



“Building the foundation for stepping
stones of success”

Parent Handbook

451 Englewood Parkway, A and B Englewood, CO 80110
(303) 781-8900 telephone (303) 781-1500 fax www.ssamontessori.com

Updated JANUARY 10, 2021

About Stepping Stones Academy and Family Center (SSAFC)

Mission Statement

To provide the foundation for stepping stones of success in the areas of academics, social, emotional, and physical in an atmosphere that is safe, stimulating, and fun.

Purpose and Philosophy

SSAFC believes that children can reach their potential if given the right environment and education. We believe that the right environment is one that is safe, fun, stimulating, and changes with the needs of the children. Experiences that are fostered with a hands-on approach of experimenting and allowing the children the freedom to explore will benefit the child greatly.

Discrimination Policy

Stepping Stones Academy and Family Center does not discriminate against and admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin. SSAFC will make every attempt to fully meet the needs of children with special needs or learning disabilities. SSAFC will act in compliance with the American Disabilities Act.

Administration

Kaela Chaffin, Owner and Head of School

Dianna Marston, Owner and Director of Administration and Marketing

Sorrell Pappas, Assistant Director of School

Hours of Operation

School Hours 6:30am-6:00pm

6:30am-8:30am Before School

8:30am-3:00pm Academic Day

3:00pm-6:00pm After School

Part- time school

3 days per week: 8:30am-3:00pm

2 days per week: 8:30am-3:00pm

*Part-time students can enroll in before and after care.

Classrooms

Stepping Stones Academy and Family Center (SSAFC) accepts children that are 6 weeks through the end of the Kindergarten year (Age 7). We are licensed for ages 6 weeks through 13 years. We have four classrooms.

Fees

Please see Monthly Tuition Rates on our website for current tuition rates.

Monthly Tuition:

Tuition is due on the first (1st) of each month and considered late on the fourth (4th) of the month. The amount of tuition is the same each month as it is based on a nine-month academic year. Tuition is paid based on your child's enrollment and not based on attendance. SSAFC will not refund or credit tuition based on absences or vacations.

- o On the fourth of each month, any unpaid tuition will be charged a \$25 late fee.
- o A \$25 fee will be charged for any returned checks. If three returned checks happen in a school year, the child's account will need to be paid in cash.
- o If tuition is 30 days late the child will not be able to attend school unless

payment arrangements have been made with the administration.

- o If collection action must be taken, the parents will be responsible for any and all fees including but not limited to court costs and attorney fees.

- o Tuition is charged to the child's account and is the responsibility of the child's guardian(s)

Sibling Discount:

- o 10% discount on the second and third child enrolled (discount excludes before and after care and cannot be combined with any other discounts)

Late Pick Up Fee:

- o If a child is picked up after scheduled departure, a fee of \$5 for the first 10 minutes and an additional \$1 per minute for each additional minute thereafter.

- o Please call the school as soon as you know you are going to be late.

- o The fee must be paid within 48 hours after late pick up.

Annual Enrollment Fee:

\$100

Annual Nap Mat/Cot Fee:

\$35

Enrollment Policies

SSAFC has open-enrollment throughout the year. Applications are accepted on a first- come basis and children are enrolled based on space availability.

In order to enroll:

Take a tour of SSAFC

- Meet with Administration (during tour)

- Return all requested paperwork via Brightwheel Portal

- Pay all fees

Holidays Observed

SSAFC will observe the following holidays and will therefore be closed. Please also refer to the school calendar for other days that SSAFC will be closed for Teacher Work Days, holiday extensions, etc. Please see Calendar for exact up to date closures.

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

- President's Day

- Memorial Day

- Fourth of July (closed for week) · Labor Day

- Thanksgiving Day (closed for the holiday weekend)

- Winter Break

- New Years Break · Spring Break

Celebrations

Holidays are always an exciting thing for children! SSAFC celebrates all holidays whether it is a birthday or a holiday. Please see your child's teacher in order to properly celebrate the various birthdays and holidays.

