



Little Genius Academy

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2023-2024
School Year
Parent Handbook

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WELCOME

Dear Families,

Welcome to Little Genius Academy in Walnut Creek, California, and thank you for giving us the opportunity to grow with your child! We are happy that you have chosen us to care for your children. This Handbook will help introduce our Academy to you and answer many of your questions. This Handbook is intended to inform you of the purpose, philosophy, goals, policies, curriculum, and procedures of the program. Please read it carefully and keep it for future reference.

INTRODUCTION

We offer care and classes for children from six months old through Kindergarten entry. Academy's position of early childhood education begins with a school environment of love, warmth, acceptance, and understanding that each child is unique. This position is based on the belief that self-esteem is the foundation upon which all learning processes rest. Young children develop it naturally when they believe in themselves, their abilities, and their worth. It happens in an environment where they can make choices, decisions, and sometimes mistakes.

Learning always involves feelings. Young children must be allowed to freely express their emotions in a safe and validating environment if they are to learn and grow emotionally and develop a healthy sense of self. Children who feel safe can take risks, ask questions, make mistakes, and learn to trust and share their feelings. If they are taken seriously, they will develop the ability to respect others. If their emotional needs are met, they will have the ability to develop empathy.

Academy provides freedom for maximum physical, mental, social, and emotional growth. We help each child to fit individual needs into group experiences by imposing gentle, flexible limits. Since children learn best through hands-on experiences, we provide opportunities to explore by tasting, touching, smelling, hearing, seeing, and doing in the areas of science, math, literature, art, music, and dramatic play.

Developmentally appropriate instruction is provided in an environment that values cultural diversity and nurtures a love of learning. Our program focuses on the whole child, emphasizing socialization and learning through play. Our curriculum incorporates a variety of learning activities designed to promote problem-solving, creativity, self-expression, and social skills.

MISSION, VISION, PHILOSOPHY, AND GOALS

Mission: To provide high-quality care, inspire, challenge, and educate.

Vision: We want to be a place where we realize that we are always learning and the love of learning is highly valued.

Philosophy: We believe that children learn best through their everyday experiences with the people they love and trust, and when the learning is fun, Children learn through active play, and learning must be tied to positive emotions.

Goals: To recruit and retain professional teachers who are dedicated to the hearts and development of young children; to provide a safe, consistent, and enriched environment of appropriate activities; to provide consistently high-quality care by continuously evaluating our operations.

Therefore we offer Experienced staff with extensive training in early care and education; Consistent, comforting, and fun routines that meet the needs of each age group; Positive guidance methods including clear limits, redirection, modeling, opportunities to make choices, and positive expectations of each child; Planned activities and experiences to develop self-help skills and independence; Opportunities for everyone to develop, practice, and model happy, healthy behaviors; Small classes and low child to teacher ratios.

CURRICULUM

Academy provides a carefully planned, open-ended, and age-appropriate curriculum. Research shows that relationships play a critical role in the brain development of infants and toddlers. We incorporate activities to help adults build strong relationships by paying attention to children's feelings, interests, and needs. Active learning and choice are encouraged so infants and toddlers can grow and develop in loving environments.

As toddlers transition to preschool age, they learn more by doing and need many opportunities to explore, grow, and make meaningful choices. Our activities foster creativity and promote emotional, cognitive, social, language, and physical development.

The activities in our curriculum are designed to help address each child socially, physically, emotionally, and cognitively. Our curriculum stimulates thinking, reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving. The curriculum is designed to be flexible, giving teachers an opportunity to choose from activities to meet the individual needs of the children in the group. Our approach works universally well for any child because it targets their ability and background. A typical daily classroom routine includes a mix of direct instruction and opportunities for children to choose their own activities. Children will work individually, in small groups, and as part of a large group.

Our goals are: To help our children love the process of learning; To teach children reasoning, thinking, and logical skills in early childhood; To introduce children to the wonderful world of learning in a playful and fun way; To develop in small children spatial imagination and creativity; To create a good foundation of competence and confidence, upon which all learning will be built.

Our objectives:

Language/Communication & Literacy Development:

- Recognize their names.
- Recognize letters.
- Communicate needs and thoughts in words
- Listen with understanding and respond to directions and conversations.
- Understand the purpose of print and become familiar with books.
- Dictate stories and experiences.

Math Development:

- Sort and classify.
- Recognize patterns.
- Identify shapes and colors.
- Recognize numbers, count objects, and understand one-to-one correspondence.
- Incorporate estimating and measuring activities into play.
- Represent data using concrete objects, pictures, and graphs.

Social Studies Development:

- Identify community workers and the services they provide.
- Cooperate and work well with others.
- Recognize similarities and differences in people.
- Accept a variety of cultural practices and celebrations.
- Recognize the reason for rules.
- Begin to understand the use of trade to obtain goods and services.

Science Development:

- Appreciate science through hands-on activities.
- Make observations and conclude.
- Investigate living things in the environment.
- Use scientific tools such as thermometers, balance scales, and magnifying glasses for investigation.
- Use common weather-related vocabulary.
- Understand basic safety practices.
- Begin to be aware of technology and how it affects their lives.
- Be aware of health & nutrition through healthy eating and proper hand-washing routines.

Music:

- Exposure to talented musicians providing quality, wholehearted music education to our students. In every class, we sing, dance and play instruments to help build a strong foundation for a lifetime of music-making. We sing early childhood favorites and songs encouraging healthy living, kindness, compassion, growth mindset, and creativity. We hope to help each child unlock the hidden talents and curiosities inside of them.
- Develop an appreciation for music, art, and literature.

Art:

- Exploratory, sensory art activities help the child experience a variety of media. Collages and creating mobiles are offered. Paints, chalk, pencils, paper, markers, glue, paste, and play dough are all available in a “free choice” activity center for the children to use as they wish.
- Explore creativity and various art forms.
- Expand their fine motor skills using scissors, crayons, and glue.

Physical Development:

- Develop large muscle skills through exercise, creative movement and balancing, running, and jumping.
- Develop fine motor skills using scissors, crayons, puzzles, and beads.

