Stepping Stone Ministries

The
Stepping Stone Academy
Parent Handbook

The Stepping Stone Academy is a Faith-based Child Development Center. We are excited to offer the highest quality and a loving learning environment for infants to Preschool age children. Stepping Stone recognizes each child as an individual and a child of God and carries a commitment to ensure the safety and happiness of every child enrolled.

Academy Mission Statement
Our mission is to offer a program that is based solely on the individual needs of each of God's children. Our role is to encourage and support each child in all areas of development, therefore creating a positive self-image and realistic opportunity for success.
The task of our program is to minister to the needs of all our families.
The Stepping Stone Academy offers a loving environment to foster a positive self-image, creativity, and social development. We offer an environment to encourage spiritual development suitable to the age of the child being taught.
The Stepping Stone Academy encourages parental involvement to help make this the best possible preschool experience for our children.

Program Philosophy

The Stepping Stone Academy strives to offer the finest in Early Childhood Education, and to direct attention to the Christian faith through value education – love, faith, hope, caring, sharing, forgiving, cooperation and appreciation. The primary value permeating our program is that every person is valued by God. Our goal is to provide an environment where each child has opportunities to develop a sense of self-worth and his/her own unique gifts. The philosophy of The Stepping Stone Academy is that children learn best through play and hands-on experiences. This is best accomplished through the use of manipulatives, games and learning centers rather than with drill and worksheets. Learning activities are designed to meet each child's developmental needs. The classrooms are set up to provide opportunities for free choice, large and small group activities and individual activities.
A children's program is expected to reflect the highest values and the best of care. The goal of The Stepping Stone Academy is to provide a safe, loving, fun place to learn and grow physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Our Center not only meets, but exceeds, the necessary fire, health and safety regulations for both the facility and staff.

Public Liability Insurance
The Stepping Stone Academy is covered by public liability insurance in compliance with state guidelines.
Liability
The Stepping Stone Academy shall not be held responsible for any accident, nor shall any member of the Preschool staff, except as covered by the insurance on the Preschool.

Child Abuse and Neglect

The Stepping Stone Academy staff is legally responsible for reporting any concerns of abuse and neglect to Child Protective Services. The staff has received training in recognizing abuse and neglect and of the proper procedure for reporting these concerns. To report concerns of abuse or neglect, parents may call (866) 684-1575

In order to provide maximum security for our students, all entry doors will remain locked during class times. Each family will be assigned a unique pass code for our REAR door entrance only. Our front (street side) door is an emergency exit only. Anyone without a pass code entering the building should check in with the office at ***(251) 970-5437 before*** access will be permitted.

General Staff Qualifications
All members of the Academy staff have at least one-year experience working with young children in a group setting (Church School, Bible School, Brownies/Cub Scouts, Preschool, Elementary School, Family Day Care). All Staff is required to participate in a minimum of 12 hours of staff development training per year. This may include workshops, lectures, and demonstrations in the areas of child development, classroom management, health and safety issues or curriculum.
Staff members support the Christian foundations The Stepping Stone Ministry. All staff have had reference checks and submitted to criminal background checks through the Alabama State Policy and child abuse/neglect central registry checks through the Alabama Department of Human Resources. Current infant, child, and adult CPR and standard first aid certifications are held by each staff member.

Health Requirements for Staff
Initially, each staff person shall provide a statement, on the required form, from a licensed practicing medical doctor, physician's assistant or a certified nurse practitioner. The initial statement shall be dated within six (6) months prior to employment and shall document the date and results of a T.B skin test (also dated within six (6) months). The statement shall attest to the physical suitability of the staff person to care for children or to perform services in a center, and the person's freedom from infectious or contagious diseases. A T.B test is required every 4 years.

Hours of Operation Standard:
Monday - Friday 7:30am-5:00 pm

Extended hours:
Early Drop 7:00 am / Late Pick-up 5:30 pm
Extended hours $35.00 a week or with prior approval can be charged at a daily rate.
If not notified prior., a charge of $1.00 per minute past 5:00 will apply

Children who will not lay quiet may be required to attend a half a day 8:00-12:00 after 14 days of trial

Registration
Application for admission to The Stepping Stone Academy will be made by completing a registration form and hand delivering it along with the non-refundable registration fee to the Director by 12:30 pm of the registration deadline date. After classes fill, the remaining forms will be placed on the waiting list for their first choice. Parents will be informed in writing or by phone of their child's status. The registration fee will be returned only if the class requested is canceled due to lack of enrollment.
Registration deadlines will be established in the following order:
1 – Families presently enrolled in the program 2 - Open
registration for all families.

