



# Parent Handbook

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## WELCOME

We welcome you and your family to our family. We are excited and happy to have you join us. If you should come across any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask

## Mission Statement

Creative Times Academy provides a fun, loving, creative environment. Our common purpose is daily enhancing the lives of the children and families we serve. We strive to support children’s growing independence and build confidence so they can achieve their full potential.

## Philosophy

- We believe teachers, parents, and children need to aid in the children’s growth and development by building a strong bond through communication and working as a team.
- We feel children should be allowed to experiment and be provided with the opportunity to explore and create in a safe and healthy environment.
- We believe in encouraging and praising children to inspire them to think for themselves, allowing them to draw their own conclusions.
- We understand that when children play everything relates to the real world, therefore for children, playing is learning.
- We encourage children to be kind, fair, and to share.
- We believe by providing a safe, clean, and loving environment we show the children that they are loved, valued, and wanted.
- We also believe that by keeping the teachers happy they will stay longer, being able to create a strong bond and trust with the children.
- We strive to maintain the highest quality childcare.
- We aspire to make a difference in the lives of the children, families, employees, and in the community, we serve.
- We are dedicated to the safety and future of all children.
- We always value the rights of the children by giving them one on one attention and listening to them. We make sure we get to their level and talk with them rather than at them.
- We are committed to every child and family at our center.

- We aim to enrich everyone's life that we are in contact with including the children, parents, and staff.
- We believe in providing age appropriate activities for the children in all areas of learning.

## Goals

- Each child to develop an understanding of themselves and others.
- Each child to develop emotionally, socially, physically, culturally, and cognitively.
- Each child to gain independence, confidence, and responsibility.
- Each child to develop an active and positive approach to life.
- Each child to develop a sense of wellbeing.
- Each child to develop relationships with the staff based on trust, love, and respect.

## New Student Orientation

At Creative Times Academy, we like to keep things personal so we do new student/parent orientations by family. Orientation is meant to provide an opportunity for the family to meet the child's teachers and center staff. We will take the parents and child around the center and show them where everything is to help parents and child adjust to a new program. We go over many of our policies and procedures as well as give them the parent handbook to take with them which goes into more detail. They complete all the paperwork needed to finalize enrollment. We will answer any questions the family has and remind them they are welcome at anytime to call or stop in the office with any questions or concerns they have.

## Our Program

Our classrooms are divided into age-appropriate centers such as Creative Arts, Math and Science, Dramatic Play, Language Arts, Reading Centers, and Music Centers. We use Creative Curriculum offering your child many opportunities to develop important skills needed to help him/her be successful. Our full day program operates with the main preschool time in the morning followed by lunch and a naptime. After the children rest they have afternoons filled with outdoor free play, indoor activities, and story time. During these times the children are encouraged to listen, take turns, and answer questions.

We support the children and their active exploration to help them become self-confident, independent, and inquisitive learners. We create learning through play environment that encourages children to become caring, competent individuals.

The infant classroom (6 weeks – 12 months) follows the schedule of your child to be sure that all their needs are met. Teachers spend plenty of one on one time with each child. Every child gets tummy time to ensure proper development of their head, neck and shoulder muscles, and this time also enhances certain motor skills. Books are read to the children throughout the day to promote literacy development from a young age.

The toddler classrooms (12 months – 2 Years) keep a consistent schedule to ensure a peaceful environment. Singing and movement are crucial parts of their day. The creative center is comprised of three motor activities such as sand/salt trays, playdough, and paints. The book center has a great variety of books readily available to the children. The teachers use finger plays, story time, puppets and flannel stories to broaden toddler's language skills. The dramatic play center includes toddler sized play kitchen, table and chairs, baby dolls, furniture, cars and trucks, and age-appropriate dress up clothes. There are also puzzles, lacing activities, and Duplo Blocks. Multiples of toys are provided to lessen conflicts between the children.

Preschool classrooms (3 – 4 years) also maintain a consistent schedule to prepare them for school VPK. All activities throughout the day are educational and promote the growth independence and social skills of your child. The toys and centers in the classroom are all age appropriate and are meant to assist in the development of all of our children. Small groups are used in the classroom to ensure that all children are able to work and learn at their own pace to be sure no child is held back or left behind.

