

# Smart Start Academy

## Preschool and Kindergarten Readiness

205 W. 5<sup>th</sup> Street\*Emmett, Idaho 83617



PURPOSEFUL PLAY AND GUIDED LEARNING

## Parent Handbook

2024-2025

Welcome to Smart Start Academy!

Hello! My name is Becky Brown. I am the owner/director of Smart Start Academy of Emmett LLC. I am also the lead teacher for our Pre-K classes. I am so happy to get to know your student this school year!

My passion is teaching and I have over 15 years of experience. I graduated from Carroll College in Helena, Montana in 2003 with a BA in Elementary Education and a minor in Reading. Smart Start Academy is the culmination of many years of teaching and working with my own children. Smart Start is my interpretation of the perfect introduction to formal education. I hope to give your child the freedom to learn while playing but also develop many necessary skills to be successful in the formal school setting. I want to be the funnel into kindergarten, preparing your child to succeed academically and socially. I appreciate the many ways that children learn and have dedicated countless hours to researching and tweaking my methods in order to reach these goals.

I know that your child is your most precious part of your life. I understand the thought that goes into choosing a preschool for your child. I do not take lightly the trust and faith you are putting in me to be your child's introduction to formal education. I look forward to sharing this time with you and can't wait to watch your child flourish and grow at Smart Start Academy!

Becky Brown

## **Smart Start Academy Guidelines and Policies**

### **Enrollment**

The following forms must be completed and returned before a child enters the program:

- Registration form
- Non-refundable annual fee of \$75
- Pick up authorization form
- Release of liability waiver
- Tuition contract
- Snack Fee Plan arranged or paid

**A child is not considered enrolled until all forms are returned.**

### **Tuition**

Tuition for preschool is \$180 (pre-k) or \$140 (3-4) each month\*. Tuition payments begin in September and end in May. **Full tuition is due regardless of holidays, snow days, or illnesses.** Tuition is due the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. You have until the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month to pay. After the 10<sup>th</sup>, please add a \$20 late fee. Please pay with a check or cash. I am able to take a credit card with a \$5 fee. Venmo payments will also need to include a \$5 fee.

### **Arrival and Pick Up**

**Please arrive and pick up promptly!** Arrival time is 8:45 am or 12:15 pm. Pick up time is 11:15 am or 2:45 pm. If you are going to be late picking up your child, please call your teacher directly and leave a text or voicemail if we do not answer. **If late pick up continues to be a problem, there will be a \$1.00 per minute late charge after 11:25 am or 2:55 pm.**

### **Snacks**

Snacks will be provided by the teachers on a daily basis. We strive to provide well-rounded and nutritional choices for your child. We also like to give students opportunities to try new things. Many of our snacks will align to themes in our classroom. There will be a \$10/month fee to cover snacks. You have the option to pay \$80 at the beginning of the year or you may add it to your monthly tuition as an extra \$10. **Please alert us to any food allergies at the beginning of the year.**

### **Holidays and Celebrations**

We will observe and discuss holidays and special occasions in our lessons. The monthly calendar/newsletter will have reminders about special parties and events. We will also ask for sign ups to help with Halloween, Thanksgiving Feast, Christmas Gingerbread Houses, Valentine's Day, and our end of the year celebration. Parents are welcome to join us for all celebrations.

We will say the Pledge of Allegiance and sing patriotic songs every day at preschool.

### **Birthday Treats**

If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday at school, please contact your child's teacher to schedule a day. We will sing to your child and he or she will receive a birthday crown. We will then eat the birthday treat as our snack that day. We ask that

you send a birthday snack for each child in the class.

**PLEASE DO NOT SEND CUPCAKES TO PRESCHOOL.** After much deliberation, I have decided to ask for parents to leave cupcakes at home for home parties. Preschoolers mostly lick the frosting off, (which is a lot of sugar and colored dye), and make a mess with the cake. If you have ever had to clean up 20+ broken chocolate cupcakes and brightly colored frosting off of carpet and tables, you will understand my request.

Birthday treat suggestions: Fruit snacks, cookies, brownies, animal crackers, fruit, popcorn, crackers, popsicles, ice cream, stickers, trinkets, etc.

### **Show and Tell**

Show and Tell gives our students the opportunity to speak in front of the group about something they love. In Pre-K classes, we assign one child to show and tell each day. This means your child will have show and tell about once every six weeks. They may bring anything important to share with the class. Please limit this to one item. Pets need to be planned ahead of time. In our age 3-4 classes, we ask for assigned shares on assigned days. More info to come.

### **Toys & Trinkets**

**Please do not send personal toys from home.** Many tears are prevented by having this rule. We provide toys that align to our learning goals. The only exception to this rule will be an assigned show and tell, which will stay in a backpack until the designated time. Wearable toys such as jewelry and other items can be a huge distraction and will be removed until class is over.

