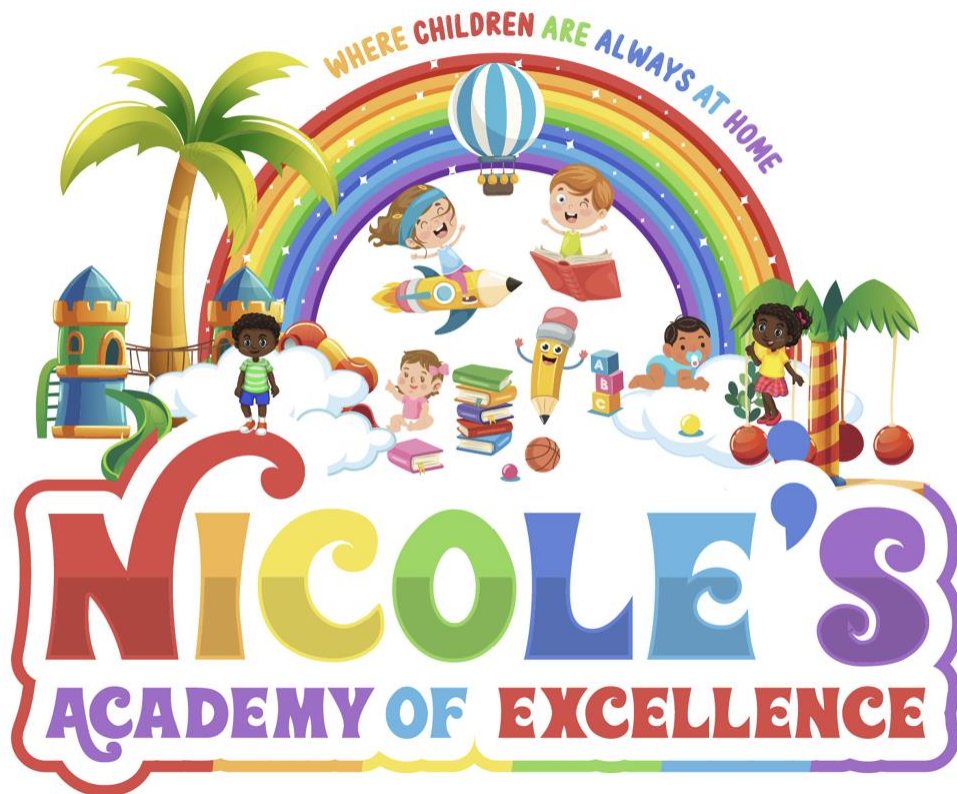


# Parent Handbook



311 Down Pine Drive Seffner, Fl 33584

813-650-6911(Cell)

813-409-2145 (Home)

Nicole@nicolesacademyofexcellence.com

www.nicolesacademyofexcellence.com

Director's/Nicole Shepherd

Owner's/Nicole Shepherd

## **PARENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence parent handbook is used to outline the school's expectations, policies, and procedures that all families must understand and comply with. You have received this handbook as a partner in your child's development at Nicole's Academy of Excellence. After reviewing this document, the consent form on the last page must be completed and handed back to the administration. This consent form states that you understand and adhere to all expectations, policies, and procedures of this learning environment. This handbook will be updated from time to time, and the most up-to-date copy will be made available to you. Thank you for being a part of the Nicole's Academy of Excellence.

## **WHO ARE WE?**

### **OUR VISION**

Our vision is to provide a safe, nurturing, exciting, and quality learning environment for all our students.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

At Nicole's Academy of Excellence, we believe each child has the potential to bring something unique and special into the world. By having a respectful and caring bond with both the student and the family, we can create a strong foundation for a wonderful early childhood experience for our students. Through active exploration of the world around them, play, interaction with others, memorable experiences, and hands-on learning activities, our student's development and growth occur every second of every day. Our mission is to provide a safe, nurturing, exciting, and quality learning environment for all our students. Our love for children is why the school first opened and why we remain open to this day. Committed to the families we serve, we strive to give parents the feeling that their child is in the care of the most loving, knowledgeable, and thoughtful caregivers each day. Children deserve to feel special, loved, adored, and cherished. They deserve to participate in experiences that will change their lives forever and Nicole's Academy of Excellence promises to provide the environment to make this come true!

### **OUR VALUES**

Our values consist of the following but are not limited to:

- ❖ Quality – We believe every child deserves excellence in early learning programs and services to make a difference in their lives and our community.
- ❖ Inclusion – All students are included in our learning environment. We welcome all with open arms and love in our hearts.
- ❖ Respect – Respect is essential in building relationships with our students and families that last a lifetime. Respect is a key component of our work as it helps to optimize the talents and diversity we bring into the school as partners in the child's growth and development.

- ❖ Accountability – We pride ourselves on providing open communication with all our business partners. This allows us to be transparent, open, and honest with one another and, in turn, provides the best environment for our students at home and at school.
- ❖ Teamwork – The combined action of the educators and the families working together provides an effective and efficient working relationship. By acting together as a team, we are working toward the best interests of our common cause, which is for our little ones!

## OUR GOALS

Nicole's Academy of Excellence goals provide us a path to our desired outcomes for our students. These goals provide direction and motivation for the quality of care and education we provide.

1. To provide a wide variety of developmentally appropriate practices that children learn and develop from and enjoy.
2. To provide a flexible, calm, and nurturing environment where affection is given freely and from the heart.
3. Independence is encouraged, and expectations are clear for all students.
4. To meet the physical, emotional, and social needs of our students.
5. To provide an atmosphere of respect for self and one another.
6. To provide opportunities for cooperative play.
7. To create a happy, warm, and exciting environment that is inviting, comfortable, and manageable for the children.
8. To support a caring staff who show genuine respect, love, and encouragement for the children.
9. To offer children individual guidance based on careful observation of each child's needs and keeping with parent/guardian direction.
10. To ensure the safety and welfare of all children.