Social-Emotional Development, Social Studies:

- Develop self-control and comfort away from a parent.
- Manage transitions and begin to adapt to changes in routine.
- Engage in cooperative group play.
- Share materials and experiences and take turns.
- Develop relationships with other students and adults.
- Show initiative and independence in actions.
- Exhibit eagerness and curiosity as learners.
- Develop problem-solving skills.
- Develop listening skills and learn to follow basic instructions.

The Little Genius Academy curriculum encourages children to be actively involved in the learning process, to experience a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and materials, and to pursue their interests in the context of life in the community and the world.

SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

The Infant Program: In the Infant Center, our main focus is to provide quality, attentive, loving care for your baby. We provide a fun, nurturing environment that will foster the ever-changing needs of your infant on a physical, emotional, and social level. Routines are the curriculum for an infant's day. Every moment of a young child's day offers opportunities for learning. The skilled educator catches these moments and helps each baby establish trust, discover and feel good about herself, tackle a motor task, realize the power of language, and begin to understand this strange new world from many angles. This includes crawling, being carried, stroller rides, outdoor play, climbing, and rocking to gain various perspectives.

Diaper changing, feeding, and other routines are vital for communication, self-discovery, and socializing. They are encouraged to master feeding themselves despite the messiness accompanying this activity. Our infant and toddler curriculum is loosely structured to take advantage of your baby's natural rhythms. He'll eat when he's hungry. She'll sleep when she's tired. And in between, our teachers give all the love and attention children need. Hugging, singing, rocking, and playing are standard fare in our Center.

The Toddler Program: In the Toddler Program, our goal is to provide children with the learning tools that they will need to enter preschool in a nurturing, loosely structured, and educationally enriching environment. Our curriculum targets age-appropriate learning and provides fun and exciting activities to ensure your child's day has great learning experiences.

Toddlers are working on becoming autonomous. The educated teacher respects this and allows opportunities for the child to be responsible and to make choices. This teacher also understands why certain behaviors must be limited and set fair and consistent limits. Expectations for behaviors are developmentally appropriate and allow the child to be challenged yet to feel support from the teacher. Consequently, frustration is minimal, and the child's dignity and self-concept remain intact.

In providing a program for toddlers, our teachers understand that these children learn with their whole bodies. They learn more by doing than by being told. Toddlers discover their world on a physical level, so they are expected to prefer walking, climbing, carrying objects, dumping or dropping objects to sitting, picking up toys, or playing only in a designated space. These large muscle activities are the legitimate activity of toddlerhood.

Children learn through structured play, age-appropriate lessons, songs, and stories, and independent learning through discovery, participation, and interaction. We have so much fun!

The Preschool Program: Our preschool curriculum offers special programs designed to meet two, three, and four-year-old specific needs. We take a comprehensive approach to math, science, reading, and writing readiness, including opportunities to experience the joy of learning. Activities in music, movement, dance, dramatics, and art are integral parts of our preschool curriculum. Our instruction in all academic subjects permits children to learn independently. We select challenging levels of experience to meet each child's individual needs. Children's art is displayed proudly and respected for what it is. The little ones are encouraged by a knowing adult to care for their belongings and the environment in ways they can handle them. The teacher creates and adapts the environment and activities to meet the children's changing needs daily.

The Pre-Kindergarten Program: Our Pre-K program gives children daily customized learning and individualized attention. Pre-K children are usually most responsive to activities in which they are involved in a "hands-on" manner.

Our curriculum frequently rotates and supplies new materials to maintain and extend the child's interest. Our exceptionally prepared teachers can spend more time each day interacting with children and less time prepping and planning.

Young children learn best when trained teachers build on the interests and abilities of the children. This reflects the currently recognized theory that endorses non-pressured, child-centered activities guided by an adult with a solid child development base and strong problem-solving skills. In such a program, parents truly become partners with the professional staff. Information or discoveries about the child's development are mutually shared, resulting in a program tailored to the individual child.

The curriculum includes activities centering on communication, science, math, social studies, music, and art, large and small motor development. An enrichment program that includes on-site visitors per monthly theme is offered. Dramatic play opportunities reinforce learning of practical life experiences.

Children need to be fully toilet-trained before the first day of Pre-Kindergarten. Please do not send your child to class in diapers or pull-ups, only regular underwear. Before coming to class each day, children should use the bathroom, although they will be permitted to go whenever requested. Please review proper bathroom habits with your child before the start of pre-k.

MEDIA VIOLENCE AND CHILDREN

We are concerned about how media violence and toys marketed with violent TV shows are teaching violence to children. We feel this is a vital issue that we all need to work together on.

Media violence teaches children that...

- Fighting is an acceptable way to solve conflicts.
- Violence is a common, normal part of everyday life.
- Violence is fun and exciting.
- The world is a dangerous place, so fighting is necessary.

Let's work together to reduce the harm of media violence.

- Work out limits in the amount of TV viewing.
- Select programs designed to promote children's positive social development.
- Watch TV together as a family when you can.
- Talk about what your child sees on TV - including such topics as what is real and what is not, distinguishing between ads and shows, solving conflicts without using violence, and what you and your child liked and did not like about a show.
- Try not to buy products directly linked to violent TV shows.
- Choose toys that promote creativity and open-ended thinking.
- De-emphasize superheroes and cut down on children's exposure to them.
- Avoid clothing, toys, or accessories that promote the violent superhero image.

Acknowledge that superheroes are fun and exciting, but they also hurt others.

Young children are learning how to get along with others. They are learning how to express their feelings and desires with words rather than by hitting and pushing. These characters demonstrate that violence solves problems and that victims are not really hurt.

Help children understand the true meaning of a hero. Real heroes are people who work hard to make the world a better place through peaceful means. Parents are heroes; teachers are heroes; doctors and firefighters are heroes; a power sword or gun doesn't make a person a hero!

SAMPLE DAILY SCHEDULE

All children must arrive by 9:00 am. Academy will only accept children into care after 9:15 am with advance approval from the Administrator. Children may attend Academy 5 full or five half days each week. This will allow the children to develop a comfortable school routine. Academy will be open from 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM Monday - Friday (except as noted in the school calendar).