VPK classrooms (4 – 5 years) have a structured schedule and classroom in order to prepare them for kindergarten the following year. Official VPK hours are 9 AM to 12:30 PM and it is crucial for all of our VPK students to be here during those hours. There is a focus on literacy and mathematical development in these classrooms so the VPK graduates will be ready for kindergarten.

Before and After Care classroom (kindergarten – fifth grade) is a safe and fun environment where children have center time, outside time, snacks, homework time, and a positive experience to and from elementary school.

Children are placed in a class based on their chronological age. We accept children into the program based upon space available. Advancement to the next age group is based on chronological age, developmental readiness and availability of space. Parents will be notified in

advance of any transitions. Please contact the office if you have any questions or concerns about your child's transition.

## Evaluations

To help us meet your child's developmental needs, the teachers will evaluate your child's progress. This will occur at least twice a year. Please feel free to request a conference to discuss the findings of these evaluations.

## Parent Visitation

Creative Times Academy has an open-door policy for parents. We welcome and encourage you to visit at any time.

## Enrollment

We are an equal opportunity provider of childcare services. Applications for enrollment are accepted without regard to race, religion, sex, or national origin. Creative Times Academy accepts children with disabilities and special needs and will make "reasonable accommodations" based on the recommendations of the child's healthcare provider.

We reserve the right to refuse the enrollment of any child and to ask parents to make alternative arrangements for the care of a child enrolled in our program.

## Arrival and Departure

The Operation Hours for Creative Times Academy are from 6:30 AM to 6 PM. The infant room hours are from 7 AM to 5:30 PM.

For safety and security reasons, a parent or designated adult must bring the child to their classroom/teacher. Never leave children outside to enter on their own.

Occasionally children experience separation anxiety. Should your child have difficulty leaving you, a prolonged goodbye may make leaving more uncomfortable for both you and your child. The staff is trained to deal with these situations and will assist you by comforting your child and by redirecting them to an activity established to begin their day.

Upon enrollment, you will be asked to name all persons authorized to pick up your child, a child WILL NOT be released to anyone not identified on the authorization list. Picture identification is required for all individuals not recognized by the caregivers. If someone other than a listed

authorized person will be picking up your child, please provide written notification to the administration staff the morning of the appropriate day. Your child will not be released to an unauthorized person via telephone notification, written notification is required (a fax will be accepted in the case of emergency). Even if the person taking your child is on the authorization list we ask that you notify the teacher if you expect someone other than the normal person to pick up the child.

All children must be picked up by 6 PM. There are late charges, which will be imposed on parents who pick their children after scheduled time. Full-day preschool is 6 PM, half-day preschool is 12:30 PM, and the infant room is 5:30 PM. Late charges are assessed at the rate of \$1.00 per 1 minute to be paid upon arrival that evening in cash to the caregiver staying after with your child. Consistently arriving late may result in the possible dismissal of your child. In the case of an emergency or unavoidable event, please contact the center to notify the administrative staff of possible arrangements.

## Health and Welfare

For the good of the other children as well as the teachers, Creative Times Academy cannot admit a child with symptoms:

- Fever of 100.7 or higher
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea (more than two loose stool or if not containable)
- Earache or ear drainage
- Unusual spots or rashes, chickenpox, infected skin patches
- Severe sore throat or trouble swallowing
- Excessive/persistent cough, difficult or rapid breathing
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye), excessive tearing, redness of eyes with discharge
- Excessive pain
- Excessive or off colored nasal discharge
- Tea-colored urine
- Headache and stiff neck

Any child in our care who displays any of the above listed symptoms will be sent home immediately. We will also notify a child's parent if the child is acting unusually tired, cranky, or cries for prolonged periods of time for an unknown reason.

