

SOJOURN
A C A D E M Y



Early Learning Academy

Parent Handbook
2017 – 2018

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WELCOME TO SOJOURN EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY

Thank you for choosing Sojourn Early Learning Academy. We look forward to getting to know you and your child this school year. We understand our task is both a privilege and a great responsibility. Our goal is to provide a safe, loving, nurturing and Christ-centered environment where children can grow.

This handbook is designed to help you understand our program and the guidelines under which we operate for the ELA. Please keep it for future reference, and feel free to contact us regarding any questions or concerns you may have.

PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY

We seek to provide all children with the best opportunity to discover God's love and His importance in their lives by offering experiences that will enhance their development mentally, physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually in a nurturing, Christ-centered environment.

We hope to convey through everyday life experiences, classroom curriculum, play, music, art and Bible stories that each child is a treasure from God and that He has a wonderful plan for his/her life. We consider it a privilege to assist you in the education and nurturing of your child.

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well." Psalm 139:14 (ESV)

GOALS

1. To help each child understand that he/she has worth and value and is uniquely designed by God.
2. To give each child a thirst for knowledge and to develop a positive attitude towards school and learning.
3. To provide stimulating experiences which encourage the child to think and analyze problems and arrive at possible solutions.
4. To encourage each child to express himself/herself through material, motor movement and language.
5. To encourage independence.
6. To help each child grow. Wherever they are developmentally, we want them to always be learning and always growing.

CURRICULUM

Sojourn Early Learning Academy does not limit to a single curriculum or publisher; we choose from the best curriculum and teach from a Christian world view. (e.g. - Bob Jones Press, Handwriting without Tears, God's Little Explorers, Wee Learning, and other sources).

Our experienced classroom teachers use their creativity and personal style to maximize instruction. ELA helps children to explore their unique abilities through group activities, learning centers, music, art, classroom experiences, as well as dramatic play centers to encourage social interaction, language development, and cognitive thinking.

CALENDAR

Classes begin August and continue through May. Beginning/ending dates and holidays are listed on our yearly calendar. The calendar will generally coincide with Sojourn Academy. The school calendar is subject to change. We will notify you of changes through notes home, newsletters, and/or email.

ENROLLMENT

Enrollment will begin in January for the following school year. There is an enrollment fee of \$200 (non-refundable) to reserve your child's spot in the ELA program. During January there is a priority two-week period of enrollment for current students. Open enrollment will begin in February and continue until maximum enrollment is reached.

Enrollment is open to any child 12 months through 4 years of age; provided that space is available and that the school administration believes that our program can best meet your child's needs. Children are enrolled in the program on a first come, first served basis. Enrollment is limited, because we are committed to maintaining low child to staff ratios.

Child/teacher ratio goals in our program are as follows:

1 year olds.....2 Teachers, 8 Students
2 year olds.....2 Teachers, 10 Students
3 year olds.....2 Teachers, 12 Students

REGISTRATION & FEES

New Application Fee (non-refundable): \$75

Re-Enrollment/New Enrollment Fee (non-refundable): \$200

EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY TUITION: \$2,600/year

EXTENDED CARE TUITION:

8:00 – 9:00 AM Extended Care: \$300/year

2:30 – 4:00 PM Extended Care: \$350/year

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Tuition is a yearly fee which is payable by the month for your convenience, August through May. Payments are made directly to Sojourn Academy via check or cash in the front office. You may elect to enroll in FACTS where your payments will be automatically deducted from your checking or savings account each month on either the 5th or 20th of the month, depending on your election upon completion of your FACTS account. Please see the finance office if you are interested in enrolling in FACTS.

You may elect to pay tuition in full and will receive a 2% payment in full discount on tuition only (not extended care tuition).

You may also elect to pay by semester with payments due August 1st and December 1st.

There is no reduction in tuition for days that the school is closed due to inclement weather, holidays, or child absences.

Invoices are sent monthly via email to each ELA family the first week of each month. If you elect to enroll in ELA extended care, that will be reflected on your monthly invoice. Payment is expected upon receipt of the invoice. If payment is not received by the last day of the month, a \$25 late fee is applied for each month that tuition is not paid.

You may pay your monthly invoices via credit card. There is a 3.5% processing fee for all credit card payments. It will be automatically added to your monthly invoice. Remove the credit card fee if you are making a payment directly to the school by cash or check.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Early Learning Academy is from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM on Tuesday & Thursday. Children may not be dropped off in their classroom until 9:00 AM, as teachers are preparing the activities for the children. Children and their parents may wait in the lobby area until that time.