Baby Room-Infant Center's Daily Schedule (6m-12m)

07:30 AM - 09:00 AM Arrival, Free Choice Playtime
 09:00 AM - 04:00 PM Eat, Sleep, Play, Outdoor Time, Diaper Changes on Demand*
 04:00 AM - 06:00 PM Pick-up Time

**Our infant curriculum is loosely structured to take advantage of your baby's natural rhythms. He'll eat when he's hungry. She'll sleep when she's tired. And in between, our teachers give all the love and attention children need. Hugging, singing, rocking, and playing are standard fare in our Center. We support every child's needs with stimulating activity, quiet time, small group interactions, educational activities, music, movement, and the arts.*

Please note this schedule is approximate. Infants eat and sleep on demand or per their own individual schedules and service plans. Attentive and loving adults always talk to babies, especially during routines. Teachers are gentle and respond quickly to babies' activities and cries. Music is played frequently throughout the day. Our primary goal is to provide a nurturing, secure environment.

Toddler Room-Infant Center's Daily Schedule (12m-24m)

07:30 AM - 09:00 AM Arrival, Hand washing, Free Choice Playtime
 08:45 AM - 09:15 AM Breakfast
 09:15 AM - 09:30 AM Diapering, Hands Washing, Free Play
 09:30 AM - 10:00 AM Dancing, Morning Circle Time
 10:00 AM - 11:15 AM Outside Play Time, Morning Art
 11:15 AM - 11:30 AM Hands Washing, Diapering
 11:30 AM - 11:45 AM Lunch
 11:45 AM - 12:00 PM Story Time
 12:00 PM - 03:00 PM Nap or Quiet Time
 03:00 PM - 03:15 PM Diapering, Hands Washing, Free Play
 03:15 PM - 03:30 PM Dinner
 03:30 PM - 04:00 PM Art
 04:00 PM - 05:00 PM Outside Play Time
 05:00 PM - 05:30 PM Hands Washing/ Diapering
 05:30 PM - 06:00 PM Free Play Time (Center closes at 6:00 pm)

Preschool Daily Schedule (2y-4y)

07:30 AM - 07:50 AM	Free Choice Playtime
07:50 AM - 08:00 AM	Hand Washing
08:00 AM - 08:45 AM	Diapering, Free Play Time
09:00 AM - 09:30 AM	Breakfast
09:30 AM - 10:30 AM	Outdoor Play
10:30 AM - 10:45 AM	Toilet Training, Hands Washing
10:45 AM - 11:00 AM	Calendar/Circle Time
11:00 AM - 11:45 AM	Lesson Time/Arts and Crafts
11:45 AM - 12:00 AM	Diapering, Toilet Training, Hands Washing
12:00 PM - 12:30 PM	Lunch
12:30 PM - 01:00 PM	Story Time
01:00 PM - 03:00 PM	Nap or Quiet Time
03:00 PM - 03:30 PM	Diapering, Toilet Training, Hands Washing
03:30 PM - 04:00 PM	Dinner
04:00 PM - 04:30 PM	Free Choice (Puzzles, Manipulatives, Sorting)
04:30 PM - 05:15 PM	Outside Play Time (Weather Permitting)
05:15 PM - 06:00 PM	Departure (Center closes)

Pre-K Daily Schedule (3y-5y) Potty trained

07:30 AM - 08:30 AM	Free Choice Playtime
08:30 AM - 09:00 AM	Hand Washing
09:00 AM - 09:30 AM	Breakfast
09:30 AM - 09:45 AM	Circle Time, Morning Physical Activities
09:45 AM - 10:15 AM	Arts and Crafts
10:15 AM - 10:30 AM	Restroom Break
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM	Outdoor Play
12:00 PM - 12:15 PM	Hand Washing
12:15 PM - 12:45 PM	Lunch
12:45 PM - 01:00 PM	Story Time
01:00 PM - 03:00 PM	Nap or Quiet Time
03:00 PM - 03:30 PM	Dinner
03:30 PM - 04:30 PM	Outdoor Play (Weather Permitting)
04:30 PM - 05:00 PM	Puzzles, S.T.E.M. Activities
05:00 PM - 05:15 PM	Games (Indoor play)
05:15 PM - 06:00 PM	Free Choice Playtime (Departure)

TEACHERS

Little Genius Academy Preschool and Infant Centers each hold a childcare license issued by the State of California. We regularly undergo inspection by Community Care Licensing, the County Fire Marshal, the County Health Department, and our worker's compensation insurance and liability insurance carriers. We have the County business license and comply with county business practices. We are fully insured. In addition, our staff receives regular First Aid training and is certified in CPR.

We employ warm and nurturing people who understand child development, can apply their knowledge in the classroom, and respect each child as an individual. We seek employees who value working as a team with parents, colleagues, and volunteers. Our teachers have the highest standards of education in the industry. We select teachers who have made preschool education a career choice, who are child-centered, and who want to spend their day loving and learning with young children.

Our staff is compensated for continuing their education in early childhood development. This ensures they are current in the field and enrich the entire program. They also receive vacation, holiday pay and medical benefits, investment 401 (k) plan with an employer match.

We conduct an annual staff evaluation. As part of this process, we seek your input. You will be given a questionnaire asking your views on the childcare quality we provide. Please assist us by filling out the form.

We require a police record check and a physical examination. Continuing education is an important part of working at the Little Genius Academy. Each staff person attends training in first aid, communicable disease recognition, child abuse prevention and recognition, child development, and teaching methods. All staff members are supervised by the center Directors, who report to the Board.

If you have any concerns regarding our staff, our practices, our policies, our facilities, or any area of concern, please do not wait for the annual evaluation; bring it to the attention of an Administrative Director or the Administrator immediately.

DISCIPLINE

All children are encouraged to express their feelings while teachers help them to find safe outlets for anger, fear, jealousy, and sadness. A “problem” between children represents a teachable moment where tolerance and conflict resolution skills can be learned, and limits are set without blame or judgment. We honor a child’s own inner pace of development and trust his or her choices. In our program, we allow a very wide range of choices and behaviors but are very active as adult role models in setting limits of respect and limits for safety. Children get an extraordinary amount of practice in living with the consequences of their choices and experience challenging and discussing limits, so they can deeply understand the responsibilities that accompany freedom.