Please be considerate to the students, teachers, and staff and keep sick children at home. These guidelines are set by government agencies and must be complied with. If you are contacted during the day regarding your child being sick, please come and pick them up as soon as

possible. **Dismissed children must be free from symptoms for 24 hours before being allowed to return to the center.** Must be fever free entire 24 hours without medication.

After your child has been ill, it is important that you adhere to the following guidelines when determining whether or not your child is ready to return to the center:

- Mood, appetite, pain, behavior and activity are again back to normal
- No fever for 24 hours or more without medication
- Antibiotics if prescribed have been used for a full 24 hours, 48 hours in the case of strep
- Vomiting, diarrhea cleared for 24 hours
- Frequent coughing, excessive nasal discharge resolved
- Chickenpox are completely scabbed over
- Periodic inspection for head lice will be carried out. A nit free policy will be followed for the child to be able to return to the center
- If there are still symptoms you must have a doctor's note stating that the child is not contagious for the child's return to the center

\*Contagious diseases must be reported to the center as soon as the illness has been diagnosed, so that other parents can be notified. A sign will be properly posted in the center to notify all parents. The identity of the child will not be given out.

## Immunizations

All students must be immunized and have a current physical from their pediatrician. You are required to get the shot records and physical forms from your child's doctor within the first two weeks of being enrolled. Reminders will be sent out when your child's immunization records are approaching expiration. These notices will allow plenty of warning to have your child to the pediatrician. **Children with out-of-date immunization records cannot be allowed to enter the center until the situation is resolved.**

## Medication

Creative Times Academy will not administer any medication without a completed Authorization for Medication form and a prescription from the child's doctor. Authorization for Medication forms can be picked up in the office, filled out, signed and given to the office with the medication.

- Give Authorization form directly to the office and review it with them. Please go over the medication, time, and amount. We will fill in the amount of medication given, time given and initial the form that will be kept in the medication file.

- Medication must be sent to school in the original container with the child's name on it, name of drug, dosage, directions for the administration, current date and physician's name and telephone number on it.
- Droppers, spoons, etc. should be included with the medication, if needed.
- Over-the-counter medication WILL NOT be administered without a doctor's written authorization including dosage, and an authorization form filled out by the parent.
- Medication must be given directly to the office and not the classroom.

After medication has been administered the permission slip will be placed in the medication binder in the office.

## Safety and Accident Procedure

We will make every effort to ensure the safety of your child while in our care. Unfortunately, minor accidents occur. If an accident occurs, an accident report will be completed. Minor injuries will be treated with soap, water, ice, and Band-Aids. If necessary, the emergency contact will be notified.

The accident report must be signed by the parents and left at the center. Accident reports will be maintained in the accident file and a copy will be provided to the parents if requested.

## Biting

If your child is bitten: many children under the age of three use biting as a form of communication. We try to limit biting in our classrooms. However, it is very likely that at some point your child will be bitten. We attend immediately to the bitten child with first aid (soap, water, ice, etc.) and give them lots of love and comfort. We will also work with the parents of the biter to help change this behavior. If your child is bitten, you may wish to contact their pediatrician to determine if medical treatment is necessary.

If your child bites: Biting can be a form of communication. We will advise you if the biting does not seem to be age-appropriate and we will help you develop a plan to change the behavior. However, if the biting is aggressive, breaks the skin or does not seem to be lessening, you may be asked to remove your child from the center until the behavior diminishes.

## Meals and Snacks

A nutritious hot lunch, including whole milk, will be provided daily to all full-time toddler/preschool children (Ages 1-5). The milk will be served to all children UNLESS the parent signs a form in the office stating they do not want their child to be served milk. The morning and afternoon snack is provided to all children in our care during scheduled snack times. The

morning snack time is served with 100% juice. Children in our half-day VPK program will need to bring a lunch every day. If you choose, you may purchase a school lunch on a weekly basis.

Lunch menus will be posted monthly. Please review menus carefully. Should your child have a food allergy or be displeased with a specific type of meal for a specific day, you will want to provide a healthy alternative from home that can stay in your child's classroom. Questions or concerns regarding the food menus can be addressed to the office.

