director. If center staff feel that documentation and/or the child's immediate safety warrants a report to the Department of Children and Families, the director will also notify the parent that we plan to file or have already filed and why.

The Department of Children and Families is the agency that if a child is suspected of being abused or neglected we report to: (508)-929-2150, ask for a case worker.

Any teacher or teacher-aid is considered a mandated reporter. All teachers are required by the Department of Early Education and Care to complete the required training on mandated reporting.

All mandated reporters must file a report if they have reasonable cause to believe that:

- A child is suffering serious physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse inflicted upon him/her, including sexual abuse.
- A child is suffering from neglect, including malnutrition.
- A child is physically dependent upon an addictive drug at birth.

"Reasonable Cause" means that after all the facts in a particular situation, most people with similar training and experience would also suspect abuse.

If a mandated reporter fails to report known or suspected instances of child abuse, they may be punished by a fine of up to \$1,000. Failure to report may also result in civil liability if a child is harmed after the reporter gains knowledge of abuse and fails to report. In knowing these facts at our center, certain procedures should be followed:

- If a staff member suspects that a child has been abused or neglected that staff member will make an immediate report to the director. They will then document the findings and decide upon further action, which may result in a report to DCF, parents may also be contacted.
- When a report is necessary, a call to DCF will be made. Within 48 hours of the telephone call a written report will be sent.
- If DCF cannot be reached, after business hours, etc. call the Child At Risk Hotline at 1-800-792-5200. If you feel a child is in immediate danger, call the local police.

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If there is a suspicion of child abuse or neglect on the part of a staff member while at work, said staff member shall not be permitted to work with children until the conclusion of an investigation which results in a finding that the allegations are unproven, or for such further time as the Department of Early Education and Care requires. This center will cooperate fully with an investigation conducted by an authorized agency.

Evacuation/Emergency Contingency Plan

If a child goes missing from the program:

The teacher is to alert both another teacher and the Director immediately to ensure the safety of the children still in the classroom while a search for the child is done. Local police should also be called immediately after the child is said to be missing. The parents of the child will also be contacted immediately.

Emergency Plan for Evacuation due to Fire, etc:

Separate evacuation plans are posted in each room. In the Infant and Toddler room, the posted plan states; that when infants are present, they should all be placed into one of the cribs to be evacuated.

Each individual teacher is responsible for maintaining accurate attendance as the children arrive and leave each day. This attendance is located on a clipboard in each of the individual rooms. With each attendance is a list of emergency numbers for each child. They are to be taken by the lead teacher in the classroom as the building is evacuated. The teachers will be responsible for assuring the number of children in attendance to the number of children safely evacuated.

The Director or the designated teacher in her absence, will check for stragglers and contact appropriate authorities once all are evacuated.

Evacuation drills will be done once a month. The director will be responsible for documenting the date, time and effectiveness of each drill.

If a fire should occur all the children will be brought to the restaurant across the parking lot. The teachers will try to contact the children's parents to inform them of the situation and to retrieve their child.

Emergency plan if the school should lose power, heat, or water:

If any health concerns arise for lack of utilities, the parents will be called immediately to pick up their children and the school will close. If the parent cannot be reached someone from the child's emergency list will be called to pick up the child. If someone other than the parent is called, the Director will continue to try to contact a parent. If the parent cannot be reached after several attempts, a note will be attached to the front

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door of the center alerting the parent as to where the child is. The center will remain closed until there are no health risks or concerns.

If a Natural Disaster or Act of Terrorism should arise that would warrant an evacuation:

We as a center are registered with the Town Emergency Management Office. We are listed with them as a “Special Needs Facility”. They will contact us, or we can contact them at 911 after receiving the news of a potential disaster or after a potential disaster strikes. They (the town of Sturbridge) will provide transportation to a Safe Facility, one of which is the Town Hall. There are several “Safe Facilities” listed in the town and they will determine where we will be brought or where we should go based on the type of disaster to occur. We will contact parents and our location will be posted on the doors of the building. If we are unable to evacuate or if a disaster hits without warning, the staff will bring the children to the safest part of the building where they stay until deemed necessary.

Transportation Policy and Child Release

All children must be picked up by a parent or parent designee. Whomever picks up the child is responsible for signing them out. No child is ever released to anyone unless we have written parent notification on file. The person picking up will need to show picture identification.