## **A LOOK INTO OUR PROGRAM**

### **WHAT WE DO AND WHAT WE BELIEVE**

At Nicole's Academy of Excellence, we believe each child has the potential to bring something unique and special into the world. By having a respectful and caring bond with both the student and the family, we can create a strong foundation for a wonderful early childhood experience for our students. Through active exploration of the world around them, play, interaction with others, memorable experiences, and hands-on learning activities, our student's development and growth occur every second of every day. We strive to have the utmost respect and love for all children who walk through our school's doors. We are a family!

## **DESCRIPTION OF AGE GROUPS**

### **INFANTS**

**This age group begins at 3 weeks to 12 months old.**

In the infant classroom, we follow a wonderful daily flow. No matter what your baby's sleeping and eating schedules are, we always come together to make wonderful memories. We enjoy story time together, outside walks, learning circle time, sensory exploration, and creative art. We also enjoy our days learning lots of songs, reading wonderful stories, and interacting with our friends and teachers. We love discovering different textures, sizes, and shapes. We love learning about our weekly themes like shapes, colors, animals, and people. Our little ones are always nurtured, cuddled, loved, and adored, and whenever they need something, we are there!

## **TODDLERS**

**This age group begins at 12 months to 24 months old.**

In the toddler classroom, we explore anything and everything we possibly can. Our little one's love wandering around the classroom and learning using their senses. Our toddlers have a wonderful daily schedule of group time, outdoor play, meals and snacks, naptime, and the most important and fun time of the day, PLAYTIME! We read books about transportation, family, and kindness during our group time, among many other subjects. We talk about our day, how we feel, and what it means to be together in our bright and warm classroom. We enjoy our outdoor playtime and seeing the beautiful nature outside. Our weekly themes include exploring our homes, families, pets, and animals. Singing and playing our days away is what makes our room so special!

## **OLDER TODDLER**

**Ages 2 to 3 years old**

Our older toddlers love to dance, sing, and play. We inspire them to explore the world around them and learn something from everything they see. Socialization is very important to our older toddlers as they begin to share, use manners, and learn to take turns. In this age group, we begin to count numbers and have letter recognition. We enjoy singing our daily songs to teach us about the days of the week, the month, and the year. We love diving into our art projects and seeing what we can create with an abundance of materials. We enjoy watching our teachers do exciting science projects and love to watch the students guess what will happen and see their eyes full of surprise! Going outside and playing on the playground is part of our everyday schedule. We also enjoy walks around the neighborhood and putting a smile on our neighbors' faces!

## **PRESCHOOL AND PRE-K**

**This age group starts at 3 years old and prepares the students for kindergarten.**

In this age group, we focus on our social-emotional growth and explore who we are as beautiful, unique individuals. We learn how to work together and how to conquer objectives by ourselves. We enjoy writing our names, learning to read, and exploring phonics. We enjoy extreme science projects that make us say, “WOW!” We dive into our sensory bin, which helps enhance the learning theme we are studying that week. We often have guest speakers and love exploring the community to supplement our learning. We get outside often to move our bodies and strengthen our fine and gross motor muscles. This age group helps to prepare our students for the next grade, which is kindergarten. Our little ones are well on their way to a successful journey into the older ages!

## **OUR CURRICULUM**

### **DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CURRICULUM**

At Nicole’s Academy of Excellence, we provide our students with a developmentally appropriate curriculum based on Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough standards. NAEYC, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, defines a developmentally appropriate curriculum as follows: “NAEYC defines “developmentally appropriate practice” as methods that promote each child's optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning.” We believe this to be the heart of our curriculum. Our weekly lesson plans are developed through our students' interests and what grabs their attention. We love to study themes that get them excited, interested and progress their natural cognitive development. We try our best to meet every child’s individual cognitive and development level and encourage and inspire them to continue to advance this growth.

## LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Our developmentally appropriate experiences and activities, such as book reading, singing, art activities, games, and journaling, represent meaningful learning opportunities that incorporate early literacy concepts and handwriting in various forms. Language development skills are developed through exposure to letter-sound connections, combining those sounds into meaningful words, and putting words together into sentences to communicate our thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Our language activities foster your child's handwriting abilities, phonological awareness, vocabulary, alphabet letters knowledge, and narrative skills.

## COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT: SCIENCE, MATH, AND SOCIAL STUDIES

Cognitive development is how children explore, think, create answers, and figure things out. It is the development of knowledge, skills, and problem solving that help children think about and understand the world around them.

### Math

Early math skills involve children learning the basic concepts of numbers, counting, simple addition, and subtraction. We begin with learning how to count one by one using manipulative materials. We also learn how to recognize single and double-digit numbers, and once this skill is mastered, we learn how to add and subtract numbers. Visual representation is key as children build relationships between written numbers and represented items. Children also learn to construct simple patterns and sort objects by color, shape, and size.

### Science

Science helps children develop an understanding of scientific concepts and develop inquiry skills. Scientific development in young children consists of children using their senses to observe, compare, measure, make predictions, classify, and construct hypotheses. Students are born natural scientists. Students are eager and curious to explore the world around them. At Nicole's Academy of Excellence, our job is to nurture their scientific spirit and provide students with the opportunity to enhance their scientific exploration experiences in and out of the classroom!