Breakfast is an important meal. At this time, we do not offer breakfast. Please do not send breakfast with your child in the morning after 7:30 AM. You are permitted to bring breakfast for your child prior to 7:30 AM in disposable containers. Please do not bring cereal with milk; instead you can bring dry cereal and a cup of milk. After 7:30 AM breakfast should be given to your child prior to coming into the center.

Before and after school children/Summer Camp children must bring their lunches from home on the days off from school and in our care all day. We are unable to microwave individual meals. If you are packing an item that needs refrigeration, please place a freezer pack in the lunchbox to keep it cool.

Meals from home: If you should choose to pack a lunch for you child we request you pack healthy snacks and lunches. Milk will be provided if you do not pack any. Please check out our website, the front counter, and the office for nutritious ideas that the kids will love.

## Special dietary needs of children

We understand that there are all kinds of special dietary needs including personal likes and dislikes of certain foods, some food causing uncomfortable reactions, and some parents/children preferences or other reasons you may not want your child to eat something. However we offer the food for your convience and we are unable accommodate substitutions. Please be sure to review the menus for anything that you do not want your child to eat. If you wish your child to not eat something for any reason please be sure to inform us in writing on a form we will provide you upon request. We will make sure not to serve the item(s) to your child. However, you are responsible to bring in a nutritional substitute for the item(s) you do not want them to have.

## Nap Time

Naptime is scheduled for the children from approximately 12:30 PM until 3 PM depending on the classroom. Blankets must be labeled and taken home weekly to be washed. To protect the

health of your child we provide a sanitized cot for your child. **Dropping off your child during naptime is not permitted.** You will be asked to wait to bring them and when the children wake up. Please do not try to bring your child to school during that time.

## Payment Policies

Registration fees for each child shall be paid at the time of enrollment. Registration fees are a one-time only charge per child or family. This is a nonrefundable fee to hold a place for your child.

The first week in September there is an annual supply fee due for each child. This is a nonrefundable fee used to help replenish craft supplies used during the year, including paper, pencils, crayons, markers, scissors, glue, etc. There are no discounts on the supply fee for multiple children in a family. This fee will also serve as your child's reregistration and will guarantee your child a place in the next age-appropriate room.

Tuition is due each week to hold your child's enrollment in the center. There are no discounts given for absences. \*See vacations for days off without paying

Weekly tuition pays for your child's attendance for a maximum of 10 hours per school day for full day students and for the specified hours for ½ day and Before/After School programs.

## Discounts

Families with more than one child attending will receive a 10% discount off the oldest children. The youngest child is at the regular rate and all remaining children are at the discounted rate. No registration or supply fees are discounted.

## Late fees and return check fees

Weekly tuition fees are to be paid each Monday morning for the week ahead, unless prior arrangements have been made with the administrative staff. If payment has not been made by Wednesday morning, a notice of delinquency will be placed in your child's mailbox. If tuition is paid late, any time after 12 noon on Wednesday, a 5% late fee will also be assessed on the total balance due. An additional 10% late fee will be assessed after Friday, and the full payment must be made in order for your child to return. One-week delinquency of payment is grounds for dismissal from the center. **There will be a \$25.00 charge on all returned checks.** This documentation will be placed in your child's personal file.

## Communication and Parent Involvement

Creative Times Academy has an open-door policy and an open line of communication. You are welcome to visit or volunteer in our classroom anytime. We are also available for parent/teacher conferences as you or the teacher feels needed.

If you have an interest in volunteering, please sign up at the front desk to be added to our list of volunteers. Also please watch your child's papers, signs around the center, Facebook, and your child's newsletters for more volunteer opportunities.

It is important that each family discuss any concerns, suggestions or questions with the director as soon as possible. You may contact the director by telephone during school hours to request a conference. If an informal conversation is all that is necessary, do not hesitate to discuss this with the director as you drop off or pick up your child that day.

Please refrain from using inappropriate or abusive language with the director or other staff members. They're here to work together with you to provide the best school environment for your child.

## Special Events

We hold many special events throughout the year designed to provide parents, children, and family members with special opportunities to enjoy each other. Each event is meant to be a shared time which gives parents an opportunity to get to know each other, to talk to your child's teacher and caregivers, and to have an inside look at their child's school experience.

