**[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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Welcome to Beach Kids Learning Center

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you and your child to our school!

A child’s first educational experience is especially important and strive to make this experience a positive one, that will launch your child on a lifetime of learning. We believe that children are capable and eager learners. We support their need for hands-on meaningful activities and are advocates for the importance of play. We prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond through creative, productive experiences. We are staffed by a talented team of teachers who are committed to ensuring your child is well cared for and is learning in an environment that is both enriching and stimulating. This handbook was prepared to help you learn about us and to communicate our policies and procedures that help ensure our relationship has clear expectations and guidelines. We think most of your questions about how we operate are answered in this handbook but if not, please do not hesitate to ask us about anything that concerns you. We want to make the experience of bringing your child to school for the first time a happy, pleasant time. We are committed to making the transition from home to school as smooth as possible. Thank you for choosing Beach Kids Learning Center. We are happy to serve you and your children.

Renee Cobb

Owner/Director



**Introduction:** Beach Kids Learning Center is licensed by the State of Florida, Dept. of Children and Family Services. Beach Kids contracts with the Dept. of Education, Early Learning Coalition to offer the state funded Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program.

We serve children 18 months (about 1 and a half years) through pre-kindergarten and limited school age care during the summer when available. We are open Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. We provide a school calendar to assure that you are aware of the days we are closed to make sure that our school will work for your schedule.

The Owner/Director, Renee Cobb, has a bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education from Florida State University with over 26 years of experience directing an NAEYC accredited early childhood program. She creates a community where adults and children experience a sense of connection and creates an environment that ensures children have a childhood that is full of play, adventure, investigation, and learning.

Beach Kids has a very professional staff who are well educated and trained in early childhood and follow ethical principles and best teaching practices.

For the safety of our children and teachers our doors remain locked throughout the day, however, our program maintains an “open door” policy which simply means that parents are allowed to visit the program, announced or unannounced, to check on their children anytime their children are in attendance.

**Educational Philosophy:** We believe that children are by nature curious and eager learners. We believe that children learn best as they experience the environment through play. Because children “make meaning” through direct experiences in their world, we provide meaningful, relevant hands-on experiences and explorations in an aesthetically pleasing environment. We place emphasis on educating the whole child. We plan experiences to promote cognitive, language, social, emotional, and physical development. The teachers provide expert guidance and support for children as they explore and learn about living successfully in the world with self and others.

**Goals for Your Children:** The most important goals of our preschool curriculum are for children to get along well with others and become enthusiastic learners. We want children to become independent, self-confident, curious learners who can work well with others. We teach them how to learn, not just in preschool, but all through their lives. We do this by creating purposeful and productive play experiences that help children grow in all areas. Our curriculum identifies goals in four areas of development.

Social/Emotional: to help children develop independence, self-confidence, and self-control, follow rules and routines, make friends, and learn what it means to be part of a group.

Physical: to increase children’s large muscle skills-balancing, running, jumping, throwing and catching-and use the small muscles in their hands to do tasks like buttoning, stringing beads, cutting, drawing, and writing.

Cognitive: to acquire thinking skills such as the ability to solve problems, to ask questions, and to think logically-sorting, classifying, comparing, counting, and making patterns-and to use materials and their imagination to show what they have learned.

Language: to use words to communicate with others, listen to and participate in conversations with others, understand the purpose of print, recognize letters and words, and begin reading and writing for a purpose.

Through the activities we plan, the way we organize the classroom, select toys and materials, plan the daily schedule, and talk with children, we seek to accomplish the goals of our curriculum and give your child a successful start in school.

**Staff:** The Teaching Staff are professionally trained and committed to the field of early childhood education. All teachers undergo background checks, all required training, and certification to instruct young children. The teaching staff undergoes a minimum of ten hours of continuing education each year. All staff maintains current CPR and First Aid training.

**Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK):** Beach Kids offers VPK. If you live in Florida and have a child who turns 4 years of age by September 1st, for the school year beginning in August, and you are a Florida resident, your child is eligible to receive funding for 540 hours (about 3 weeks) of prekindergarten instruction that adheres to the learning goals and standards developed by Florida’s Dept. of Education. You must enroll your child at both the center and the Early Learning Coalition of Santa Rosa County.