## **Social Studies**

Social studies learning begins as children make friends and participate in decision-making in the classroom. Then it moves beyond the school into the neighborhood and around the world. Here at Nicole's Academy of Excellence, we explore different cultures, places, foods, music, and backgrounds of people around the world. We take monthly virtual trips to other countries, where we interact with people who share insight into their traditional customs and culture. We love exploring the world and opening our eyes to the many different beautiful people and places on this planet!

## **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL**

Children's emotional well-being during their early years has a powerful impact on their social relationships. Emotionally healthy children can better establish and maintain positive relationships with adults and their friends. In our classrooms, children are learning to talk about their feelings and the feelings of others. We feel social-emotional development involves more than just expressing emotions. Social-emotional development involves the act of taking turns, learning to become independent, following routines, interactions with both verbal and nonverbal peers, controlling and managing emotions, and developing a positive and loving self-image. These skills are crucial for children's successful participation in all aspects of life, school, and home experiences, and their overall positive self-growth.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT: FINE AND GROSS MOTOR**

### **Fine Motor:**

Fine motor skills involve the movement of the smaller muscle groups in your child's hands, fingers, and wrists. While hand-eye coordination comes far more naturally to some, this is not true of all. Children must learn how to control their muscle movement in their hands to obtain hand-eye coordination and more. There are specific ways we do this in the classroom such as having your child use scissors, color, play with Legos, draw pictures, and more. These skills can later become more advanced as your child decides to knit, play the guitar, or type on the computer!

### Gross Motor:

Gross motor skills involve movements of the large muscles of the arms, legs, and torso. Kids rely on gross motor skills for everyday activities at school, home, and in the community. It's these larger muscle groups that allow babies to sit up, turn over, crawl, and walk. By playing actively indoors and outdoors, each child develops muscle strength, endurance, agility, coordination, balance, and flexibility and builds confidence and social skills.

## **SENSORY EXPLORATION**

Sensory exploration is a child's way of examining, discovering, categorizing, and making sense of the world, and it is beneficial to provide them with opportunities for sensory play. Here at Nicole's Academy of Excellence, the student participates in activities that allow them to explore different types of materials and enhance their senses, such as music and dance games, sensory bin exploration, and playing with a variety of materials that smell, feel, and taste very different!

## **ART, MUSIC, DANCE, AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION**

At Nicole's Academy of Excellence, we encourage and provide opportunities for our students to explore creative expressions such as art, music, dancing, and drama. The creative arts engage children's minds, bodies, and senses and allow them to explore their imagination, sense of movement and rhythm, and their ability to express themselves through art. Teachers plan activities to introduce children to different kinds of art media, music, culture, and dance to encourage the student's development of creativity and imagination. Many opportunities are presented for exploration by playing with water, dirt, kinetic sand, many seasonal nature items, and various food items in the sensory table. The arts allow students to dive into different means of expressing themselves and have fun while doing so!

## **ADMISSIONS**

### **ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS**

To enroll your child at Nicole's Academy of Excellence, your child must be between the ages of 3 weeks and 12.

### **REGISTRATION DOCUMENTS**

The following forms must be completed to reserve your child's spot at Nicole's Academy of Excellence

- Enrollment Application and All Forms
- Registration Fee
- First Week of Tuition
- Parent Contact Information Form
- Proof of Immunizations

### **ENROLLMENT FEES**

- \$50 registration fee (**FIRST DAY OF CHILD CARE AND EVERY JUNE1**)
- tuition deposit

### **SPECIAL DISCOUNTS**

I do not offer discounts.

### **SIBLING ENROLLMENT PROGRAM**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence requires advance notice of three months for the placement of a sibling into our program. Siblings are given priority into the school but are not guaranteed a spot.

### **WAITLIST INFORMATION**

To join Nicole's Academy of Excellence waitlist, parents/guardians must be put on a list.

### **CLASSROOM PLAYDATE AND SCHOOL VISITATION**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence allows a thirty-minute scheduled playdate onsite, one month prior to the child's start date. This must be confirmed and scheduled with the administration. It is the parent's responsibility to schedule the playdate so that the administrator can confirm the proper day and time.

### **ANNUAL ENROLLMENT FEE**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence requires a \$50.00 re-enrollment fee due the first day of enrollment and on the first of June. This confirms your child's spot for the upcoming school year, which starts the first week of September.

### **ITEMS TO BRING ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**

Your child must have the following on their first day of school

- Closed-toed indoor shoes for all kids one and over
- Extra set of clothes brought in a Ziplock bag
- Diaper and wipes if required
- Pacifier if needed (FOR INFANTS ONLY)
- Infants must bring Formula
- Toddlers if on special milk

### **UPDATING FORMS FOR YOUR CHILD'S FILE**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence requires all parents/guardians of enrolled students to keep their child's forms up to date with their current medical and emergency forms. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure all school forms are current and updated. The administration has the right not to allow the student into the school if any forms are missing from their file after two notices from the administration.

## **PAYMENT POLICIES**

### **PROGRAM CHANGE OF DAYS ENROLLED**

If you wish to change the days or time for your child in the program, you must do so with approval from Mrs. Nicole's Shepherd. Adding days to your current program and or switching the day of the week or time that changes when your child is enrolled depends on our current space availability.

### **ADDED DAILY RATE**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence allows for an occasional request for your child to add a day. This is contingent on space availability and a two-week prior approval notice from Mrs. Nicole's Shepherd. Our daily rate is \$50 for eight hours.

### **WEEKLY TUITION FEE/LATE PAYMENT FEE**

Payment is due at 5pm for everyone. If not paid at 5pm please add your late fee of \$25.00 for not paying on time. Then an additional \$10 per day. If not paid in full Wednesday when dropped off they cannot come.

### **FIELD TRIP FEE**

Field trips will have to be paid for a week in advance. This information will be in our newsletter and posted on the parent board.