On very few occasions we will allow classes to watch a DVD if it is short and theme related. But in general we do not allow TV's in the classrooms.

## Birthdays

Parents may choose to have their children celebrate their birthdays at school with their friends by bringing in a special treat. Special arrangements must be arranged and approved by the lead teacher in advance. Only store-bought items can be brought in to serve to the other children. Sorry we are not allowed to have any food items homemade.

## Vacations

Full-time students will earn five days of vacation per year, available to start using after three months of attendance. If you are to be gone longer than five days, you must still pay your

tuition or you could possibly lose your place and be required to repay your registration fee. Part-time pre-K students also receive vacation time every school year equal to one week of their attendance. Vacation days run from January 1 through December 31. Written notification one week prior to the vacation is required.

## Holidays

We will be closed for the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday
- Half-day Christmas eve and all Christmas Day

If the holiday falls on the weekend we will be closed Friday if it falls on Saturday and we will be closed on Monday if the holiday falls on Sunday. Please see the office for exact dates we will be closed each year.

Discounts for weeks with holidays are not given, tuition rates are prorated.

## Inclement Weather

We urge each family to plan what they would do if a disaster strikes during the day when you and your child are separated at work, childcare center, school, etc. We will remain with your child/children and tell you or someone you have designated can safely pick your child up. We have emergency supplies and staff trained in first aid and CPR.

The center may close if Pasco County schools close due to inclement weather conditions. Please call prior to bringing your child/children in. We will try to keep Facebook updated as well.

The opening or closing of the center will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Although we may be opening it is strongly recommended that you decide what is best for you and your family and consider keeping your child/children with you as a safety precaution.

If schools are closed due to an unscheduled closing IE: inclement weather for two or less days in a week you will be required to pay 100% of your tuition to hold your child's spot. If we are closing for three or more days in a week you will be required to pay 50% of the tuition to hold your child's spot.

## Withdrawal

We require a **two week written notice** if you plan to withdraw from the program. If you withdraw your child/children for the summer months, the classroom opening for the fall is NOT guaranteed. There will be a registration period for the fall's opening. It is the responsibility of the parents to stay in touch or contact the sender to know about the registration for the fall. Please note, children that are currently enrolled will be admitted before we will open registration to the public.

## Toys from Home

We ask that toys be left at home. Guns and war toys are not considered appropriate tools for learning and **may not be brought into the center at any time.**

## Personal Belongings

Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their personal belongings. Labeled storage areas are provided for the children's belongings.

This is what your child needs to bring to school. Please be sure to **LABEL ALL ITEMS**. Please communicate with your child's teacher to keep abreast of anything else your child may need.

Infants:

- Diapers
- Wipes
- Blanket
- Fitted crib sheet
- Bottles or sippy cups **labeled with first and last name**
- Formula/milk
- Baby food
- Bibs
- Complete change of clothes (weather appropriate) including socks
- Diaper ointment
- Pacifiers
- Anything you think would help your child throughout the day
- Backpack or tote bag to bring things to and from the center

1 and 2-year-olds

- Diapers
- Wipes

- Blanket
- Fitted crib sheet
- Sippy cups **labeled with first and last name** (younger one-year-olds only)
- Bibs
- Complete change of clothes (weather appropriate) including socks
- Diaper ointment (as needed)
- Backpack or tote bag to bring things to and from the center

#### Preschool 3 to 5-year-olds

- Blanket
- Fitted crib sheet
- Complete change of clothes (weather appropriate)
- Backpack or tote bag to bring things to and from the center

## Toilet Training

When you feel that your child is ready to begin toilet training, please advise your child's teacher of toilet training directions so that every effort can be made to ensure consistency between home and the preschool whenever possible. You will be notified of any toileting accidents and the need to replace clothing on your child's daily communication sheets. If your child is in the potty training stage, please be sure to supply extra training pants and extra changes of clothing, including socks.