Admission
Student Information Forms:
Parents should have all necessary forms completed before their child attends school. Those forms include:
Birth Certificate
Health Insurance card
Photo I.D of any adult authorized for pick-up.
Immunization record (blue card)

Pre-Admission forms
Photograph/media permission forms
Exemption form
It is the parent's responsibility to update these forms. Information will remain confidential.
At the time of admission one week of tuition, supply fee, and registration will be due.
Holds: We will hold a spot for one week with the registration fee. After one week you will need to pay full tuition price and all fees to hold your spot. The payments are non-refundable if you decide not to enroll your child for any reason.

Withdrawal
Should a parent need to withdraw a child, 30 days written notice is encouraged, but no less than 2 weeks will be accepted. To remain a reliable program, we must keep our classrooms as full as possible. If the notice is not given, the parent(s) will be responsible for an additional 2 weeks tuition whether the child attends or not. No refunds will be given for any prepaid tuition. The teacher, with the approval of the Director, has the right to determine readiness to attend. Should a child need to be withdrawn for readiness reasons, notice will be given in writing by the Director.

Tuition and Supply Fees
Full payment is expected each week regardless of classes missed due to illness, vacation, weather or holidays if your child is enrolled. The tuition and fee schedule are determined by the Board each year.
Full payment of the regular weekly tuition fee for your child/s is required if your child is registered. Tuition is due one week in advance and by Friday of each week. (next week's tuition is due the Friday before checking out) A grace period of 3 days (Sat-Mon) is given for late payments. If not received by Monday at 10am a late fee will be added to the amount due. If the payment is 1 week past due, the child may no be permitted to attend until payment is made and tuition will still be due for the following weeks unless proper notice is given. No refunds will be given for any prepaid tuition . The Stepping Stone Academy has the right to dismiss your child from the program until a full payment has been made and no refunds will be given.

No fees or tuition are refundable unless a written statement is given by the Director.

Tuition
Full-Time M-F 7:30-5:00
Infant / Toddler-$155.00
Twos and all non-potty trained- $145.00
Potty trained Three-Five-$135.00
Half day program: M-F 8:00-12:00 $100.00
Part-Time M-F 7:30-5:00 (2 and up)
3 days Mon, Wed, Fri $125.00
2 days Tues, Thurs, $100.00
Summer Program (Kindergarten & 1st grade) M-F 7:30-5:30 $75.00

Fees
Registration/hold $105.00 non-refundable Curriculum Fee: $108.00
Supply fee due in Jan and June $30.00. One session due at registration/admission.
Late payment fee: $25.00 after 3-day grace (Monday morning 10 am)
Late pick-up fee: $1.00 per minute after 5:00 unless extended day has been arranged
Extended day fee: $35.00 for morning and evening rates can be broken down with approval

Fundraising
Tuitions fees alone do not cover all of our yearly financial needs. The Stepping Stone Academy may depend on fundraising to meet our total expenses. A variety of fund-raisers will be offered during the school year. Families are encouraged to participate in fundraising activities that are of interest to them, and not feel pressured to participate in everything.

Medications
The Academy will administer prescription and non-prescription medications by The State of Alabama Minimum Standards.
Medications must on the AUTHORIZATION FOR ADMINISTERING MEDICATION/MEDICAL PROCEDURES FORM only and be approved by the Director. Medications/Epi-pens must be sent in it the ORIGINAL container with the pharmacy directions label on the bottle.

Illnesses
Exclusion guidelines for child care centers include:
A temperature of 100 or higher taken orally or 99 taken under the arm, diarrhea; severe coughing; labored or rapid breathing; vomiting; unusual spots or rashes; symptoms of a communicable disease-lice, pink eye, chicken pox, etc. The ill child will be cared for in the office and allowed to rest and wait for an authorized person to pick him/her up. Simple health screenings will be done by the classroom teacher/assistant each day.
Conditions will be noted on the health sheet and will include: a (GREEN) runny nose, cough, tiredness, cries easily, bumps, bruises, cuts, itching, rashes, complaints of headaches, stomach aches, vomiting, diarrhea, fever. Any child found to be ill or unable to participate the day's activities will have his/her parent notified.