We try to stress two main patterns of behavior: respect for other people and respect for property. As a result, we don't allow children to hit or shove other children or verbally abuse them. We also stress that they respectfully treat material possessions (ours or theirs). There is a difference between playing hard and using a toy for a purpose for which it was not intended. For example, books are for looking at, not tearing pages out of, and toy brooms are for sweeping, not for bashing the kitchen set with.

If a child continues to abuse a certain toy, the privilege of playing with that toy may be taken away from that child for a period of several minutes up to the rest of the day. If the whole group of children is engaged in this, the toy will be considered "closed" for a while.

If a child continues to behave inappropriately, we will talk to you about it. Hopefully, these two types of behaviors are ones you want your child to adopt, too, so they will be reinforced at home. If that is the case, we shouldn't have any major problems!

Children are never punished for lapses in toilet training or accidents (spilled milk, for example). In the latter's case, we will ask the child to help us clean up, if possible, not for punishment but to help teach responsibility.

Children at our Academy will not receive physical punishment. Children who have conflicts or problems with others while at our center will be encouraged to verbalize their anger and concerns. Even infants without verbal skills will hear their caregivers describing problems, solutions, and logical consequences. The role of the adult at school is to be a helper in positive problem-solving. Our staff members guide rather than punish. Discipline, i.e., guidance, will always be positive, productive, and immediate when behavior is inappropriate. No child will be humiliated, shamed, frightened, or subjected to verbal or physical abuse by staff or parents on the premises or during field trips. Each adult in the environment is a teacher who sets the ground rules and tone by his or her example. The adult is expected to model these rules and to assist the child in following them.

Participants are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior at all times. If a child is acting inappropriately, the staff of the Little Genius Academy will discuss it to find out where the problem may be. We will attempt to make the changes necessary to eliminate inappropriate behavior. Positive statements and redirection of negative behavior are practiced. When this fails, these guidelines will be implemented:

- Conduct report is written by staff and discussed with the parents.
- Copy of this report is given to the parent.
- Conversation with the staff will discuss further action if necessary. If inappropriate behavior continues and a child has had repeated conduct reports written on him/her during the program, then the following procedure would occur:
 - A behavior contract is implemented.
 - The child will be suspended from class for at least two days.
 - If the problem continues after the suspension, the child will be removed from the program.

BITING POLICY.

We have implemented a “4-Steps Biting Policy Program” at the Academy. Although we understand that biting might be a part of a child’s development, we must ensure the safety of children attending our program. Therefore the following policy will be upheld:

Step 1:

The child bites for the first time. Parents will be informed through an incident report explaining what happened. We will ask the parents to speak to the child about the incident at that time. The administration of the Academy will evaluate the classroom and the incident.

Step 2:

The child bites a second time. Parents will receive an incident report, and the administration of the Academy will counsel them and give literature, as well as referrals, to help them deal with the situation as a parent and let them know how we are dealing with the situation in the classroom.

Step 3:

The child bites a third time. If the two previous steps prove ineffective, parents will be expected to pick up the child from the school and return the following day.

Step 4:

The child bites a fourth time. Parents will be asked to remove the child from our Academy.

COMMUNICATION

Families and schools represent the two main environments where young children grow and develop. Because the family and the preschool program have a common interest in the child's well-being and share care and education tasks, it is important to establish and maintain positive relationships through communication, cooperation, and collaboration. Children are the ones who benefit most from healthy, reciprocal relationships between teachers and families.

Assessment Reports: Informal assessments are completed yearly to monitor your child's progress. Assessments help the teaching staff identify children's interests and needs while allowing them to modify the curriculum and adapt their teaching practices. Parents will receive reports during the school year regarding their child's progress in school.

Program Evaluations: Evaluations of the preschool program will be distributed to parents annually. Evaluations will be generated online, and all responses will remain anonymous. Please take the opportunity to complete the evaluations; your input is very important in continuing to provide a successful preschool program for the community.

We believe that communication is essential, and encourage every family to speak with the Academy director or a teacher whenever a question/problem arises or something occurs in the child's life that may be significant. We will be giving you feedback on your child whenever we can. Formal conferences will be scheduled in November and March. Other conferences may be scheduled at your convenience when questions arise.

Activity Feed: Parents receive daily communications, such as a summary of their child's day, including photos, notes, and activity logs, all in one place. The brightwheel app is a comprehensive and user-friendly solution for tracking and managing your child's daily activities, communication, and progress at school. Safety alerts, reminders, newsletters, illness and incident reports, and other information, such as billing, are available with the brightwheel app.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parent involvement and family interest in the Academy are crucial links in the educational process. By enhancing the parent-child relationship, providing continuity between school and home, offering education, better perspective, and personal growth for the parents, and assuring the best possible individualized program for your child, we will create a school in which both child and adult can thrive.

Open Door Policy: Parents/Guardians are always welcome visitors to our Academy.

Special Events: The Academy holds several informal gatherings throughout the year

for parents, guardians, and family to come together and become better acquainted with each other, the children, and the staff. Please make sure you check the calendar, newsletter, and postings for these events.

Parent Volunteers: We welcome parents to come into the classrooms and work with the teaching staff. We encourage parents/guardians to share special skills, knowledge, and/or hobbies with our programs. Please speak with your child's teacher if you would like to volunteer.

Fundraising: The preschool always seeks materials to enhance our learning environment. Children need representation for play – the possibilities are endless! Please let your teacher know if you would like to donate any materials that reflect items used in the “real world,” such as old cell phones, telescopes, telephones, rulers, calculators, and cereal boxes. Little Genius Academy sponsors regular fundraising events to support our mission. Money raised is used for program enhancement, employee development, equipment and supplies, toys, and improvement to the physical space. Academy will not sponsor fundraising for specific causes or individuals but will consider encouraging involvement in community events. From time to time, parents will be asked to contribute to the financial well-being of their child's daycare center. Your support is greatly appreciated.