You will need to submit documentation of your Florida residency and proof of your child’s date of birth to the Early Learning Coalition of Santa Rosa County.

**Programs and Grouping:**  Age, alone, does not always determine classroom or center placement. Typically, children are placed according to his/her age on September 1 to maintain consistency with the public schools in Florida and transitions usually occur at the beginning of school in the fall. The developmental level of the child, availability of space, overall group and the assessment of the professional staff and Owner/Director of the center determine any needed changes in classroom placements. Each decision is made on a case-by-case basis. Changes in centers or classrooms may be made at other times of the year if professional staff and parents feel that the move is in the best interest of the child. Each classroom has a lead teacher who is responsible for the daily operation of the classroom. The teacher plans activities and develop lesson plans and partners with parents keeping them informed about the lessons, their child’s progress, and planned activities.

**TODDLERS:** Toddlers are proficient in walking and have become curious about their surroundings. We will provide a room with interesting objects to explore. This room will have many soft components i.e., foam blocks, bean bag chairs, rugs, and vinyl mats. We have many duplicates of favorite toys as most toddlers are not prepared to share. We begin developing play in a simple housekeeping center so that children can act out the routines like "cooking" and "sweeping" with which they have become familiar in the home. We introduce art activities which include gluing, scribbling, and painting. Beginning manipulatives are used for stacking and matching shapes, etc. Language development is emphasized by using words in addition to sign language to describe our actions and feelings. Our teachers provide active music activities and read books to the children each day.

**TWO’S:** Two-year-old children typically become more assertive and are gaining independence. They need a safe place to assert his/herself. We provide materials such as blocks, trucks, dress-up clothes, housekeeping, areas to explore art materials and manipulatives (puzzles, table blocks, bristle blocks, etc.) We provide enough materials so that children are not continually required to share. We begin to encourage turn taking, making friends by playing together, and other important social skills. Our art creations are child centered, meaning that the process of making something has been the learning activity. We assist with potty training. When you feel your child is ready for toilet training, we ask that you begin teaching at home. We will follow through and encourage your child while they are in our care. Daily communication between the parent and day care provider is very important.

* *The child must be showing signs of readiness and able to control their bladder and bowel movements and communicate that they need to go.*
* *The child must be kept in a diaper or pull ups until they are reliable in communicating that they need to use the toilet and are having very few accidents.*
* *Please keep in mind that the high activity level here at the Center may distract your child from responding to the urge to use the potty more so than at home.*
* *Staff will never put a child on the potty unless the child is willing.*
* *Staff cannot wash out soiled clothing per regulations set by the Center for Disease Control. They are required to put soiled clothing in a plastic bag for you to take home and wash or you may prefer that we throw them away.*
* *Please send them to school with loose fitting clothing that your child can manage independently. Try to avoid tight clothing, pants with snaps or buttons, overalls, jeans and tight leggings. Sweatpants work best.*
* *The child will be encouraged to use the potty every 30 minutes.*
* *Parents are required to supply the diapers or pull ups and extra clothing (including socks) daily.*
* *A pull-up or diaper will be put on the child during naptime.*
* *We encourage every child to be toilet trained before transitioning into the preschool room.*
* *We encourage parents to communicate with your child’s teacher throughout the potty training process.*

**PRESCHOOL:** The three and four-year old children have begun proficiency in his/her language skills, friend-making, pretend play and building or creating things. We spend time moving from large group play, small group play and individual time with the teacher. In group activities, we will practice turn-taking, manners, negotiating and learning to share ideas. Children will participate in activities to learn literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, and technology, all in a developmental framework that offers multiple opportunities for children to explore, discover, and grow. The physical space of the classrooms is organized into interest areas-Blocks, Dramatic Play, Music, Movement, Science/Math, Outdoors, Gardening, Cooking, etc. In each area, the arrangement of furniture and the chosen materials involve children not only in learning but also in caring for the classroom and materials. VPK teachers develop lesson plans according to the VPK standards set by the Dept of Education. We focus on helping children develop a healthy self -concept, learn to make good choices, and work to have a good relationship with others.