Children's Records

SSAFC is required by the Department of Human Services to have the following documents on file on the child's start date:

- o Completed Application

- o General Health Appraisal filled out and signed by your doctor at every well check

- o Emergency Contact information

- o Consent for Treatment

- o Proof of Immunization on the State approved form

- o Child Information Form
- o Permission Forms

Your child's file must stay in compliance at all times with the Department of Human Services. We appreciate your help with maintaining your child's file in a timely manner.

Withdrawal from Program

In the event that a child needs to be withdrawn from our program, we do require a 30 day written notice. Tuition will need to be paid regardless if your child is in attendance during this 30 day notice period.

SSAFC reserves the right to withdraw any child due to behavior from the child or family. We will make every reasonable attempt to work with the family to prevent this from happening.

Chronic Misbehavior and Other Adjustment Issues

Stepping Stones Academy and Family Center will make every effort to notify and work with parents regarding any misbehavior or issues with children. If a child is unable to adjust to our program, is consistently insubordinate, or has a serious behavioral problem, we reserve the right to suspend or terminate his or her enrollment. We believe that behavior resolution takes teamwork. The parents, teacher and child must work together. In the event the teacher or parents feel that added support is needed, an administrator will become involved in finding a reasonable resolution.

Arrival and Pick Up Arrival:

The person dropping off will need to sign the child in with their signature and the current time.

SSAFC asks that all parents drop off their children at the appropriate time. If you are going to drop your child off late please do not disturb the classroom and quietly say your goodbyes outside the class. If available, an administrator will deliver your child to their classroom. If you are going to be late, please notify SSAFC. If your class is on an excursion when your child is dropped off, your child may join another class.

All children need to be dropped off to a teacher/staff member. DO NOT leave your child unattended anywhere onsite. Your child should always stay with you.

Departure:

The person picking up will need to sign the child out with their signature and the current time.

SSAFC asks that all parents pick up their children at the appropriate time. If you are going to be late please call SSAFC as soon as possible. Please note there is a late fee for any late pickups.

All parents that are picking up their child(ren) need to make verbal contact with the teacher/staff member before taking their child. For safety reasons, please make sure that your child(ren) stay with you the entire time before exiting the building.

Child Release Policy

Children will only be released to a parent/guardian or authorized pickup individual. Children must be signed out by the person according to the above procedure. SSAFC must have prior written authorization from a parent/guardian in order to release a child to an individual not listed as an authorized individual to pick up child.

In the event of an emergency, the parent/guardian may call the school and give verbal authorization for a child to be picked up. This person will need to show a driver's license in order for the child to be released.

Fire

In the event of a fire at SSAFC, students will evacuate the school through designated doors and will to the predetermined area. The children will wait at the predetermined area until it is safe to return into the building or until a child is released to an authorized parent/guardian or individual.

Tornado

In the event of a tornado, students will move to a predetermined area inside the school and take cover until the warning has passed.

Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement weather, students will stay inside where it is safe. This includes extremely hot or cold conditions outside. Staff members and administration will use their discretion on whether it is safe for the students to participate in outdoor activities. Please have your child prepared for the weather i.e. coats, mittens, hats, etc.

School Closing/Delayed Start due to Weather

School Closing:

The school will follow the Englewood School District. If our local school district determines that it is not safe enough for students and staff to be commuting to school then we will follow their lead. Tuition will not be credited in the event of school closings.

Delayed Start:

The school will follow the Englewood School District. If Englewood School District is on delayed start then we will follow the same timed delay. *Tuition will not be credited in the event of school closings.* For example, if Englewood School District is on a one-hour delay we will also be delayed one-hour.

Daily Departure Procedures

The closing staff members will check the sign out list to ensure that all children have been picked up and signed out. If a child is not picked up the staff member will call the parent to ensure that the child has been picked up.