BIRTHDAYS

We celebrate each child's birthday. If you would like to bring in a special snack, please notify your child's teacher beforehand so she can plan accordingly. Please refrain from large portions as the children seldom finish eating a large treat. Due to peanut allergies, we do not allow any peanut products for birthdays or snacks.

CLOTHING

Please **label** all belongings the child brings to school with the child's **name**, including shoes and underwear. Each child will be provided with a cubby for storing personal items. Your child's cubby should include at least one complete change of clothes, underwear, and shoes that are season appropriate. Please note: children are permitted to wear sandals *indoors only* due to irregular playground surfaces.

Children should be simply and comfortably dressed in washable play clothing that they enjoy wearing. Rubber-soled shoes are safer unless corrective shoes are required. Remember, the children will be active and experiment in all school areas. They should not feel restricted by the good clothes they are wearing.

Things **NOT** to bring to school: toys (other than for sharing day), money (if a child has money with them, we will put it in the parent mailbox), gum, candy, and medicine that is not given to a staff member to administer.

TOYS AND SHARING

Sharing important finds, toys, and events is an invaluable experience for the preschool child. It helps to develop language skills, self-confidence, and listening skills. A specific share time will be designated. Please encourage your child to bring meaningful shared toys or ideas - i.e., postcards, nature items, books, games, and souvenirs. In accordance with our philosophy, the Academy does not allow CANDY, GUM, or WEAPONS. Children are asked to save shared items for the specifically designated sharing times **only** and asked to refrain from bringing toys each day. Children may bring a special item from home on their special "sharing" day when they are on the calendar to bring one. Other items that correspond to our theme of that week may be brought to the "sharing table" on any day. Live animals and special guests are welcomed with prior notice.

POTTY TRAINING AND DIAPERS

Using the toilet is an important self-help skill for the children in our care. We want potty training at our Academy to be a non-stressful experience appropriate to each child's individual development and involving the child, parents, and teachers.

When your child demonstrates readiness, we will begin the potty training process. We cannot begin the process for any reason other than that your child is developmentally ready (not for convenience, age of the child, etc.) Children must be able to tell the teacher when they need to use the bathroom without constant reminders. It is not possible for teachers to give constant one-on-one attention at all times to every child. Also, it is the policy of the Academy that a small child not be permitted to use the bathroom unattended. Therefore it is essential that a child be able to clearly express the need to potty to the teacher. This is one of the most important skills to master before toilet training can commence.

We have deduced that while some children might be completely potty trained at home, they continue to have difficulty at school. This is in part due to several factors, such as; children often appear to be more in control at home or in calmer, less active situations. Additionally, they are not yet able to "listen" to their body's signals when presented with the distractions of a group care environment. Please do not request that we begin training your child until he/she has experienced prolonged toileting success in your own home. Your child will need to remain in diapers or "Pull-Ups" during daycare hours until he/she has shown the ability to remain accident-free at home and at school for a period of at least two weeks. The determination of when your child will be able to remain in underwear throughout the day will be left up to the discretion of the school.

We are continuing to happily take your child to the bathroom whenever requested, as well as scheduled potty times (every two hours). We will also remind your child (paying special attention to those who are potty training) to go "potty" throughout the day.

Children, as always, will be permitted to go to the bathroom whenever requested. We understand that accidents happen and are to be expected. We will need an adequate supply of clothes during the toilet training process to keep the child dry all day. Please keep at least three full changes of clothes, including socks and an extra pair of shoes, in your child's cubby during this period. Furthermore, we request you keep a few pull-ups in your child's cubby. If a child has two consecutive accidents in one day, your child will be put in a pull-up (if provided) or in a diaper. For health reasons, we will not wash out or handle soiled clothing. Soiled clothes will be bagged up and set aside for parents to take home and wash. If soiled clothing is not picked up by the end of the second day, it will be discarded.

We understand the need for a reward system throughout this transition, although we will not be rewarding children with candy for going potty. Teachers will reward children with stickers, stamps, pencils, etc. In addition, we will never force a child to sit on the potty. We will not punish nor shame children in any way for accidents. We recognize that accidents are part of the learning process. Children will never be forced to clean up a potty accident because they made it. We will not allow children to remain in wet or soiled clothing following accidents and will be changed immediately into dry clothing.

We want to do everything we possibly can to assist in this process. This is an exciting time for you and your children because they are becoming more independent and learning how to make their own way in the big world. The LGA teachers and staff are more than happy to help you and your child with their potty training. The transition from diapers to underwear can be quite a change for many children. Because each child is different and the time and attention needed to become "potty trained" varies from one child to another, we felt it necessary to put a general policy in place to help guide this transition.

NAPPING

All children under the age of five are required by state law to have rest time (and we haven't met one yet who doesn't need it!). We will provide a safe, quiet place for your child to rest. Children two and older will sleep in the main room on a cot. Children under the age of two always sleep in the nursery, and those under one year will always be in a crib or playpen. Children who wake up before the rest is guided in finding a quiet time activity to engage in that will not disturb any sleeping children.

Children are encouraged to rest during naptime. The nap period is 2 hours long after lunchtime. The teachers try to make the time pleasant and restful by dimming the room and playing soft music. The staff may rub the backs or tummies of children who are restless, asking permission first. Children who are not sleeping after an hour will be given quiet toys to play with. Each child will have his or her own labeled mat and mat sheet supplied by the Academy. Infant bedding is changed daily, and for older children, weekly.

SNACKS/MEALS

Daily meals are designed to ensure your children have nutrients important for growth, development, and learning. Our menu consists of three home-cooked meals, breakfast, lunch, and dinner, consisting of healthy food groups such as fruits and veggies, grains, protein, and dairy. A vegetarian option is available daily. Please note any special dietary restrictions and allergies on your registration form. The menu is available monthly. We are a nut-free facility.