### **RETURNED PAYMENTS**

All returned checks will pay a fee of \$75 plus tuition. This must be paid before your child can return to school. After the second returned checks only cash, money order or cash app.

### **EVALUATION OF TUITION RATES**

All families will be notified of any changes in tuition rates two months prior to when they become effective. By notifying our families well ahead of time, we help prepare them for the changes in pricing, and this allocated time to contact administration with any questions.

### **ABSENCE FEE**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence absent policy.

Nicole's Academy of Excellence does not offer tuition refunds or make-up days.

### **VACATIONS**

Full tuition is still due if you go on vacation.

### **LATE PICK-UP CHARGE**

A \$2 per minute per child. This must be paid when you drop the child off that morning.

### **HOLIDAYS**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence is closed for ALL FEDERAL HOLIDAYS.

Payment is still due for all holidays.

### **WEATHER POLICY**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence may close due to harsh weather conditions. No discounts are given. The owner/director of the school will monitor local news to address when the school must close early or cancel operations for that day, and the parents will be notified through texts or a direct phone call. If Hillsborough County School is closed Nicole's Academy of Excellence is closed.

## **WITHDRAWAL AND DISCHARGE POLICY**

### **WITHDRAWING FROM THE CENTER**

If you wish to withdraw your child from Nicole's Academy of Excellence, a 10-day written notice is required.

## **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE**

### **ARRIVAL PROCEDURE**

Upon arriving at the school, parents must pull up in the designated pick-up and drop-off spot in the front of the building. Parents must walk their child to the front door. Parents must sign the child in and wash the child's hands. Drop-off time is between 5 a.m. and 9 a.m.

### **DEPARTURE PROCEDURE**

If you plan to pick up your child earlier, please notify the administration prior through texts (if at nap time). Upon picking up your child, you are responsible for grabbing their belongings. This includes personal items.

### **PICK UP AUTHORIZATION**

For the child's safety, the only people authorized to pick up a child are those designated by the parent/guardian on the child's approved pick-up list. If a child is to be released to anyone other than the person(s) listed, a written note authorizing pick-up must be received prior to pick-up time.

#### **Pick-Up Authorization Process:**

- Parents/guardians must inform Nicole's Academy of Excellence (call, leave a note at drop-off) of the name of the person who is picking up their child on any day when they themselves are not.
- The "Authorized Pick-Up Person " must **be at least 18 years old** and will be asked to provide photo ID to the staff.
- This authorization shall remain in force until edited or rescinded in writing by the signer of this authorization.

## **GENERAL EMPLOYEE INFORMATION**

### **STAFFING AT NICOLE'S ACADEMY OF EXCELLENCE**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence always provides enough staff for the capacity of each classroom. This means that student to teacher ratios are always followed. A detailed staffing plan is maintained and kept in the office.

### **WHAT MAKES OUR STAFF SPECIAL?**

Our staff can demonstrate the skill and competence necessary to contribute to each child's physical, intellectual, personal, emotional, and social development. Factors contributing to the attainment of this standard include:

- Emotional maturity when working with children
- Cooperation with the purposes and services of the program
- Respect for children and adults
- Flexibility, understanding, and patience
- Physical and mental health that do not interfere with childcare responsibilities
- Good personal hygiene
- Frequent interaction with children
- Listening skills, availability, and responsiveness to children
- Sensitivity to children's socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, religious backgrounds, and individual needs and capabilities
- Use of positive discipline and guidance techniques; and
- The ability to provide an environment where children can feel comfortable, relaxed, happy, and are involved in play, recreation, and other activities.



## GENERAL EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATIONS

Nicole's Academy of Excellence has the following employees on staff to ensure proper supervision and learning environment.

- ❖ **Owner:** The owner oversees and oversees all program elements. The owner handles all business concerning the city and state. The owner manages the business finances and the business.
- ❖ **Director:** The childcare director shall be responsible for the planning and supervision of the program and activities of the children, orientation to newly employed staff, on-site supervision of all staff, and in-service training.
- ❖ **Lead Teacher:** A lead teacher is responsible for the academic, social-emotional growth, and development of children in their care. The focus for our lead teachers is to work with parents, administrators, and other teachers to improve students' experience and meet teaching goals. Additionally, lead teachers plan, evaluate, and improve the physical environment of the classroom to create opportunities that meet the changing needs of their students.
- ❖ **Assistant Teacher:** The assistant teacher will support the lead teacher in general supervision of the class and the overall classroom management. The assistant teachers' duties are the following but not limited to assisting in planning and implementing activities to meet the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social needs of students, assisting in teaching social-emotional management and independence, assisting in the creation and planning of activities, class project, field trips, and other program activities, staying on task and following the daily schedule, and helping to communicate with parents.
- ❖ **Floater and Substitutes:** The floater/substitute position supports all teachers in the classroom. This person is required to have all the same qualifications as an assistant teacher and have the correct paperwork on file.

## **YUMMY, IT IS TIME TO EAT!**

### **PREPARATION OF FOOD**

Food Service is supervised by (Mrs. Nicole Shepherd).

### **MEALTIMES**

Meals are served at 6:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 2:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.

### **MENUS**

All food menus are posted in the kitchen, walkway entry and the office.

### **WATER AND MEALTIME FLUIDS**

Drinking water is always freely available to all children at Nicole's Academy of Excellence. The water is supplied from (water fountain).

Nicole's Academy of Excellence will provide milk to the students for breakfast and lunch. Water will be served with a snack.

### **CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL DIETS**

If a student has an allergy or dietary restrictions, please inform the school immediately.

Parents/guardians must notify the administration in writing, and this is kept in the child's file.