**Daily Schedules:** Each classroom posts a daily schedule that they closely follow. Parents drop children off at the entrance and always sign their child in each day!

Beach Kids opens at 7:00AM and breakfast is served until 8:00AM. To avoid interfering with morning snack and other mealtimes no breakfast is served after 8:00AM.

Departures: Parents pick up their children from the front entrance and sign out each day!

The following show the typical daily schedule for the centers.

**SAMPLE**

**Preschool Schedule**

**7:00-8:00 Breakfast**

**8:00-9:45 Clean up, Play and Prepare for main program day. Outdoor Time**

**10:00 Large Group Time**

**10:20 Snack/Choice Time/Small Group Time Math/Science/Daily Focus**

**11:00 Bathroom Break/Wash Hands/Snack**

**11:00 Outside Time**

**12:00 Lunch**

**12:30 -2:30 Nap Time**

**2:30 Bathroom Break/Wash Hands/Snack/Free Play**

**3:30 Outdoor Time**

**4:30 Close**

**SAMPLE**

**Toddler/Two-year old schedule**

**7:00-8:00 Breakfast/ Indoor Choice Time**

**8:00-8:30 \*Diapering and potty check**

**8:30 Indoor Time/ Buggy Rides**

**9:30 Wash Hands/Diaper/Potty Check/Snack**

**10:00 Outdoor Play**

**11:30 Circle Time Stories/Songs/Choice Time/Art Play**

**12:00 Lunch**

**12:30-2:30 Nap Time**

**2:30 Diaper/Potty/Free Play**

**3:00 Outdoor Time**

**4:30 Close**

**Curriculum:** Beach Kids Learning Centeruses the *Creative Curriculum for Preschool* as a blueprint for planning and implementing a developmentally appropriate program. Its effectiveness in helping children acquire social competence and the skills they need to succeed as learners is well documented. This curriculum is research based and is approved by the State of Florida. It provides for an educational/developmental sequence of activities within a safe, nurturing environment.

**ASSESSMENT & SCREENING:** Assessment is naturally integrated into the course of every day as ongoing teacher observation of group patterns and individual development is used to adjust the program to better support group and individual progress. At the beginning of the school year teachers ask parents to fill out an “Ages and Stages” (ASQ) questionnaire screening tool as one measure of assessment. After the children have settled in, teaching teams meet weekly to identify the group’s current interests and needs and then plan accordingly for the next week’s explorations. At times, these reflections indicate the need for altering the classroom environment, shifting the unit focus, trying new teaching strategies, etc. If concerns about individual children’s development arise and are not readily remedied via classroom adaptations, teachers initiate a dialogue with colleagues and parents to plan approaches to try at both home and school.

**BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES and DISCIPLINE POLICY:** Our guidance policy begins with prevention. We carefully arrange the physical aspects of the classrooms such that the spatial arrangement, itself, helps children interact appropriately. For example, large open spaces are avoided to help children save their large muscle activity, such as running, for the playground. Teachers are careful and attentive observers of the children in their classroom such that they are finely attuned to each child’s uniqueness.

At Beach Kids, our rules and expectations are designed to help children learn to manage their behavior for effective interaction and cooperation. All staff members guide and support children by clearly communicating in a positive manner and tone. For example, "Let's keep the sand in the sand table so that we have a lot to pour." Typically, the children are eager to act appropriately and are recognized for doing so. We design activities that are age appropriate in both task and duration to maximize positive interactions. Our teachers also carefully monitor the children's activities to anticipate and diffuse problems before they begin. A child who is losing interest in one activity or getting too loud may be redirected to another area that can spark renewed engagement and positive behavior.

**Behavior Expectations at the Beach Kids Learning Center:** Knowing and meeting expectations encourages independent action and fosters self- esteem. The following are examples of tools and rules that we use in the preschool classrooms.

Use words to communicate.

Turn your voices down inside.

Walk inside the building.

Use materials appropriately.

Put everything in its place.