Late Fee

Please be prompt in picking up your child. Children not picked up by 2:30 PM will be checked into our ELA Extended Care Program and charged a \$15 late fee per quarter hour.

EXTENDED CARE

We are happy to offer an AM and PM Extended Care Program. Children enrolled in the Extended Care Program may be dropped off at 8:00 AM and picked up NO LATER than 4:00 PM. Children need to be dropped off and picked up in the classroom assigned for extended care. There is a \$15 late fee for every 15 minutes past 4:00 PM.

SIGN-IN/SIGN OUT PROCEDURES

Each day your child attends Early Learning Academy; he/she must be signed-in and signed-out. A sign-in/sign-out sheet will be located in your child's classroom and **MUST** be signed daily.

Sign-In

Upon arrival please take your child to their classroom door and obtain a teacher's acknowledgement of your arrival and sign-in your child. Do not leave your child in a classroom without a teacher.

We encourage you to help your child place their belongings outside their classroom each day. We recommend that parents do not linger too long when dropping off their child as it hinders interaction with teachers and other children. For your child's sense of security and trust, develop a short good-bye routine (e.g. - hug, high-five, blown kiss), assure him/her that you will return, and leave with a smile.

If someone other than a parent is picking up your child please inform the teacher and submit a written note to the Director that includes a name and telephone number of the person that will be picking up your child. Photo identification will need to be shown at the front office and at the classroom.

Sign-Out

When you pick up your child, you should make sure the teacher is aware that the child is leaving and sign-out your child. Your child **MUST** be signed-out, and the time of your arrival must be clearly written and initialed.

CHILD RELEASE TO ANOTHER PERSON

Children will only be released to parents or persons listed on the *Approved Transportation Form* that is filled out by parents at the beginning of the school year. Please remember to update all information with the office if any changes need to be made.

For security purposes anyone other than a parent will be required to stop at the front office and show proper photo identification. Anyone unknown to the teacher or Director will be required to show proper photo identification.

If for some reason a person other than those listed on the *Approved Transportation Form* will be picking up your child, please inform the Director in writing by letter or fax to (281) 292-2818.

SUPPLIES

Each student will receive a list of supplies required to bring. You will need to bring these supplies during "Meet the Teacher" or upon the first day of school. Occasionally, teachers may ask for items during the school year to help with a special activity or event.

NAPTIME

A special personal belonging may help to make a child more comfortable during rest time. We encourage each child to bring a comfort item (e.g. – stuffed animal, special blanket) for rest time. Pacifiers are not allowed at school except during nap/rest time. Children will need a nap mat, pillow, and blanket to rest on the floor during our designated nap times. Nap mats and blankets will be sent home on a weekly basis for laundering, we want to keep germs to a minimal if possible.

TOILET TRAINING

Many two-year-old children will begin to show an interest in using the 'potty' instead of staying in diapers or pull-ups. During the transition time from diapers to toilet training, it is best that both a parent and teacher work together on this process. Our teacher's will make an effort to coordinate with parents on their style of training so as to not cause confusion. We do not allow training potties and ask that until your child is fully potty trained, please have them wear plastic training pants over their underwear. The children will use the hall bathrooms and are encouraged to use the potty throughout the day.

Please make sure to provide plenty of changes of clothing (including socks, shoes, underwear and clothes) to adequately care for your child.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

All personal belongings must be labeled with your child's name and remain in your child's backpack or placed in the designated areas outside the classroom.

Toys

Each classroom is filled with developmentally and age-appropriate toys. We ask that you please refrain from bringing your child's toys to school. Lost or broken toys can cause conflict and hurt feelings in a classroom, and disrupts the day for both teachers and children.

Teachers may occasionally request that children bring items from home to reinforce a learning concept or for show and tell days. These items should be small enough to fit into your child's school backpack. Please make every effort to encourage your child to participate in these activities by helping him/her to select an appropriate item to bring to school. Please do not send any irreplaceable treasures, as we cannot be responsible for broken or misplaced items.

Clothing

We ask that you dress your child in comfortable clothes for active playing. Despite our best efforts, there are times that your child will get dirty at school. Children are to wear washable and comfortable clothes so they can fully participate in all activities (e.g. – sensory table, painting, and outdoor play). Clothes should also be easy to take off and put on for your child, this will help with fewer accidents in the bathroom. Children should wear safe, comfortable closed toed walking shoes to school at all times. NOTE: flip-flops, backless sandals, and Crocs are discouraged at ELA, because they tend to cause falling, tripping and mulch getting into their shoes on the playground.