Lost Children/Keeping count of Children

A child is considered lost when a child is not accounted for and the safety of the child cannot be confirmed by a staff member or guardian. Staff members and administration will search the building and school grounds. If the child cannot be found then a phone call will be placed to the parents. If the child is not with the parents or they are not reachable, emergency personnel (911) may be called. Every effort will be made to do the above in a quick and efficient manner. Each staff member will always know how many children they are in charge of and where those children are at all times. Each transition the staff members will connect to verify how many children they now have.

Reporting of Child Abuse

The State of Colorado requires that child care providers report all known or suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

If you feel that your child has been a victim of child abuse, assistance may be obtained through the Department of Social Services, Arapahoe County at 303-636-1750.

Visitors

All visitors must sign in at the office with a staff member. Visitors are asked that they do not

disturb the students, staff or schedule. Advance notice is always appreciated; however we love to have visitors.

First Aid/CPR

All staff members are required to be certified in both First Aid and CPR.

Accidents and Emergencies

In the event of a minor accident, the child will be taken care of based on the staff member's First Aid training. An accident report will be filled out and a copy will be given to the parents. Staff members will also watch the child for the rest of the day for any concerns from the accident. There also may be times where the teacher/administration calls and notifies the parents of an injury even if the child is well enough to stay at school and does not require any additional care.

In the event of a major accident, the staff member will call 911 and then the parents. If the parents cannot be reached, the emergency contacts will be called. SSAFC staff members will follow instructions from emergency responders.

Illness

The Stepping Stone Academy and Family Center will follow a strict policy regarding sick children in order to keep from spreading illnesses throughout our school. If a child is sent home from school, the child may not return for 24 hours minimum and must have been fever free for AT LEAST 24 hours (without the aid of fever reducing medication). Please help us keep your child healthier by keeping illness out of SSAFC as much as possible. We appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Illness/Accidents during the school day

We immediately notify parents or legal guardians when their child becomes ill, is involved in an accident or is injured and requires emergency medical care while at school. All non-emergency or minor accidents and injuries will be treated with first aid and TLC by a trained staff member then the accident or injury is documented and parents are notified upon picking up their child at the end of the day. When we feel a child is too ill to attend school in order to maintain the good health of our children within our school, we will not accept children if:

- Just began taking an antibiotic for a contagious illness within 24 hours
- Elevated temperature over 100.5 within the last 24 hours
- More than one episode of vomiting within the last 24 hours
- Acute diarrhea

Please call our school (303-781-8900) if your child is too sick to attend for that day. SSAFC reserves the right to determine if your child is too sick to attend school. If a child becomes ill at school parents will be called and must pick up their child within one hour.

Absences

Please call SSAFC when your child will not be in attendance for the day.

Medication

In the event that medicine is needed for a child and the medicine cannot be given at home, SSAFC will give medication under certain situations. Only staff members that have completed the Medications Administration Training will be allowed to administer the medicine. We must have the medication in the original container including the printed label from the pharmacy and must also have your child's doctor fill out a form that must be given to SSAFC before medication can be administered. In the event that any of these items are missing, SSAFC will not be able to give the medication, but parents may stop by to give the child the medication themselves.

All medications must be given to the teacher or administration. Medications cannot be stored in the child's cubby or with their personal belongings. Administration will store all medication away from the children in a special medical storage place.

Children's Personal Belongings and Money

Each child will have a cubby in their classroom. All of the children's belongings will need to be stored here. Please make sure that your child's belongings are all individually labeled with your child's name. Items can and do get lost. Please help us by having your child's name on each item and keep extra special items at home. SSAFC is not responsible for lost items. Tuition will be paid to the administration. Please do not give your children the tuition or put it into their backpack.

Discipline

If a child is showing minor misbehavior, the child will receive redirection, a verbal warning, or possible personal time.

If a child's behavior is deemed severe, the child will receive personal time in order for the child to calm their body. If a child is being unsafe towards others, the child may have to be sent to the administration. If a child's behavior is consistent or severe, parents may be required to come and pick up their child.