Be a kind.

Listen the first time.

Follow directions.

Stay in your own space.

**Discipline Practices Include:**

Provide limits in a calm, consistent, and respectful manner, which allows the child to grow in self-control and self-esteem. Respond to a child’s challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a manner that provides for the safety of the child and the others in the classroom. Help children learn to identify both positive and negative emotions, as well as to express them appropriately. Work with children to develop conflict resolution skills necessary to solve their disagreements in an appropriate manner.

Help children express and acknowledge their choices. Help children describe problems, evaluate their actions, verbalize alternatives, and consider the perspective of others. Children are guided and supported as they learn to accept the natural consequences of their actions. This approach includes positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, redirection, reminders of classroom rules, modifying the classroom environment and/or daily schedule, and providing a supervised quiet time for the child to gain control. After a quiet time, the teacher invites the child to rejoin the group and reminds the child of the relevant expectations for the activity in progress.

**Prohibited Practices**:

• Corporal or any type of physical punishment is not permitted. This includes hitting, spanking, beating, shaking, pinching, or other measures that produce physical pain.

• Withdrawal or the threat of withdrawal of food, rest, or bathroom opportunities is not permitted.

• Abusive, profane or derogatory language, including yelling and belittling, is not permitted.

• Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment, is not permitted.

• Any form of emotional abuse, including rejecting, terrorizing, isolating, or corrupting a child is not permitted.

**PERSISTANT AND SERIOUS BEHAVIOR:** Occasionally there will be a child whose behavior is excessively disruptive to the classroom environment or who is harmful to themselves or others. If the child’s behavior is excessively disruptive and/or becomes a threat to his/her own safety, other children’s safety or staff safety, parents will be called to come and pick up their child. If disruptive and aggressive behavior persists the Owner/Director will contact the parents and the child will be withdrawn from the center.

**Biting:** Especially in young children, biting is, unfortunately, common. Though our teachers use best

practices to prevent biting, children occasionally do bite each other. When it happens, the area where the child was bitten is immediately washed with antiseptic soap and water. Both children, the child who was bitten and the child who did the biting are then given care. An accident/incident form is filled out and the parent of the child who was bitten is given a copy. The name of the child who did the biting will be given only to the parent of that child so that they can work with the staff to eliminate the behavior. An accident/incident form is completed and given to the parent of the child who did the biting. The lead teacher and Director will work with the parents/guardians to help them form a plan to reduce any future re-occurrences. If intervention by the teachers in cooperation with the parents/guardians does not bring resolution to the problem the child will be withdrawn from the program.

**Parents’ Concern About Other Children’s Behavior:** If you have a concern about a child other than your own, discuss your concern (s) with the child’s lead teacher or the Owner/Director of the center.

**HOLIDAYS AND BIRTHDAYS:** At the Beach Kids, we plan celebrate with age-appropriate activities. We limit our school celebrations to very brief spans of time. We attempt to maintain our regular school routine.

Birthday celebrations for young children at school can be a special time for the child to share with friends at school. Please consult with teachers if you plan to bring in a special snack to share with the class. Please choose a celebration snack that is commercially prepared and packaged in factory sealed containers. We avoid foods with high sugar content, food additives or highly processed food, and we plan carefully around any food allergies that children in the group may have. Celebration snack alternatives include mini muffins, pancakes, cheese, fruit, ice cream cups and frozen yogurt. Families are welcome to enjoy the treat. If you plan an additional birthday celebration outside of school time, please mail invitations from home unless the entire class is invited.

**FIELD TRIPS:** Occasionally, we schedule walking field trips for our VPK children. Parents are required to sign a permission slip for each trip individually and will be notified at least two weeks prior to the field trip.