Each child should have a complete change of clothes (including socks and underwear) at all times in their backpack. Remember to pack appropriate clothing during each season. Please label all clothing items with a permanent marker (e.g. – jackets, gloves, change of clothes in Ziploc bags, etc.).

Diaper Changes

Children who are not potty trained in our 1 year old and 2 year old classroom will need to bring enough disposable diapers and/or pull-ups for several diaper changes throughout the day. Please make your child's teacher is aware of any special instructions for diaper changing (e.g. – rash cream, powder, etc.). Remember to label all belongings, diapers, pull-ups, and any special items for changing.

LUNCH, SNACK & WATER BOTTLE

Each child must bring a nutritious lunch, drink and a snack. We also request each child bring a spill proof cup filled with water. ELA will re-fill water bottles as needed, especially during hot days. We want to keep the children hydrated. Do not send glass containers or carbonated drinks. Refrigeration will not be available, please include an ice pack in your child's lunchbox if needed.

All children will feed themselves (with assistance from the teacher when needed). Please do not send food in your child's lunch that can easily cause choking (whole grapes, large chunks of apple, or whole hot dogs). Foods need to be cut up into halves or bite size pieces for our younger children.

Sojourn Academy does offer a hot lunch through the school cafeteria for the Early Learning Academy at an additional charge. If you would like further information please contact the Director or front office.

Occasionally, throughout the year, snacks and lunches will be provided for special celebrations and as a learning aide. Please be sure to keep an updated *Medical Information Form* in the office so we know of any allergies or dietary restrictions for your child. Please inform your child's teacher and the Director if there are any food allergies.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Every student will have a communications folder. In this folder teachers will send home your child's work as well as a weekly report. Our 1 year old students and 2 year old students will get a daily report of what they ate and diaper changes. The school will send out newsletters with information of upcoming events. The communications folder is our primary method of daily communication; therefore, it is important to go through the papers each day in order to stay informed.

We do understand that parents want to know about their child's day; however, it is best not to discuss a child at length during departure time, because each child deserves privacy and confidentiality, and teachers need to be able to supervise other students and communicate with arriving/departing parents. If you would like to discuss your child's development further at any time with teachers or the Director, please let us know, and we will schedule a convenient time for all to meet.

A weekly email will be sent by the Director outlining the upcoming week's activities and any special events of which you will need to be aware of. Please remember, ELA has an open door policy. Feel free to contact your child's teacher or the ELA Director with any questions or concerns.

BEHAVIOR

At ELA, we want every child to have the very best experience. Our staff values each child, and we understand that all children are special, unique individuals. We will positively reinforce good behavior and encourage all children to act appropriately. We understand that children will need reminders and redirection throughout the day. Each teacher will have their own behavior system set up in the class, but all children at ELA will be treated with love and respect at all times.

Parent/teacher communication is a very important aspect in your child's educational experiences. You will be notified if there is a problem dealing with your child's behavior. Extreme behaviors (in which your child is acting in a way that could cause harm) will result in a parent being contacted to pick that child up from school.

BITING

Biting is a common developmental stage for children to go through. It is usually a temporary phase between the ages of 12-26 months. The reasons for biting are varied and differ from child to child. Biting often occurs during the teething and continues as toddlers explore their world by putting everything in their mouth. Children who bite are not a bad child; they are most often still in the beginning process of learning what is socially acceptable and what is not. Children may also bite when they are hungry, fatigued, bored, over stimulated, and most often when they are frustrated and don't know what else to do. Their lack of language proficiency often causes conflict and they are struggling with demands on their very young emotional network.

When biting does happen we do take it seriously and try to understand why the child bit and work to extinguish the behavior as quickly as possible. A notice will be sent home with each child involved in the biting incident. No names will be exchanged regarding the incident. Every effort will be made to prevent biting in the classroom. If biting occurs repeatedly, a child may be asked to exit the program. Our staff will take the following steps:

Child that is bitten: 1) the bitten child will be separated from the child who bit them and comforted, 2) first aid will be administered, 3) a written incident report will be sent home.

Child who bites: 1) the staff will remove the child who bit from the situation, and firmly tell the child that biting hurts, and that we do not bite people, 2) time out until self-control is evident and the teacher talks to the child about biting and guides them and redirects them with appropriate ways to get their wants, 3) incident report will be completed and a parent will be contacted.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Injury

It is our hope and prayer that no child gets injured, but if an injury occurs, you will be contacted immediately either by email or phone, depending on the seriousness of the injury.