This information is also posted in Nicole's Academy of Excellence's classroom for all to be aware of.

Depending on the method used in allergy emergency situations, parents may be asked to complete a Food Allergy Information form.

### **FOOD FROM HOME**

If Nicole's Academy of Excellence cannot provide the food needed for a special diet, meals or portions may be provided by the parent. The parent and the administration must agree upon this. Perishable food will be refrigerated upon arrival. Special foods provided by parents must be clearly labeled with the child's name, date, and identity of the food and will not be shared with

other children. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure the student has food at the school every day.

### **SCHOOL CELEBRATIONS**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence loves to celebrate your little one during the school day! Parents/guardians must notify the administration or the classroom lead teacher one week prior to the celebration to discuss the classroom and school's food restrictions and policies for bringing in outside treats and snacks.

### **GENERAL SCHOOL POLICIES**

#### **STATE REGULATIONS AND LICENSING**

All Nicole's Academy of Excellence employees must be knowledgeable in the state's child care licensing rules and regulations. A copy of the state and local guidelines is always kept in the school, and each employee receives a copy upon hire.

#### **SMOKING POLICY**

Marijuana, cigarettes, and other smokeless tobacco products are not allowed at Nicole's Academy of Excellence. Parents/guardians who smoke are strongly encouraged not to do so before picking up their child from school, as smoke stays on clothing and hair for some time. All parents and guardians must wash their hands after smoking before arriving at school.

#### **ALCOHOL POLICY**

If at any time we feel that a parent, guardian, or anyone authorized to pick up or drop off the child is under the influence of alcohol and or any other toxic substance, the school may refuse the release of the child, and the school will contact another authorized person to come and collect the child, explaining the circumstances. In some cases, an incident of this nature could lead to a referral to our governing bodies and a call to social services.

## **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment and prohibits discrimination and harassment of any type without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, disability status, genetics, protected veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local laws.

This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruiting, hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leaves of absence, compensation, and training.

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

At Nicole's Academy of Excellence, we value all employees and job candidates as unique individuals, and we welcome the variety of experiences they bring to our company. As such, we have a strict non-discrimination policy. We believe everyone should be treated equally regardless of race, sex, gender identification, sexual orientation, national origin, native language, religion, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, genetic information, pregnancy, or other characteristics protected by law. If you feel that you have been discriminated against, please let the administration know immediately. Every complaint will be appropriately investigated.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Sexual harassment constitutes discrimination and is illegal under federal, state, and local laws. For the purposes of this policy, "sexual harassment" is defined, as in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines, as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when, for example: a) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, b) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or c) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 recognizes two types of sexual harassment: a) quid pro quo and b) hostile work environment. Sexual harassment may include a range of subtle and not-so-subtle behaviors and may involve individuals of the same or different gender. Depending on the circumstances, these behaviors may include unwanted sexual advances or requests for sexual favors; sexual jokes and innuendo; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; commentary about an individual's body, sexual prowess or sexual deficiencies; leering, whistling, or touching; insulting or obscene comments or gestures; display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; and other physical, verbal or visual conduct of a sexual nature.

Nicole's Academy of Excellence encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation regardless of the offender's identity or position. Individuals who believe that they have been the victim of such conduct should discuss their concerns with their immediate supervisor, any member of the personnel practices committee, human resources, or any ombudsman. See the complaint procedure described below.

### **CHILD NEGLECT AND ABUSE**

All of Nicole's Academy of Excellence employees will be screened by the appropriate law enforcement agency. Adults will never be alone with children on premises unless others can observe them.

At the first reasonable cause to believe that child abuse exists, the reporting adult will immediately inform the director, who will determine the action to take. The reporting adult will make an immediate phone call to the local law enforcement agency. As a backup to the phone report, a written report will be completed and filed with the director or owner.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media includes online electronic tools to help students, parents, teachers, and staff communicate effectively. Specific examples of popular social media tools include Facebook and other communication apps.

Upon enrolling a child into the center, all parents and guardians must complete the social media consent form. This form is used as approval for allowing a parent's or guardian's child to be seen on our social media platforms.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Childcare programs maintain **confidentiality** on a "need to know" basis. This information is shared only when it is necessary. This is important, especially when there are specific health and safety concerns. State and Local Laws prohibit the sharing of information about children or employees without written approval from the parent, guardian, or individual.

## **HAZARDOUS ITEMS**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence has clear guidelines on identifying, using, and storing dangerous products, plants, and objects. This policy aims to protect the employee, children, families, and visitors from the risks associated with chemical products, medicines, other dangerous substances, and dangerous equipment used in the school's outdoor and indoor environments.

## **BITING**

Biting is a behavior that is often unexpected and can harm and frighten others. Biting is a natural developmental stage that many children go through. Most times, it is a temporary behavior and one that is seen between the ages of 11 and 24 months. Toddlers bite others for many different reasons. A child might be teething, feel tired, angry, frustrated, or even bite when they are overly happy and excited. Biting may also be a way for a child to get attention from other adults or friends. Toddlers do not have strong verbal skills, are impulsive, and lack strong self-control, and it is important to remember that they are developing these abilities at their own pace. Biting can also occur for no apparent reason, happen quickly, and be shocking to observe. Our primary concern at Nicole's Academy of Excellence is the safety and health of the children and our staff. We take all biting situations seriously and use our knowledge as educators to handle these tough situations in positive, constructive, and meaningful ways to stop them from occurring.