**Enrollment:** Enrollment fees are paid at the time of enrollment and the entire monthly tuition amount is paid on the first day the child begins attending regardless of starting day of the month. Monthly tuition is always due on the 1st of each month. Tuition not paid by the 5th will be charged a late fee of $50.00. A check returned with insufficient funds will be charged $50.00. Your child will be withdrawn if payment is not received by the 15th day of the month. The entire monthly tuition is due even when the school is closed on holidays and breaks and even if your child is out due to illness. You will be provided with an annual calendar that shows the days that Beach Kids Learning Center is closed to make sure that our schedule will work for your family. Our school closes each day promptly at 4:30. If your child is not picked up by 4:30 we will contact you and/or your authorized contacts and you will be charged a late fee of $50.00. If you are late more than twice picking up your child, they will be withdrawn from the school.

Prior to the child’s first day of school, parents are required to submit current Florida school entry health and immunizations forms. These are available from your pediatrician or county health department.

Thereafter, parents must submit an updated form after the yearly well-child checkup. You will be notified when required immunizations are due and you will need to bring a copy of the updated immunization form to the preschool office. *Please be aware that some children in our program may not have current immunizations.* All health and safety information files are kept current by updating as needed. Parents or legal guardians have access to their child’s records and may give consent for access to regulatory authorities, on request. The files are kept locked in the office. Parents of children with allergies must assist the school in accommodations. Meals are provided by the center and a menu posted. You may send a lunch from home if you do not want your child to eat what will be provided on that day.

**Waiting List:** Your child will be put on a waiting list in the order that they are enrolled. No payment is due to be on the waiting list. We will contact you if a spot becomes available. We have no way of determining how long that will be.

**Withdrawal Procedures:** If you are planning to withdraw your child, please let us know. No refunds of paid tuition are given upon withdrawal.

**Emergency Closings:** Please listen to the radio or television if you suspect that the school may be closed due to weather or emergency conditions. **We will follow the Santa Rosa County School closing**. **If they are closing then we will close.** In all cases when school is in session, we encourage parents to use their best judgment about whether the roads in your area are safe to bring your child to school. We do not refund tuition for weather or emergency closings.

**Moonlighting and Babysitting:** Caring for children in a planned environment requires the adult to be rested, well- read in child development, and refreshed on a daily basis. Often, teachers are approached by families to provide evening and week-end childcare. **At Beach Kids Learning Center we discourage employees from accepting these additional commitments on a regular basis.**

**Pets:** From time to time our centers may include animals as part of the curriculum. If your child has any allergies to pets, please indicate those on your enrollment form and on the classroom information form and talk with your child’s teacher to make sure we are aware.

**Picture Taking:** Parents may not take pictures (still or video) of children in the centers without first checking with the classroom teacher or the office to find out if the parents have agreed to allow their child to be photographed.

**Sunscreen:** Our outdoor playgrounds are partially shaded for most of the day, and there is always some shade available in the pavilions and play structures. We ask that parents apply sun block (min. spf 30 uva/uvb) before bringing their child to school but we will apply sun block if it is authorized in writing and provided by the family.

**Hand Washing:** Because hand washing is the #1 preventive measure to avoid the spread of disease, we explicitly teach, scaffold, and monitor hand-washing procedures that involve the use of liquid soap and running water, with vigorous and thorough rubbing for at least 10 seconds (the length of the alphabet song), followed by paper towel drying and faucet contact. We and the children wash our hands upon entry, before snacks and meals, before and after food preparation, after toileting and diapering, after contact with bodily fluids, after play in the water table or with infants and toddlers, and after re-entry from the outdoor classroom, as well as after any messy activities or contact with pets. Adults also wash their hands after assisting with toileting, handling garbage or cleaning, and before and after feeding a child or administering medication.

**Diapering:** Beach Kids Learning Center follows state licensing requirements for sanitary disposal of soiled diapers i.e. the soiled diapers are held in a closed container out of the reach of children and the diaper changing area is disinfected after every use. \*Please see Diapering procedures. Unfortunately, we do not accept cloth diapers. **Parents MUST supply disposable diapers only**

**Toilet Training:** Children are toilet trained when they are ready to use the toilet on their own within their physiological and emotional time and needing little assistance from adults. A child is truly toilet trained when your child can tell you what they need to do--not what they have already done. Children MUST be toilet trained to participate in our pre-kindergarten three’s and VPK programs. When children are ready, staff will provide the support and nurturance to help them master this important developmental milestone. Please feel free to talk about your child’s toileting needs with your child’s teacher as individual classrooms and circumstances vary. Soiled underwear or clothing is put in a plastic bag (without rinsing) for laundering at home.