If an accident occurs and your child is injured, proper medical attention will be given and the injury documented. You will be notified from the main office by email and/or phone and the teacher will fill out an accident report detailing what happened. For very minor instances, the teacher will send a note home.

If the injury or accident requires immediate emergency attention, the local emergency services will be contacted. In all situations our ELA staff will take responsible measures to ensure the safety and well-being of your child. The teachers and staff at ELA are all CPR/First Aid certified.

Medical Emergency Release Form

Every child is required to have a *Medical Authorization Form* on file in order that specific steps may be taken if a child is ill or has an accident at school which requires immediate treatment.

Immunizations

All children are required to maintain their program of immunizations consistent with state regulations and policies. Each child must have proof of immunizations or a state issued exemptions before attending the school. All records will be verified by the school health care provider and a record will be kept on file in the office. It is the responsibility of the parent to keep the school informed of any updates to the immunization record. If an immunization record is incomplete, the school reserves the right to refuse admittance until proof of immunizations is produced. If immunizations are not up to date, a grace period of 30 days will be given to the parents to obtain the needed immunization. At the end of the grace period, any child who fails to comply with state regulations will not be allowed to attend school until proof of compliance is received.

Communicable Diseases

We request that parents/guardians inform the office or Director if their child has contracted any type of childhood illness or communicable diseases during the school year (chicken pox, measles, mumps, including head lice and pink eye).

PLEASE NOTE: Children with contagious, life-threatening diseases shall not be admitted to the school. For the protection of all the students in the school, a doctor's note must be brought to the office or Director in order for your child to return to school.

SICKNESS POLICY

In effort to prevent the spread of illness, we ask each family to cooperate with our policy. Children who have a contagious illness or exhibit signs of illness may not attend school. STUDENTS MUST BE SYMPTOM FREE FOR 24 HOURS BEFORE RETURNING TO SCHOOL. This means no body temperature above 98.6° after a fever (above 100.0°) has been present, no vomiting, no diarrhea, or no colored discharge.

Your child must remain symptom-free (without medication) for 24 hours before returning to school. Please keep your child home if he/she has any of the following symptoms:

- Fever (99.4 or higher)
- Nausea
- Vomiting/Diarrhea
- Cold and/or Cough
- Sore Throat
- Runny nose with green discharge
- Eye Discharge (white or yellow), Pink eye
- Head lice
- Unexplained Rash or skin infection

Should your child become ill at school, your child will be isolated from his/her class and a parent/guardian will be contacted and required to pick-up your child as soon as possible.

MEDICATION POLICY

The Sojourn Academy office personnel record all prescription and non-prescription medication that is dispensed to a student. The school office can only administer prescription and non-prescription medications if a *Request for Administration of Medication Form* has been completed by the parent and/or physician. Parents must provide cough drops and other non-prescription medications for colds and allergies. All medications should be in the original container with the student's name. Prescription drugs must have the original label with the student's name, name of medication and specific instructions for dosage, time to be given, and the length of time the medication is to be taken. Do not send any medications in a student's backpack or lunch box. All medication must be secured in the school office in a place that is not accessible to students.

The Academy is not responsible for product expiration dates. Parents must personally check medication in and pick it up when it is expired or at the end of the school year. Medication that is not picked up will be discarded.

BIRTHDAY AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Please talk with your child's teacher or the Director before bringing refreshments, decorations or favors to your child's classroom. Some children may have specific allergies or dietary restrictions; accommodations may need to be made so all children can celebrate.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING

Occasionally, emergency conditions make it necessary to close school. In most cases, this will be due to weather-related conditions that make the roads impassable or unsafe. Weather dismissal will be consistent with the Conroe Independent School District, CISD. Parents will be notified of emergency closing via the RenWeb automated text messaging system.

SOJOURN ACADEMY

Seeking Wisdom... Pursing Godliness - Romans 16:19

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have read the Early Learning Academy Parent Handbook.

I understand this Handbook contains important information on policies and procedures and it may not cover every situation which may arise, but is simply a general guide to refer to.

To contribute to my child's safety and wellness, I am aware of my responsibilities to the program:

- To maintain accurate records regarding my address, contact information, medical emergency information, and immunizations with the school.
- To sign-in/sign-out my child on the attendance log provided in the classroom each day.
- To provide my child with a nutritious lunch, snack, and water bottle each day.
- To provide my child with a nap mat and blanket each day for naptime.
- To keep a change of clothing in my child's backpack.
- To review my child's communication folder each day.

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date