When it comes to a biting incident, our goal is to help identify what is causing the biting and resolve it immediately. The school will encourage the children to "use their words" if they become angry or frustrated. **The staff members will always maintain close and constant supervision of the children.**

If a biting incident occurs, state regulations require that the parent of the child biting and the parent of the child who was bitten be contacted. Names of the children are not shared with either parent. **For every biting incident, two actions will occur**

- 1. Parents will be contacted with a phone call.**
- 2. An accident report will be completed and signed by the parent/guardian at pick up for the child who bit and the child who was bitten.**

If the biting becomes excessive and the school's techniques have been exhausted, Nicole's Academy of Excellence has the right to discharge the student. Please note, many measures will be taken prior to helping the student prior to getting to this point. These measures are outlined as follows:

**Procedure Employees will follow if Biting Occurs:**

We do not use techniques to alarm, hurt, or frighten children. The staff's job is to keep the children safe and help a child that bites learn different, more appropriate behavior.

**For the child that was bitten:**

1. First aid is given to the bite. It is cleaned with soap and water. If the skin is broken, the bite is covered with a bandage.
2. Parents are notified with a phone call. If a parent cannot be reached, an email will be sent, and an additional phone call will occur until the parents are reached directly.
3. An accident report form is filled out documenting the incident for both children involved.
4. Parents/guardians will sign the form at pick-up
5. This form is stored in the child's file. Parents/Guardians can receive a copy of the form if asked.

**For the child that bit:**

1. The teacher will firmly tell the child, “NO! DO NOT BITE!”
2. The child will be brought to an area of the classroom where they can talk with the teacher.
3. Parents are notified with a phone call. If a parent cannot be reached, an email will be sent, and an additional phone call will occur until the parents are reached directly.
4. An accident report form is filled out documenting the incident for both children involved.
5. Parents/guardians will sign the form at pick-up
6. This form is stored in the child’s file. Parents/Guardians can receive a copy of the form if asked.

**Procedure if Biting Continues:**

1. The child will be shadowed to help prevent any biting incidents. This includes the teacher remaining close to the child and holding the child’s hand in moments where there is free play, outside time, high energy activities, or times where the child has bitten in the past.
2. The classroom staff will observe the child to determine what is causing the child to bite (teething, communication, frustration, etc.)
3. The director and administrative staff will also observe the child if the classroom staff cannot determine the cause.
4. The child will be given positive attention and approval for positive behavior.
5. The teachers will also support the learning of appropriate behaviors with books, short acceptable educational video clips, puppet shows, and modeling interactive games and activities.

**Procedure if biting becomes excessive:**

1. If a child inflicts three bites in one week, a conference will be held with the parents to discuss the child’s behavior and how the behavior may be modified.
2. The administration, teachers, and parents will create an action plan, which will be followed immediately in the classroom. This action plan can consist of shadowing and mirror techniques, half-day exposure to school, or an agreed-upon disciplinary approach.



3. At the end of the one-week action plan, if the child has two incidents of biting, suspension or discharge from the program will be decided by the administrator if they feel the behavior is disrupting the classroom, cannot be controlled, and harming others.
4. Recommendations for therapy, alternative schooling, and other ideas will be provided to the parents.

Please note, Nicole's Academy of Excellence will do its best to integrate and teach appropriate behavior choices for children who bite or harm others, but in some situations, the environment may not be the best for this child, and the teachers may have exhausted all resources.

## **POTTY TRAINING**

- The child can say they need to go potty or are wetting their diaper.
- The child tells you that they need to go to the bathroom.

### **Physical/Psychological Signs:**

- The child stays dry for longer periods
- The child can hold urine or bowel movements.
- The child has a somewhat consistent bowel movement schedule. This means their bowel movements are at somewhat regular times.
- The child can pull down and pull up pants and underwear.
- The child asks and wants to wear underwear.
- The child initiates using the toilet by walking to it.
- The child can learn and initiate the following actions of going to the bathroom, pee, wipe, flush, and wash hands.

## **General Notes on Potty Training**

**The following notes are important to remember while potty training your child:**

1. Make potty training a POSITIVE EXPERIENCE for everyone!
2. Never make the child feel bad for having an accident. Remember, it is a process!
3. Positive reinforcements are beyond helpful in training.
4. Make sure to pay attention to the child's signs of readiness and be ready yourself!
5. Remember that all children potty train at their own speed.

## **The Potty-Training Process at Home and School**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence requires the potty-training process to begin at home. The process should begin when the parents and child can be dedicated, and there are not many changes in the child's life.

### **The Process at Home:**

1. Notify the teacher of a scheduled weekend you plan to start the process. Ensure that the teacher is aware and can start working with your child at school around the same time.
2. We recommend your child stay in underwear for two to three consecutive days. This is because underwear feels different than a diaper on a child. They start to realize that the underwear cannot hold their urine/poo, and they feel uncomfortable. Underwear helps produce the sensory signs of going to the bathroom on the toilet to maintain dry and clean underwear!
3. It is important that parents stay close to home and keep the child close to the bathroom while playing or participating in activities to ensure ease of use.
4. We recommend your child wear comfortable, easy-to-remove clothing during this process.
5. Take your child to the bathroom every two hours, and reward them with cheering or other positive reinforcement techniques even if they are just sitting on the toilet.
6. Read books throughout the process and watch clips to support this new and exciting milestone.
7. Staying consistent with the procedure at home is the most important step in this process.

### **The Process at School:**

A successful weekend at home is defined by the child having three or fewer accidents and remaining excited about the process. If your child goes more times during the weekend on the toilet than in their underwear, this is a sign of success!

1. Notify the teacher that it was a successful weekend through a note in the app or face-to-face conversation.
2. Bring extra clothes and underwear in case of accidents.
3. Walk the child to the bathroom and show them how it looks, just like the one at school. Stay a minute at the school to have the child sit down and become comfortable with a toilet outside their home.
4. Talk with the child about how excited you are for them to use the potty at school.
5. The teachers will bring the student to the bathroom every 1.5 to two hours.
6. Notes on the potty-training process at school will be provided to the parent.