**Illness and Injury:** Young children often experience falls or bumps during a day, especially in the outdoor playgrounds. Usually, they do not result in injury and are handled with simple comfort, a drink of water, or a sympathetic band-aid or ice pack (i.e., not necessary yet comforting). When children sustain a cut, bruise, or other injury, staff members will provide treatment according to procedures specified in our pediatric first aid training. They will verbally report the injury to parents, guardians or caregivers, recommend treatment by a medical professional if appropriate, and complete an injury report within one day. Copies are kept in the child’s file and signed by the parent.

Parents or guardians will be notified immediately in case of a more serious accident and prompt action will be taken by contacting EMS personnel. If necessary, we will accompany the child to the nearest hospital, by ambulance. In these cases, injury reports are supplemented by the EMS reports.

**Sick Children:** Beach Kids Learning Center relies on the adult family members’ thoughtful assessment of each child's health before sending him or her to school. Even if your child begs to come to school, please keep him or her at home if any of the following symptoms are evident. Any of these may indicate the beginning of an illness, which might be easily communicated to other children.

• Your child has a fever, 100 degrees or above

• Your child has 2 loose stools within the day

• Your child has a rash

• Your child is vomiting

• Your child has pink eye (conjunctivitis)

• Your child has lice

• Your child has any discharge from eyes, ears or nose

• Your child has a persistent cough

• Your child has a sore throat

• Your child has any other sign or symptom of illness

Your child may return to the center:

• 24 hours after fever is gone without the use of fever reducers

• 24 hours after first medication is administered for strep throat

• 24 hours after insecticidal shampoo has been applied and all lice, lice eggs and egg cases removed for lice.

• Eye(s) completely clear (no discharge) after pink eye

• No discharge, no fever and all sores scabbed over in chicken pox

• Five days after rash in measles

• No fever and 9 days after swelling began with mumps

Current Covid Protocol: If your child comes down with covid or is exposed to someone with covid please contact the office and let us know. If they come down with covid we are required to let the Dept. of Children and Families know and the Santa Rosa Health Dept. We will also let all families at the facility know that they may have been exposed to covid. *\*This is subject to change as we are still receiving updated information regularly. Know that we are doing everything we can to ensure a very clean environment and enforcing strict handwashing procedures daily. Please be sensitive any time that your child is not feeling well and do not bring them to school. Your cooperation is very important so that we can make sure everyone stays healthy.*

When your child will not be in school, it is helpful to call the office to let your child’s teacher know. In most cases in which medication is required, physicians recommend that the child be on medication for a full 24 hours before returning to school. In addition, please keep your child home until the child is well enough to participate fully in both indoor and outdoor activities because we do not have staff members available to supervise children indoors while the rest of the class is outdoors. If medication needs to be given while the child is at school, please bring the medication in its original labeled container with written directions from the doctor to the office and complete a medication authorization form or decide to administer the medication yourself. Do not send medication in the child’s lunchbox, backpack, or sippy cup.

**Clothing:** Comfortable, sturdy clothes that are easily taken off are the best clothes for participating in school activities. Tennis shoes (sneakers) are required every day. Since children are active learners, “dressy” clothes are likely to get soiled or damaged, so it is best to not wear them to school. We are very messy! Children should always have clothing appropriate for the weather, light clothing in the spring, summer and fall and heavier clothing during the short winter season.

**All children should have an extra set of seasonal clothing including socks and underwear. All clothing should be marked with your child’s name.**

**Napping Accoutrements:** All children must have a small blanket or beach towel. Make sure the blanket has the child’s name marked on it. All should be taken home at the end of each week for laundering. Large bed-sized pillows and blankets cannot be accommodated due the lack of storage as well as health and safety concerns.

**Blessings and Pledge:** As part of our daily routing, we encourage students as they enter preK and VPK to say the pledge. We also encourage children to say a blessing of thanks before each meal/snack as a group.

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)