Communicable Disease Information
Parents should inform the Preschool if their child contracts a communicable disease (chicken pox, head lice, Fifth's disease, pink eye, etc.) so that all parents can be informed, and any precautionary measures can be taken to lessen the spread of the disease. Better protection for all (children and adults) results when ill children are kept home until they have completely recovered. It is not unusual for children attending Preschool for the first time to develop illnesses 5-6 times during the year. Children exposed to an ill child may attend Preschool as long as they do not have any symptoms of the illness. When in doubt, contact your doctor.
FEVER – A child should not attend if they have a fever of 100 or higher taken orally or 99 taken under the arm. Fever over 104 is a sign of serious illness. Children with moderate fevers should be kept at home until they have been fever-free for 24 hours.
RUNNY NOSE – Mucus that is thick and yellow or green is part of the natural process of the cold. A prolonged runny nose with thick mucus could be associated with an infection/allergy and should to be evaluated by a doctor. In this case, the Director will speak with the parent and together evaluate the situation.
ANTIBIOTIC – A child taking an antibiotic may return to school after he/she has been on the medication for 24 hours.
COUGHING – If the child has a dry cough (barking dog) or a cough that is frequent and causes gagging or breathing difficulties should be kept at home and evaluated by a doctor. In less severe cases the parent may be asked to fill out a medication form for cough medicine to be given during school hours.
VOMITING -Sometimes a child will vomit just once for no apparent reason and then return to his/her normal activity level. In this case, the parent will not be required to pick-up but will be notified. If the child vomits more than once or shows signs of illness the child should be picked up and may return to Preschool 24 hours after vomiting has ended if no other signs of illness are present.

DIARRHEA – A child with 2 loose stools needs to be picked up and remain home until diarrhea has ended for 24 hours. After returning; if the child has only 1 loose stool the parent will be expected to pick-up.

Allergies
If your child is allergic or sensitive to any food, please let the teacher/assistant and Director know RIGHT AWAY! If your child has an allergy, please bring in a signed statement from your Doctor.

Special Concerns
Special concerns (allergies/sensitivities to ANY substance, asthma, other health concerns, separation anxiety, emotional, behavioral, or developmental concerns, etc.) should be brought to the Director's attention before the first day of class.

Transportation
Parents are responsible for bringing and picking up their child/children at this time. The teachers or Director must be informed of all carpool arrangements and any other changes in transportation in writing. The person picking up must present a valid ID. If last minute changes in transportation occur, please call the office and speak to the Director. Please be sure that your child's pick-up list remains current. Teachers/Assistants are NOT permitted to transport children. *We hope to offer a local school pick-up option in the future.

Parking Lot
Please use the alley in the back of the building. You may park in the rear lot. **Please do not park in the alley-way at any time!** Please use extreme care in the parking lot. Drivers should enter and exit at a "snail's pace", even when you are running late. Children should NEVER be left unattended in a vehicle. We're here if you need help.

Field Trips
Parents will receive notice of the field trip at least two weeks before the trip date.

Emergency Drills
Monthly fire, tornado, and lockdown drills will be practiced following the fire evacuation plan developed through the Fire Marshal's office and documented on the Drill Record Sheets.

Inclement Weather Policy
The Preschool will follow the Baldwin County Public School announcements concerning school closings due to inclement weather.
If BCPS is CLOSED, we will close.
If BCPS opens late, we will open late.
If BCPS releases early, we will release early.

School Holidays
The Stepping Stone Academy will follow the BCPS for most holiday closings with the exception of, Spring Break, Fall Break, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Please see the Director for more information.

School Closings
All Federal Holidays
New Year's Day: January 1-2 closed
Teacher Summer preparation day: May TBA
Teacher Fall Preparation Day August TBA
Early Release is at 12:00

The Stepping Stone Academy reserves the right to decide to close in a case of a late-breaking condition. An email will be sent to parents regarding closure information and a message will be available on the Preschool phone number – 251-970-5437
The Preschool has a battery-operated NOAA weather alert radio that we may begin our plan as soon as possible.

We have a cell phone that you may use to contact us see Director. This cell phone is for emergency use ONLY. For all other calls, parents should use the main number, 251-970-5437

Class Size
The number of children per classroom is determined by the State of Alabama Department of Human Resources Minimum Standards, but, our primary concern at The Stepping Stone Academy is providing the children with the best environment to thrive in, therefore our ratios are very low. In most cases they are lower than the required ratios. Each classroom will have a lead teacher but will be encouraged to merge/blend with the neighboring classes to provide a mixed age learning experience.

Placement
Children will be placed in classes in accordance with their chronological age, peers and for older children, we follow public school guidelines. Example: A child must be three years old on or before September 2nd to be enrolled in the three-year-old class; a child must be four years old on or before September 2nd to be enrolled in the older four-year-old class. The child's readiness to attend will be evaluated by the classroom teacher and Director. After appropriate observation, evaluation, and consultation with the parents, a recommendation will be made with the approval of the Director that a child would be better placed with a different class.

Facilities
All rooms have age-appropriate furnishings, equipment and materials and observation windows. An outdoor fenced play area is available. The facility meets all state health and fire safety requirements for regulated child day programs operated by a church.
All bathrooms, tables, chairs and toys are washed daily using a sanitizing solution. Floors are vacuumed and swept daily by staff members.