SSAFC reserves the right to dismiss a child from our Academy in the event that the child's behavior is deemed unsafe for the child, other children, or staff members. The remaining tuition will be forfeited. Every effort will be made in order to work with the family in order to achieve positive behavior.

Cultivating positive child, staff and family relationships

Each teacher at SSAFC has been trained on positive teaching practices that ensure that children's behavior is guided in a positive manner. We continuously incorporate our families through daily communications regarding their child(ren) and encourage family involvement to ensure that their child(ren) are being guided in a positive direction.

Creating and maintaining a socially and emotionally respectful early learning and care environment.

All of our teachers encourage positive interactions with each child through demonstration and teachings that allow children to learn and be capable of respecting others socially and emotionally.

Implementing teaching strategies supporting positive behavior, pro-social peer interaction, and overall social and emotional competence in young children

Through training each teacher is able to effectively and positively reinforce children's positive behavior and re-direct any behavior that is harmful to a wanted behavior. Each teacher continuously demonstrates positive interactions with each child, which helps children learn how to treat others in a positive way and allows them be more socially and emotionally aware of the feelings of their peers.

SSAFC believes in working as a team to identify the specific social and emotional needs of each child. Our staff are trained in methods that enable them to understand children's behavior and develop positive behavior support plans for each child. This reduces challenging behaviors and may prevent suspensions and expulsions.

Access an early childhood mental health consultant or other specialist as needed.

At SSAFC we continuously strive to strengthen our relationships with our children and their family. Through our continuous specialized trainings, our teachers are able to identify the individual needs of our children. While working with our families, we are able to provide each

child with the specialized care that he/she may need within our classrooms. When a situation occurs that make a child's needs difficult for staff and parents to adequately address the family will be given information on how to access an Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist to support their child in all environments.

After observing and working with a child, if a staff member feels that a child may benefit for other services, a staff member will contact the parents and explain the interactions. Administration will provide information for services and recommendations based on the child's need. SSAFC Administration will provide contact information of the services or contact information for support to the parents via email or handout.

Language Interpretation

If English is not your first language, please always let us know. We are happy to provide all correspondence in your preferred/home language. This includes both written and verbal translation such as newsletters, conferences, day to day conversation, etc. Our goal is for all families to feel comfortable and be a part of your child's growth. In the event that a translator is needed, SSAFC will use the interpretation services of Colorado Language Connection.

Colorado Language Connection
(303) 923-2945
www.coloradolanguageconnection.org

When we have students in classrooms that have a different home languages, we will have a teacher that speaks your home language in the child's class.

Transitions

Transitions are often difficult for young children. Our goal is to work together with the student and family to make each transition as easy as possible. If you have any questions regarding transitions, please feel free to reach out Ms. Kaela or Ms. Sorrell. We will be happy to set up a time to connect with you.

Transitioning into SSAFC: New environments are often challenging for new students. We recommend that you attend a tour of SSAFC with your child so that the environment is not brand new. Talk to your child about the transition in a fun manner. On the first day, set up a routine with your child that you will follow each drop off. Example: Give your child a hug, kiss, and wave then tell them you will see them after school. Follow this routine regardless of their response. SSAFC Staff will give them lots of TLC and also let you know if they get upset. Often times, students are happy as can be before parents even get to their car! You are always welcome to message or call to check on your child.

Transitioning into another classroom: When a child is ready to move up to another class, staff will speak to the parents to make the best decision for the child. If we cannot meet with families, SSAFC will send home a letter. Staff will introduce you to the new teachers and tell you a little bit about the classroom routine. We will have the student visit the new classroom and follow their lead as to how many visits they need to feel comfortable in their new classroom.

Transitioning to Elementary: Transitioning to elementary school is a big moment for students and families! SSAFC will put out fliers of local schools Kindergarten Round Up. SSAFC will also try and connect you to other students at that elementary school. Towards the end of the year and again at the end of the summer program, we will invite a couple elementary students to talk with our transitioning students to answer questions.