## Dress

Please dress your child in washable, sturdy play clothes. Clothes that are durable, comfortable, and easy to remove for toileting are very helpful. We go outside every day, with the exception of extreme weather, and therefore please dress your child accordingly. Be sure to label jackets you bring in. Often times we have several identical jackets and without having them labeled they could be taken home by someone else in error.

We encourage children to wear smocks when painting. However, clothes can become soiled during arts and crafts activities.

To prevent injuries during outside play, open toed shoes and flip-flops are not permitted. Tennis shoes with socks are ideal for outside play.

## Confidentiality of Records

All your child's records and information will be kept confidential and reviewed when necessary by the administration and your child's teacher. Other children's names are not reported on accident/incident forms. Confidentiality applies to all families enrolled at our center. Please refrain from discussing other children and their families with other parents or people outside the center.

Should there be any change of address, phone numbers, place of employment, legal guardianship or other pertinent information please inform the office staff immediately.

## Staff Babysitting

Creative Times Academy discourages employees from babysitting students after work hours. If an employee agrees to watch your child outside of the center they are not acting as an employee of our company and therefore Creative Times Academy will not be held liable for any events that may occur during this time.

## Discipline Policy

Creative Times Academy is structured to allow the children choices of play activities and materials. This allows the child control over his/her environment and helps deter behavior problems. Children are encouraged to develop language skills that help them communicate their needs to others.

If your child is experiencing difficulty, he/she will be redirected and offered alternatives. In some cases, an activity or a center may be off-limits until the child can make appropriate choices regarding his/her behavior. In the event your child still does not have control and cannot use language to problem solve, he/she will be removed from the play space and offered a personal space away from the others to regain control. Time limits in this personal space are closely monitored and may be self-imposed by the child. Your child may return to the group or activity whenever his/her behavior is under control.

Staff members model appropriate behavior. Language development is continuously encouraged so children can learn how to avoid conflicts, make decisions, and develop self-control. Continued or patterns of negative or adverse behavior may result in the teacher's consultation with the Director, which may result in the Director's intervention. Patterns of severe behavior problems may result in removal of the child from the classroom to the administrative office area while parents are contacted for consultation. Children who demonstrate inappropriate

behavior, which cannot be resolved through the combined direction of the parent, director, and teacher, will be asked to leave the center.

Children will never be subjected to discipline, which is severe, humiliating, frightening, etc. and discipline shall never be associated with food, rest, or restroom privileges. Physical punishment of any form will never be an option for discipline.

## Child Abuse Reporting

Our staff is required to report any unusual marks or injuries on a child, and statements made by, or behavior of, a child that may indicate abuse or neglect. It is our obligation as mandated reporters, and all staff must sign forms indicating their understanding of the requirement and complete an online Mandated Reporter training course upon hire.

## Drop off

- Park in a parking space if available, do not park along the side of the building this is a fire lane. Turn off your car's engine.
- Remove all children from the car and bring them into the center with you. Please never leave infants or other children unattended in your vehicle.
- Bring valuables with you and lock your car.
- Enter your code into the keypad to enter building, if you forget your code please ring the bell.
- Take your child to their classroom, make sure that the teacher sees you and your child before you leave the room. Either you or the teacher can sign your child in with the time on the clipboard.
- Give your child a big hug and tell them you will see them later today!
- Exit the building and have a wonderful day. Feel free to call later to see how your child is doing.

## Pick up:

- Anyone that enters the building that we do not recognize is stopped and their ID checked. In the classroom, the teachers will only release the children to people they know can pick up. If anyone comes that they do not know, they will call the office to verify, even if the child says they are who they say they are.
- When they are picked up the clipboard is updated with time out and the new count is acknowledged by all teachers in the class
- Your child must be picked up by an adult who is at least 18 years old and listed on your emergency contact sheet. Only those individuals listed as authorized pick-ups can pick up

your child (this person may be asked to show ID.) For reasons of safety and confidentiality, please do not give out the door code to persons who will not be regularly picking up.

- Please note that we will not release children to anyone that appears intoxicated or impaired. If they are insistent on picking them up they will be brought to the office.