ACCIDENT/ILLNESS PROCEDURES

If your child suffers a major illness during school hours, we will make every effort to notify you immediately about the condition and any medical treatment. Concurrently, we will contact the appropriate emergency agency (consistent with your request outlined in the "Identification and Emergency" form you completed at registration) to provide the necessary special care your child needs. In the case of an emergency, and if the Academy cannot make contact with you or your designated emergency contact, Little Genius Academy, ***in its sole and unlimited discretion***, shall seek any necessary treatment, including but not limited to calling 911. The parent or guardian shall be responsible for any and all expenses incurred in the event that this course of action becomes necessary.

Whenever there is an injury to the head when a wound, scratch, or bruise occurs that requires first aid, or when a child has a bad dream -- an incident report will be completed. Please check the Brightwheel app at the end of each day for reports or other pertinent information.

ILLNESS POLICIES

Our Academy operates for healthy children and staff only. State regulations prohibit us from admitting a child too ill to participate in regular daily activities. To keep children healthy, we ask you to adhere to the following guidelines and keep your child at home if any of the following apply:

- A fever of 100° F or above,
- A skin rash that has not been identified by a physician who has seen the rash
- Diarrhea and/or vomiting two or more times in a day
- Evidence of head lice or other parasites
- Severe coughing
- Rapid or difficult breathing
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Conjunctivitis
- Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool

- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
- Stiff neck
- Infected skin patches
- Pain of which the child complains and interferes with normal activity • Evidence of infection
- Excessive fatigue
- A moist or open cold sore

Our Director/Teacher conducts a health check of each child before s/he is admitted to school each morning. If you have overlooked any of the above symptoms in your child, s/he will be returned home. Children developing those symptoms after arrival will be isolated, and the parents will be contacted to arrange for the child to leave the Academy.

Children may be readmitted: Children sent home may not return the next day until they have been free from disease, fever free without the benefit of fever-reducing medications for 24 hours, and free of vomiting/diarrhea for 24 hours while on a normal diet along with a physician's statement that the child is free from communicable disease and that returning poses no risk to the child or others.

Children should be fully able to participate in all activities, including outdoor play. Parents should provide appropriate clothing changes so children do not become either chilled or overheated. Children with symptoms of the communicable disease remain with a staff member until the parent or designated representative arrives for the child. We make every effort to reach the parents when a child is ill, but after 30 minutes, we will contact the emergency contacts indicated by the parents. The Academy retains the right to continue to exclude a child despite a physician's statement if that statement contradicts the Academy's policies. Staff with symptoms of illness will remain away from the center. Our staff members have special training in recognizing communicable diseases. We follow strict hand-washing and disinfection procedures.

Do not send an overtired child even though you may be overtired of caring for her/him. Do not send a child who appears fuzzy, cranky, or anything other than her/his normal morning behavior. Even though there may be an absence of fever, this can be the beginning of an illness or an open invitation to any bug or virus the child might come up against during the school day. Remember, if you are in any doubt about whether or not to send your child to school, it is best to keep her/him home. Sickness is most easily transmitted in the early stages before the most obvious symptoms appear. Report to the Director if your child has been exposed to or has contracted a communicable disease. Please make sure this form, which you filled out when your child entered school, has the name and phone number of someone who can pick up your child if you cannot be reached. If you are going to be away from home while your child is in school, let the Director know where you can be reached, or if this is not possible, make sure the person on your emergency form will be able to pick up your child.

MEDICATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Each child must have authorization for medical treatment and a registration form on file before attending the center. This authorization allows us to obtain medical treatment for the child during a medical emergency. We will try to notify the parent as soon as possible if a medical emergency occurs. Every year, health forms must be updated, including health care provider authorization. If you have given your child medicine before coming to school, please inform a staff member so that we can be aware in case side effects develop. The authorization form must be completed before a childcare licensee or staff person administers inhaled medication to a child in care. A copy of the completed form should be filed in the child's record and the personnel file. Written instructions from a child's physician or a health care provider are also needed. These instructions should include specific indications (such as symptoms) for administering the inhaled medication in accordance with the physician's prescription; potential side effects and expected response; dose form and amount to be administered in accordance with the physician's prescription; actions to be taken in the event of side effects or incomplete treatment response in accordance with the physician's prescription; actions to be taken in an emergency; instructions for proper storage of the medication; the telephone number and address of the child's physician.

Medication is given only if parents sign an Academy-supplied permission form. Prescription medication must have a prescription label with the child's name and date on it. Permission forms must be renewed every six months. Chopsticks, sunscreen, diaper rash medications, and modified diets do not require a physician's signature but do need a parent's written instructions and permission. Such items must be labeled and given to a teacher. If a child's diet must be modified for health reasons, a physician's written explanation is required. If a child's diet is modified for cultural or religious reasons, the parent is asked to put the request in writing and may be asked to provide their own food for the child.

For all prescriptions and non-prescription medication, by law, you must bring it to the Little Genius Academy in its original container and complete the medication box on the health form so it can be administered to your child. Please note: a doctor's signature is required for all medications, both prescription, and non-prescription. All medications must be turned in to a staff member. All medication will be stored in a locked box.

MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Please promptly inform us in writing of any changes in information concerning your child's health, emergency phone numbers, and names of persons authorized to pick up your child. Information pertaining to the admission, progress, health, or discharge of an individual child shall be confidential and limited to facility staff designated by the program manager unless the child's parent granted written permission.

ADMISSION CRITERIA, REGISTRATION PACKAGE

Before your child is accepted for admission to the Little Genius Academy the following criteria must be met: Call the school and schedule a tour and an interview with the director to see if the Little Genius Academy will meet your child's and family's needs. When you are ready to enroll your child, submit an online "Intake Form" to confirm space availability for your child to start school. Once you receive a confirmation, you may submit your registration packet online or turn it into our office with a nonrefundable Registration Fee, Teacher Retention Fund, and a \$500 Deposit made out to Little Genius Academy.