Continuity of Care and Ratios

Continuity of care means that children and their caregiver remain together for more than one year, often for the first three years of the child's life. SSAFC has two teachers in each classroom. These teachers are the same teachers everyday. This way the teachers can emotionally bond and staff can provide the best care possible for each child. Our goal is to have the staff move with the students as the students grow in our program.

Our goal is to follow the NAEYC standard for ratios which is a smaller ratio standard than the State of Colorado Licensing requires. For example, Infants must be at 1 student for every 5 students whereas we do 1 student for every 4 students.

Nap

All children will rest (as required by the State of Colorado). The children (except Kindergarteners) will all be asked to nap for a period of approximately 2 hours. If the child wakes up and cannot go back to sleep, the child will be allowed to do a quiet activity such as read a book, color, or work quietly in the room. Parents will need to provide their child with a 2 inch nap mat, sheet and blanket. The parents will need to nap materials home each week to clean them.

Kindergarteners will be asked to rest for 30-45 minutes. This time may include silent reading, teacher reading, resting, and listening to music, etc.

Food

A small healthy snack will be provided in the morning between 9:00a-11:00a and again in the afternoon at 4:00pm. These snacks will be a small helping of a nutritious item. For example, apples slices and ranch or string cheese and crackers may be served.

Breakfast is served Monday through Friday from 7:30a to 8:30a. When enrolled in the breakfast program each child will be served a nutritious drink and breakfast. The cost is \$2.00 per day.

Lunch is served Monday through Friday about noon. When enrolled in the lunch program each child is served a nutritious main dish along with healthy sides and a drink. The lunch is served family style in order to teach children about serving themselves properly and basic table manners. The cost is \$4.00 per day.

Field Trips

SSAFC may take children on short field trip excursions or walks, i.e. the library, within 1 mile of the school. The Academy does not provide transportation (except in an emergency) therefore parents will be asked to sign up to transport children to any off campus trips outside of 1 mile.

Any field trips outside of the walking 1 mile radius will require notice and an additional permission slip. All guidelines/procedures for the field trip will be provided at that time. Please note all car seat laws will be strictly observed.

Staff members/adults will stay with the children at all times during these excursions. Ratio will be followed while on field trips.

Video/ Movie Policy

Movies may be watched on occasion. The staff to child ratio will remain the same as during regular classroom activities.

Conferences

Conferences will be given twice per year by your child's teacher. In the event that a teacher feels the need for a conference at other times, you will be contacted to schedule one.

Conferences are a great opportunity for parents/guardians to learn where the children are in their development.

Annual Survey

Annually, SSAFC will conduct a survey regarding how we are doing as a school. We will ask for parent/guardian input on what families like, what families would like improved and also additional suggestions on how SSAFC can support our families, staff and community. Upon completion of the survey, SSAFC will share the results with our families as well as create a Quality Improvement Plan. A copy of the Quality Improvement Plan will always be available upon request in the main office at SSAFC.

Volunteer Hours

We ask that each family donates 10 hours per year towards SSAFC. These hours are not only meant to support the Academy, but more importantly your child. This time is a great way to learn about your child's time at SSAFC and also celebrate with your child during parties and events. These hours are accumulated on an honor system and can be achieved in various ways. We ask that you keep track of your hours and submit them to the school each May.

Ways to accumulate 10 hours?

- Attend informational meetings, parents/teacher conferences, extracurricular activities presented by the school.
- Help the teacher by putting together projects, research ideas, wash rugs, etc.
Donations of requested goods, Read to children and volunteer in classroom
- Career/Interest Day

Complaints

Complaints about the Academy should be directed to the Administration. (Kaela Chaffin & Sorrell Pappas)

Unresolved complaints can also be directed to:

Colorado Department of Human Services Office of Child Care Services 1575 Sherman Street
Denver, CO 80203-1714
]303.866.5958

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