### **The following Guidelines must be followed when children are potty training at school/wearing underwear:**

- No Overalls, pants with a belt, pants that snap. or any clothing that is hard to get out of quickly.
- If possible, bring an extra pair of shoes as they can get wet too.
- ALWAYS have extra clothes and underwear onsite at the school.
- Inform the teacher if your child prefers to sit or stand when using the toilet.
- Keep a small supply of pull-ups for nap time at the school.
- Your responsibility is to take home any soiled clothes to be cleaned and sanitized.
- ***ALL KIDS MUST BE POTTY TRAIN BY THE AGE OF THREE***

## **SCREENS AND MEDIA**

The use of visual media, such as television, films, and videotapes, shall be limited to developmentally appropriate programming. Media may be used as a special event or to achieve a specific goal but not as a regular daily routine. TV, video, internet, or DVD viewing shall not be allowed during meal or snack time.

The director must approve all videos, and all screen time must be related to educational programming developed by the center.

## **ATTIRE FOR CHILDREN**

Your child must wear clothing that is easy to manage and safe for the activities they will be participating in while at school. Dressing your child in simple, comfortable clothing that is washable. Please remember in choosing their clothing that children paint, glue, and participate in large movements daily. Children must also be dressed appropriately for the weather. Children must wear comfortable, closed-toed shoes. No flip-flops are allowed for safety reasons.

Don't forget to include a change of clothing to be left in your child's backpack in case of emergency. All clothing items must be labeled with the child's name. The school is not responsible for any lost or damaged clothing items.

## **SPECIAL EVENTS**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence hosts special events throughout the school year as an opportunity for our families to get together with our staff and have a wonderful time. You will be notified by email three weeks before the event. Please note alcohol and smoking are prohibited. Your participation in these events brings a feeling of connectedness and collaboration to our school!

## **ASSESSMENTS, OBSERVATIONS, EVALUATIONS**

### **ASSESSMENTS AT NICOLE'S ACADEMY of EXCELLENCE**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence reserves the right to conduct developmental assessments of children's growth and progress to determine appropriate placements and programming.

### **PROFESSIONAL EVALUATIONS**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence may ask parents to share professional evaluations when necessary to determine how best to meet their child's needs. This information helps us provide the best care possible for your child's unique growth and development.

### **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Parent-Teacher conferences occur multiple times throughout the year. These meetings provide parents with insight into their child's growth and development while enrolled at the school and what parents can do at home to support what is occurring at school. Parent-Teacher conferences also allow the teacher and the parents to form a more personal relationship to ensure the school is meeting the family's standards and so that the teacher can understand the family setting the child has outside of the school's doors.

Parents will be aware of their scheduled Parent-Teacher Conference time one month before the scheduled meeting.

## **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

### **EMERGENCY CONSENT FORMS**

Emergency consent forms are completed by the parents or guardians upon enrolling their child(ren) at the center.

## **EMERGENCY HANDBOOK ONSITE**

Nicole's Academy of Excellence has an emergency procedure handbook to define policies and protocols in emergencies. This handbook is reviewed often, and all staff upon hire will be trained.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

### **IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION**

Should a child or a staff member receive an injury while at school, an accident report is completed. The report includes information regarding the time and date of the injury, what happened, how it was treated, and the signature of the witnessing teacher. This report is provided to parents before the child leaves the center and recorded in the center's medical logbook.

### **FIRE**

Fire drills will be practiced at random times of the day. The drills will occur at least once a month. Evacuations maps are posted throughout the school and are easy to access and always visible. All employees and students will be prepared for the drills and review what happens during a drill often so that all are prepared! All must remain calm and keep their heads during any emergency drill!

- The director or owner will inform the staff in advance that a drill will occur later in the week.
- The staff will talk to their students about the alarm, rules, and procedures while evacuating the building.
- The director or owner will sound the alarm, and the school will act and do the evacuation procedure.
- Children will proceed immediately to their designated outside school meeting spot.
- If possible, one staff member should try to grab the attendance sheets emergency contact list and have cell phones with them.

- The staff will take the students' attendance and check off their attendance sheets or communication app.
- If safe, the director or owner will quickly check hiding spaces in the school for any lost children. They will also check for any sources of smoke or fire during an actual fire emergency.
- The director or owner will then meet the rest of the students and employees at the designated area.
- The director or owner will review attendance by checking the sign-in and out sheets or other student attendance documentation (the school's communication app).
- The director or owner will time the drill to see how long it took to evacuate the building.
- The director or owner will confirm when it is safe to return to the building with local law officials.
- The director or owner will complete the first drill log with the following information: date and time of the drill, number of students, number of teachers, and the length of time it took for the students and teachers to evacuate the building.
- Parents will be notified a fire drill occurred on this day.

## **TORNADO**

Tornado drills will occur twice a year, at most times during the spring and summer as tornados occur during the warmer months. Evacuations maps are posted throughout the school and are easy to access and always see. All of Nicole's Academy of Excellence employees and students will be prepared for the drills and review what happens during a drill often so that all are prepared! It is important that all remain calm and keep their heads during any emergency drill!

- The director or owner will inform the staff in advance that a drill will occur later in the week.
- The staff will talk to their students about the alarm, rules, and procedures during a shelter in place.
- The director or owner will sound the alarm, and the school will act and do the shelter in place/lockdown procedure.
- Children will proceed immediately to the designated lockdown site/shelter in place designated spot.