The following required forms must be completed and returned:

- Registration/Financial Agreement Form
- Parent Responsibilities and Obligations (Admissions Agreement)
- Identification and Emergency Information
- Child's Preadmission Health History - Parents' Report
- Physician's Report - Child's Pre-admission Health Evaluation, TB test
- Immunization Record (No TB test required if there are no risk factors)
- Authorization to Consent to Treatment of Minor
- Personal Rights
- Parents Handbook Receipt
- Photo Release, Permission for Roster/Advertising/Brightwheel
- Parents' Rights Notice Receipt
- Emergency Card
- Infant/Toddler services plan (applies to Infant Center only)
- Individual Infant Sleeping Plan

The Little Genius Academy will accept children on a 60 days trial basis. We will offer continued care to those to whom we feel we can offer quality care. The State of California law requires the Academy to have a completed exam form on file before your child can attend any classes. The completed form must also include proof that your child has been immunized in compliance with state regulations.

TB test is required unless the doctor notes there are no risk factors!

IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

Each child is required to have on file at the center a record of immunization, recorded on the card provided by the California State Board of Health. The Little Genius Academy reserves the right to refuse admission to the center to any child not immunized for disease during an outbreak of the same disease within the region. Also, children will be refused admission if displaying symptoms of a disease for which they have not been immunized. Staff must have documented proof of health signed by a health practitioner on file.

Children must be immunized before entering school for the first time for the following: Tetanus, Diphtheria, Whooping Cough, Mumps, Polio, Rubeola, and Rubella. A TB Tine test is required every two years; the test date and results must be on record. This test must be kept current for as long as the child is attending school.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP

Parents are responsible for transportation to and from school. For your child's safety, parents are required to come into the building to pick up and drop off the child. Children must always be walked into their classroom by an adult and left in a teacher's care.

Maintain an unhurried schedule. So that your child arrives at school in a relaxed and happy mood, avoid upsetting her/him with last-minute rushes. The arrival of an unduly upset child and parent may disturb the routine of the whole school.

Promptness: If your child arrives late, she/he has missed an important part of the program. It is difficult for her/him to become a group member, and it is disruptive to the other children and teachers. Let it be your duty to teach your child responsibility and the good habit of being on time by bringing her/him to school by 9 AM at the latest so they can be included in the morning circle and have enough time to transition and separate from their parents. Transition and saying goodbyes are difficult for a child entering the program in the middle of activities or the middle of the day. We strongly discourage bringing children in during lunch and rest time.

Siblings: If you bring a sibling to Academy drop-off or pick-up, please keep her/him under your direct care and supervision. Supervising them, in addition to our enrolled children, may put us out of ratio.

We will only release children to persons the center has written authorization. We will make exceptions only if the parent speaks directly, in person or by phone, with the teacher responsible for the child at dismissal time. In this case, the child will be released provided that the person produces valid photo identification. We will not make exceptions with a child for whom a court restraining order has been issued. A copy of restraining orders against a parent or other significant adult must be on file with the child's health form. If an emergency arises and a person without a pick-up card authorization needs to pick up your child, please call the Director and state:

1. Who you are;
2. Your child's name, class, and teacher's name;
3. Who will be picking up your child, and at what time;
4. A phone number where you can be reached.

Please inform the person picking up your child that he/she will be required to show a driver's license before your child will be released. These procedures are to ensure your child's safety at all times.

SIGN-IN AND SIGN-OUT

In the morning and at the end of the day each child **MUST** be signed in and out. We are not legally responsible for a child who is not signed in. Parents need to sign their children in/out with the time of arrival/pickup and the full signature of the person who is dropping off or picking up the child. This is a State licensing regulation. Failure to sign/check in may result in a \$100 penalty fee. We receive penalties and stiff fines for any signature missing from a sign-in sheet. In addition, accurate sign-in sheets are needed to ensure your child's safe evacuation during any emergencies or fire drill practice.

Visitors will be asked to sign in and state in writing the purpose of their visit, except employees of the Academy. Any maintenance workers outside of the Academy must sign in on the visitor's sign-in sheet.

CHARGES FOR LATE PICK-UP

The Academy is open at 7:30 AM and closes at 6:00 PM. Please pick up your child/children promptly. Late pick-ups reduce children's trust in the Academy environment. If you are running late for a pick-up time, we ask that you notify us so we can reassure your child. We are flexible in order to meet the parent's unexpected needs, but a consistent routine of being on time is appreciated.

A Late Fee of \$2.50 for minutes for each child at the Academy beyond our 6:00 PM closing. If the late fee is not paid within 3 days the child may not return to school until the fee is paid. The emergency contacts will be called if the child has not been picked up within 30 minutes after the preschool has been closed and the preschool staff has not received any telephone calls or contact from the parents. If the emergency contacts are not available then law enforcement will be contacted. To ensure the children are all picked up at the end of the day, the staff will check the sign-in sheet.

WITHDRAWAL FROM ACADEMY

As stated in the tuition agreement, written notice must be given 60 days before a child leaves the program. You are responsible for tuition charged during the notification period whether or not the child attends. The Academy reserves the right to remove a child from the school for reasons of delinquency in payment of fees or an inability of the child or parent to adjust to the school program or discipline policies. Such removals are to be determined by the Director and the Administrator.

Members withdrawing from school before the end of the school year are responsible for the following: Immediate payment of all unpaid fees and charges incurred, Completing that semester's maintenance obligation, or paying the prorated fee.

DISASTER/EARTHQUAKE PROCEDURES

Natural Disaster: In the case of hail, flood, or other severe weather, the most conservative action possible will be taken. Teachers will keep children in the most protected situation possible until help can be summoned. If necessary, children will be evacuated to another building; parents can call the office for information on their child.

Lost child: A complete description of the lost child will be called into Security, the Program Director, and Administrator. A search will be done; if the child is not found within 15 minutes, the parents and law enforcement will be called.

Fire: If a small fire occurs, a staff member will attempt to put it out. If the attempt is not immediately successful, children will be evacuated and accounted for from the attendance form.

First Aid: Please note that the First Aid kits are kept in every building. Please report any injury, no matter how minor, to the Director or Teacher.