If children are dropped off, the parent must always hand off the child to a staff member. The staff member will sign the child in and out. Sign in sheets are in each classroom by the door.

We are not responsible for any child who enters the building unaccompanied by a parent.

We will assume all responsibility for a child once the child is signed in and acknowledged by a teacher.

If children are transported by bus, the teacher who waits for the children and retrieves them from the bus will be responsible for marking the attendance. We will also put children onto the public-school bus when necessary and adjust the attendance accordingly.

We are not responsible for children until they walk off the bus and onto our property. Once we have put them onto the bus we are no longer responsible until their return.

Children will not be transported in any vehicles unless; it is a scheduled field trip where a permission slip is obtained from the parent. This permission slip will specifically outline the details of the transportation.

All parents must call the center to let us know if their child will be absent. If you do not call and your child is not here for attendance directly after school, we will call you.

What to Bring

Clothing/Diapers

A complete change of clothing should always be available for your child. All clothing should be marked with your child's name. Extra clothing should include; underpants, a pair of socks, shirt and pants appropriate to the season. If soiled during the day, we will send clothing home. Please remember to replace it the next day.

Please also bring in diapers for your child, if applicable. Wipes will be provided by the school. If your child is running low on diapers or pull-ups you will be notified to bring in more.

Lunches and our NO NUTS Policy

You will need to provide a nutritious lunch daily. We strongly suggest that you limit the amount of empty calorie foods, such as cookies, cupcakes, and/or candy. We provide two snacks and beverages throughout the day; one snack in the morning and one later in the afternoon. Please send in a labeled water bottle/cup each day for your child to use. Please send such things as yogurt, crackers and cheese, fresh fruits and vegetables, hard boiled eggs, sandwiches, soups, leftovers from dinner, etc. To ensure a balanced nutrition, a lunch should include two fruits and/or vegetables, a grain, and a protein (meat or cheese). We will heat things up as needed so your child does not need to eat a cold lunch every day.

We would appreciate it if your child does not bring anything containing nuts of any kind. We know that children can have severe allergic reactions to nuts and we do not want to be the first one to expose children to nuts.

Infants and toddlers will need to also provide necessary drinking materials such as bottles and sippy cups that will be needed throughout the day and will be sent home daily. These should all be labeled with their name.

Naptime

Please bring in a small security type blanket, and crib sheet for your child's mat, labeled with your child's name. It is your obligation to bring the blankets home once a week, for proper cleaning, and return on the following school day.

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Cubbies

Your child's cubby will be located within their classroom. Please check your child's cubby daily. Your child worked very hard and put a lot of effort in their work, and it's good motivation for the child to bring home their work.

Field Trips

Field Trips will be scheduled whenever possible. We do ask for parent volunteers. A note with a permission slip will be sent home in the newsletter and will need to be signed and returned for your child to attend. A small fee may be required for these trips.

Parties and Treats

Your child's birthday will be celebrated at school. If you would like to bring in a small treat on that day, please do so. Also, please remind us about your child's upcoming birthday so that we will be able to include something special for your child that day.

Babysitting/Staff Cell Phones/Social Media

We have a no babysitting policy for staff here at SELA. No staff are permitted to babysit for any enrolled families outside of school. This has caused many issues in the past and we ask that this policy is strictly followed to avoid these issues. Staff are prohibited from sharing and communicating through their personal cell phone numbers or social media sites with enrolled families.

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App

Sturbridge Early Learning Academy uses a parent/staff engagement app that tracks attendance, communicates with parents, generates reports, files accident and incident reports, posts pictures and videos to children's feeds, etc.

All parents, upon enrollment will be invited to download the parent engagement app that the center uses. Please do not download the app until you receive the email with the link to do so and then follow the instructions provided.

Staff will upload details regarding infants/toddlers daily schedules, and for all children, will post photos, message parents, post curriculum, etc. Staff will NOT upload live to the minute. It is important that the staff are taking care of the children, and focused and present. When they have time to update the app, they will do so and everything will be logged by the end of the day.

Parents are welcome and encouraged to message the Director and their teachers through the app. Again, please know messages may not be returned immediately, but staff do their best to return messages in a timely manner. Staff are not encouraged to answer messages outside of work hours unless it is an emergent situation. Staff are not required to have the app on their personal cell phone.

When receiving class or group photos on the app it is against policy to share or post these photos on social media. No photos or videos containing another child should EVER be shared publicly!