- If possible, one staff member should try to grab the attendance sheets emergency contact list and have cell phones with them.
- Students will take the safety position by kneeling on their knees and elbows with their foreheads on the floor and covering their heads with their hands.
- The staff will take attendance of the students and check off their attendance sheets or communication app while also comforting students to take the proper safety position.
- If safe, the director or owner will quickly check hiding spaces in the school for any lost children.
- The director or owner will meet at the shelter in place designated spot to review attendance by checking the sign-in and out sheets or other documentation for student's attendance (the school's communication app).
- The director or owner will time the drill to see how long it took for the students to take shelter.
- The director or owner will confirm when it is safe to leave the shelter in place designated spot. The director or owner will assist with children who need support to enter back into the program main area.
- The director or owner will complete the first drill log with the following information: date and time of the drill, number of students, number of teachers, and the length of time it took for the students and teachers to evacuate the building.
- Parents will be notified that a drill occurred on this day.

## MISSING CHILD

If a child is not accounted for at any time, the staff member responsible for the child should:

- Search the premises for the missing child. Each area that a child could potentially hide should be searched and the outdoor areas of the facility.
- The staff member should also double-check to confirm the child's location by checking the sign-in and sign-out log.
- If the child is not located after all potential hiding spots and immediate outdoor areas have been searched, the facility director should be notified that the child is missing.



- Begin Lock Down procedure. Employees must monitor all exits, letting no one in or out of the facility.
- The staff member responsible for the child will call 911 since they will have the best knowledge of what the child was wearing that day, along with other distinctive features.
- The facility director will notify the child's guardians that the child is missing from the facility.
- While the police are in route to the facility, the staff will continue to search the facility for the missing child. The staff should look in every cabinet, closet, cubby, and every other location where a child may hide.
- The facility director will always stay on the facility premises to be the contact person for the police department, as well as the missing child's guardians.
- The police should be asked to activate Amber Alert by the facility director.

### **POISON PROCEDURE**

- The Poison Control Center phone number will be posted on the list of emergency numbers by telephone.
- Poison emergencies or requests for poison information will be made by contacting the Poison Control Center Hotline at 1-800-252-2022 first—unless the person who has been poisoned is unconscious, not breathing, having trouble breathing, or is having convulsions. If any of these conditions are present, we will call 9-1-1 first.
- Chemicals, medications, pesticides, paints, cleaning agents, and other potentially harmful substances will be stored in locked areas inaccessible to children.
- Toxic substances will be stored away from food and food preparation areas.
- All chemical products and medications shall be stored in their original containers with original labels intact.
- Poisonous plants are not permitted in the center
- Staff must identify plants and determine “safe” prior to bringing them to the facility. If the plant is not on the poisonous plant list, please contact the poison control center (1-800-252-2022 or 1-800-942-5969) for guidance.
- Food-handling staff will be trained in and follow Integrated Pest Management practices for the prevention of pests.

- Only a licensed exterminator will apply pesticides if additional pest control is necessary.
- Pesticides must be EPA-approved with natural pesticides that are non-toxic to humans.
- Pesticides and other potentially toxic chemicals will not be applied while children are present. The application shall be in a manner that prevents skin contact and other exposure and minimizes odors. A staff member will observe the application of the chemicals and verify that they are applied according to instructions on the label.
- The Program Director will notify parents and staff before using pesticides.
- Following the use of pesticides or other potentially toxic chemicals, the treated area shall be ventilated for the period recommended on the product label or by a nationally certified poison control center before being reoccupied.
- All staff purses and personal belongings will be securely stored to prevent access by children. Purses and other personal belongings may contain items unsafe for children, including medications, lighters, pocketknives, etc.

## ILLNESS POLICIES

The following criteria will be considered in determining if your child must go home:

- a fever of 100 degrees or more
- inflammation of the eyes (excessive redness, glassy or discharge)
- vomiting
- more than one incidence of diarrhea or loose stool that is not contained within the clothing
- communicable disease as defined by the Department of Health Services/Center for Disease Control
- unknown rash
- excessive nasal discharge
- pain

If your child is sent home due to illness, he cannot return to preschool until he has been free from symptoms for 48 hours without using a fever reducer. This allows your child time to recover and stop the spread of illness to the other children and staff.

After your child has been ill, it is important to adhere to the following guidelines when determining if your child is ready to return to school.

- Mood, appetite, behavior, and activity are again normal
- No fever for 48 hours without a fever reducer
- Antibiotics (have been used for a full 24 hours)
- Vomiting cleared for 48 hours
- Diarrhea cleared for 48 hours
- Frequent coughing excessive nasal discharge resolved
- Pain resolved

It is your responsibility to notify the school if your child has a communicable disease or infestation such as measles, mumps, chickenpox, or head lice. A child may be readmitted without a statement from a physician only if the child has been absent for a period equal to the longest incubation period of the disease as specified by the Department of Health and Social Services. The local Health Department will immediately be notified of all infectious diseases, and a note will be posted in the parent information center when there has been exposure to a communicable illness in the center.

Children returned to the center with signs of illness, or communicable disease will be refused entry into the preschool.

**Please consult with your director if you need additional information.**

### **MEDICATION POLICIES**

WE DO NOT GIVE MEDICATION TO ANY CHILD/REN.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT OF PARENT HANDBOOK**

**Today's Date:**

- We \_\_\_\_\_ the parents of \_\_\_\_\_ have received a copy of the Nicole's Academy of Excellence Parent Handbook.
- I agree and understand the policies and procedures listed in this handbook and comply with the school's rules and regulations.
- I understand that the policies and procedures listed in this handbook are subject to change to reflect the program's needs.
- I understand I will be made aware of these changes in a timely fashion, and I will always adhere to the most up to handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent/Guardian Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent/Guardian Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**