Fire and Earthquake drills will be coordinated monthly with all the tenants at our Academy to prepare for any real emergencies. In case of an emergency we will evacuate the premises according to our evacuation plan

Earthquake Procedure: If there is time, try to assemble at the designated assembly place. If not, and an earthquake is severe, the parents, Teacher, and Director should become responsible for the most immediate group of children and encourage them to be calm, keep low with head and neck protected, under tables/chairs if possible. If possible and safe, one Parent and Director should access earthquake kits, which should be distributed to each adult to allocate to their group of children. Calmly and as soon as possible, the children should be told what is happening and that the adults are taking care of things. The Director needs to circulate as much as possible to give support, and reassurances and to gain as clear a picture as possible.

ANTI-BIAS AND DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

At Little Genius Academy, we do not discriminate based on race, color, citizenship status, national and ethnic origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, physical or mental disability, medical condition, marital status or veteran status. The school complies with the law regarding reasonable accommodation for all physically and mentally challenged applicants. We do have the right to deny enrollment if all our spots for a particular child's age group are filled. We do not make it a policy to deny enrollment on the basis of a child with special needs, however, if after talking with the parents of such a child we realize that we do not have the training, equipment, facilities, etc. to handle their child, we will not accept the child. This is in the best interest of the child since our goal is to meet the needs of each child. If we are not sure

whether or not we could handle a special needs child, we would be willing to try. The parents and we would have to evaluate whether or not this arrangement was working as we went along.

TUITION / ANNUAL REGISTRATION

An annual non-refundable registration fee, as well as a \$ 500.00 deposit/ tuition prepayment is due upon initial enrollment of your child. We provide excellent childcare service at a reasonable cost. Please do your part to help maintain the quality of the program by being prompt with your tuition payment. Different payment plans are available. Tuition rates are usually set in the spring for the following fall. We make our best effort to maintain these rates; however, adjustments may be necessary during the year. In the spring, parents who are currently enrolled have an opportunity to pre-register for the following school year, before the openings are made available to new clients.

If you withdraw your child during the academic year (September through May), your deposit will be applied to a portion of your last month's tuition if you provide 60 days written notice. If you do not give 60 days' notice, your deposit will not be returned or applied to your tuition. If you have any questions regarding your contract, please discuss them with an Administrative Director. We reserve the right to deny admittance to any child whose tuition is not paid by the due date. Please call the Director to make other arrangements if this is not possible. Occasionally, small fees may be collected from each child for special activities.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES RIGHTS

The Department of Social Services or Licensing Agency shall have the authority to interview children, or staff, and to inspect and audit a child or facility records without prior consent. The Licensee shall make provisions for a private interview with any child or staff member and for the examination of all records relative to the operation of the childcare facility. The Department has the authority to observe the physical condition of the child, including conditions that could indicate abuse, neglect, or inappropriate behavior.

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

All Academy's employees are required to report any suspicion of child abuse or child neglect. All staff members have the training to recognize signs of neglect and abuse.

Abuse occurs when a parent or caregiver injures or allows another to injure a child physically or emotionally. Abuse may also occur when a parent or caregiver puts a child at risk of serious injury or allows another to put a child at risk of serious injury.

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive proper care, supervision, or discipline, or when a child is abandoned.

California law requires any person who suspects child abuse or neglect to report the case to the county Department of social services. Reports can be made anonymously. A person cannot be held liable for a report made in good faith. Little Genius Academy is committed to a safe, nurturing environment for children to grow and learn in a positive manner. If you feel your child's needs are not being met, bring your concerns to the Director.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND PUBLICITY

Photographs of the children participating in our programs may be taken from time to time and may appear in newspapers, magazines, brochures, or other publicity materials. Your permission for photographs including your child to be used without compensation is part of this agreement. A permission form is provided for you in your registration packet.

PARENTS' RIGHTS

As a Parent/Authorized Representative, you have the right to:

- Enter and inspect the Little Genius Academy without advance notice whenever children are in care.
- File a complaint against the licensee with the licensing office and review the licensee's public file kept by the licensing office.
- Review, at the child care center, reports of licensing visits and substantiated complaints against the licensee made during the last three years.
- Complain to the licensing office and inspect the child care center without discrimination or retaliation against you or your child.
- Request in writing that a parent not be allowed to visit your child or take your child from the child care center, provided you have shown a certified copy of a court order.
- Receive from the licensee the name, address, and telephone number of the local licensing office.
- Be informed by the licensee, upon request, of the name and type of association to the child care center for any adult who has been granted a criminal record exemption, and that the name of the person may also be obtained by contacting the local licensing office.
- Receive, from the licensee, the Caregiver Background Check Process form.

LITTLE GENIUS ACADEMY PARENT ACKNOWLEDGMENT/HANDBOOK RECEIPT

_____ I understand the meals and snacks policy outlined in the Parent Handbook.

_____ I have read the Parent Handbook regarding outdoor clothing and will provide adequate and suitable clothing for my child.

_____ I will transport my child in a suitable car seat or booster seat at all times, and all persons transporting my child to or from the center will do the same.

_____ I am familiar with the illness guidelines in the Parent Handbook and will not bring my child to Academy if I suspect he or she has a communicable illness. In addition, I have **at least** one other responsible party available to pick up and care for my child should he or she become ill while at the center and I cannot be contacted.

_____ I will respect my child’s learning environment by attempting to uphold and model the behavior rules, including using a quiet voice, allowing the child to care for their own belongings, and using walking feet. I will further respect my child’s learning environment by arriving on time each day (by 9:00 AM)

_____ I understand that there is a late fee of \$3.50 per minute if my child is picked up after 6:00 PM. If I fail to pay this late fee to the staff member on duty within 3 days, my child may not return to school until the fee is paid.

_____ I have completed a health form, immunization card, tuition agreement, and child information form.

_____ I understand that tuition is due by the beginning of my pay period or my child will be refused admittance to the program.

We, the undersigned, agree that we will try to consistently reinforce the ground rules of Little Genius Academy and that we will redirect misbehavior in a manner consistent with the guidelines recommended above. We also understand and agree to abide by the policies outlined in this Parent Handbook regarding all aspects of Little Genius Academy Infant Center and Preschool operations.

Signature _____ **Date** _____

_____ **Name of the Child(ren)**