Behavior Management
The goal of behavior management is to help the child learn self-control and build good habits. The staff will help children learn self-control by promoting self-esteem and self-image using techniques such as: reinforcing acceptable behavior, ignoring the unacceptable behavior, offering choices, redirecting behavior to acceptable activities, setting limits, and learning to express feelings with words instead of actions. Each class will establish limits that are fair, appropriate to the age, can be consistently applied, and understandable to the children. Limits will be presented using pictures and role playing. Acceptable behavior includes cooperating, listening, sharing, taking turns, playing together, helping, talking about problems. If a child forgets an appropriate behavior, the teacher/assistant will use one of the techniques above to help the child regain self-control.
Because our program is based upon the Learning Centers approach and offers many opportunities for children to choose an activity that interest them, it is very rare that other management techniques are needed. If a child begins to have problems interacting with others or being destructive of property on a consistent basis for three days, the

parents will be informed of the problem and will be asked to pick up the child from the center. A log will be kept documenting the problem. The Teacher, Director, and Parents will work together to determine the cause of the behavior and to establish a behavior system that helps the child. Systems used may include, but are not limited to, high levels of positive reinforcement, token reward systems and picking up the child.
The Stepping Stone Academy reserves the right to ask that a child is withdrawn from the program if it is deemed through observation that the child presents a danger to him/herself and/or others.

Worship
Our daily lessons will include a Bible story, finger plays, songs, and stories about the weekly chapel lesson or everyday experiences. **Holidays**
We would like to bring a better understanding of the reasons for our holidays and special celebrations. We will focus on the Christian origins of special days. For example, at Christmas, we will focus on Baby Jesus' birthday but still have fun with of Santa and his reindeer.

Food
Lunches/Snacks are provided by parents daily. Any leftover food or drink will be returned to the parent at the end of the day unless otherwise requested. The Preschool has a refrigerator and microwave for storage and re-heating of food items.
Please do not send items that require a can opener or items that need to be cooked then cooled. We WILL reheat but if we do not have the time to cook.
We also have a group snack option. If a parent(s) would like to bring in a group snack, please speak to the teacher/assistant before bringing in food items due to allergies.

Dress Requirements
Children should come dressed to play in clothing that is comfortable, washable and that promotes safety and independence. Please do not send your child to Preschool in clothing or shoes that should not get dirty. Children will be going outside when the weather permits (even on cold days for a breath of fresh air), so be sure to send your child dressed for the weather of the day (appropriate coat, hat, gloves, long pants or thick stockings under dresses for the girls). Girls should wear shorts under dresses in warm weather. Children are urged to wear sneakers to Preschool for safety on the playground. No, flip flops or Crocs, please! Please provide a complete change of clothes (socks, underwear, shirt and long pants) in a zip lock bag marked with your child's name. These clothes will be left at Preschool until used or the school year ends.

Potty Training
Potty training is a skill best achieved by consistency at HOME and SCHOOL. If your child is ready you will usually know when:
Child tells you when/after they "go" in their Pull-up, Child tells you that they have to potty before they "go". We will start introducing bathroom habits in the 2-year-old class.
Children 2 and up will be required to where Velcro sided Pull-ups. **No Exceptions!**
Please bring ATLEAST 2 extra sets of clothing. And replenish daily if needed. the child must be accident-free for 3 days before sent to school in underwear. After 2 accidents your child will be require to wear a Pull-up for the rest of the day. Your child's tuition will not change until they are potty trained.

Nap
Each child is offered a resting period from 12-2 or 12:30-2:30 each day. This is expected to be a difficult time starting out. After 2 weeks of enrollment the child will be expected to lay still/quiet on his/her mat and not disturb the other children. We do not have another area that the child can be taken to as this time is also teacher planning and lunches. You will need to provide a blanket for your child. You may send a SMALL SOFT toy and a SMALL pillow if you like. Nap time items will be sent home each Friday to be washed. If you would like a special blanket/ toy sent home daily, please notify the teacher/assistant. Children who will not lay quiet may be required to attend a half a day 8:00-12:00 after 14 days of trial

Personal belongings
LABEL EVERYTHING!

Children will sometimes have the same items. Please write in PERMENANT MARKER on all clothing, bags, lunch boxes, food boxes and containers, cups, nap time items, bags of wipes and diapers. Literally, everything that your child brings in needs to have a name or initials on it. We can not be held responsible for items without a label.

We strive to be the Best at what we do here at The Stepping Stone Academy. If for any reason you have a concern please come to the office immediately and speak to The Director. We feel the need to address any concerns as soon as possible.

Our Contact information:
Email address foleyssa@gmail.com
Phone # 251-970-5437
Address 230 W Laurel Ave Foley Al 36535

Parent Handbook signature page

Please sign to acknowledge that you have read and received a copy of the SSA handbook.

Sign_____

Date_____