### **Curriculum--Purposeful Play**

**Is your child learning while they play? YES! Play is absolutely essential for your child to learn social skills, character skills, vocabulary, etc. When your child “makes a choice” they are able to circulate and interact in a guided environment. All learning choices in our classrooms are deliberate and focused on building these skills!**

Our students will experience theme based curriculum with an emphasis on age appropriate skills provided through small group centers, play and whole group lessons. Within our program, children will participate in daily reading readiness activities, math skills builders, character skills building, fine motor skills, creative arts, dance,, music,

and STEM science activities. Smart Start Academy does not follow a structured box curriculum. Instead, we create lessons according to specific class interests and needs. Every year at Smart Start Academy looks different!

### **Progress Checks**

Children will be monitored throughout the year in a variety of ways. We will complete one formal check for letters/sounds, math concepts, name writing, and other skills. While there are no grades for preschool, I provide feedback for the parents in order to show you what your child is working to complete. It also helps me create a learning experience that works for your child.

### **Discipline**

Misbehavior at preschool means boredom or over stimulation. Both require refocus and a new direction. In the event that a time out is necessary to regroup, parents will always be alerted to the issue. Time outs will never be isolated from the classroom. Communication is key to problem solving.

### **Changes in family dynamics can really affect behavior. Please alert us to changes and concerns your child may be experiencing.**

**If your child is experiencing difficulties at home, we would like to provide additional support at school. I understand that you are not always able to share details and that's okay. If your child is coming to school after a difficult night, morning, or weekend, please text, "Handle with Care". Nothing else will be said or asked. This will let us know that your child may need extra time, patience, or help during the day.**

### **Illness**

Please be considerate of other children and do not send a sick child to preschool. A fever of 100 degrees or higher, red eyes or pink eye, sore throat, unexplained rash, yellow or green runny nose, vomiting, or diarrhea in the past 24 hours are symptoms that would require your child to stay home. If your child develops these symptoms while at school, we will call you and ask that your child be picked up as soon as possible. An ill child will be isolated and given appropriate care until you arrive.

Please teach your child to cough into a sleeve, wash hands, use sanitizer, and not put toys into his or her mouth. Germs are everywhere in preschool!

## **Potty Trained/Toilet Procedures**

All children must be fully potty trained to attend preschool. Your child must be independent in the restroom and be able to undress and redress themselves. There will be step stools for hand washing and for toilet use if necessary. Bathrooms are located in the classrooms. We will closely monitor and “talk through” any issues that might occur but children will not be assisted unless it is an emergency. Parents will be notified of any bathroom complications that require assistance. Accidents occur in preschool. Your child will never be scolded or embarrassed if this happens. It is recommended to keep a change of clothes in the bottom of your child’s backpack.

## **Field Trips**

Part of Smart Start Academy’s curriculum involves field trips. Information will go home about field trips on the monthly calendar and also in our newsletter. Parents are responsible for transportation to and from any field trip location. Smart Start Academy does not transport due to insurance. In the event that a parent cannot attend, I would recommend asking another parent that you trust in our class to carpool. Field Trips are always optional. Siblings are invited to attend.

## **WE LOVE TO EXPLORE OUR COMMUNITY!**

### **Clothing**

The best choice for clothing is comfortable and washable. We spend a lot of time working on the floor and exploring different mediums that can be messy. All paint and markers that we use are washable. I recommend Simple Green for removal. Soft shoes are best for sitting and working on the floor.

## **PRESCHOOL IS MESSY!**

### **Process vs. Product Art**

Art can look a lot of ways in preschool. While I believe there is always a place for Thanksgiving turkey art or cotton ball beard Santas, a lot of the “art” that your child will explore in preschool is more about the process and less about the product. Many times, you may see things come home that don’t look like much of anything. This means that your child has been exploring textures or learning how to use the end of a paper towel roll to make circles. Or it might mean that we were looking at what would happen if we rolled marbles through paint. And often times, it won’t come home at all because we do lots of group

projects. Please look up “Process vs. Product” for more on this kind of art.

## **Technology**

Smart Start Academy appreciates technology and all it has to offer. This being said, please be considerate to the amount of time your child spends playing on phones, I-Pads, video games, and other devices. Research is proving that kids are developing huge gaps in fine motor development due to excessive use of screen technology. We will not use screen technology at Smart Start Academy. We will show age appropriate learning clips via YouTube to enhance our lessons.

**PLEASE LIMIT TIME SPENT ON DEVICES AT HOME! EDUCATORS ARE NOTICING A HUGE GAP IN SOCIAL SKILLS AND FINE MOTOR SKILLS AS A RESULT OF TOO MUCH TECHNOLOGY.**

## **Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Policies**

As legally mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect, we understand our legal obligations to report suspicions of child abuse and neglect. We consciously review program procedures upon hire and again once every year of employment.

To prevent child abuse and neglect, this program:

- Trains staff to avoid one-staff-one-child situations if at all possible. If scheduling requires one adult to be alone with one child, the parent is always informed at pick up or drop off.
- Design classrooms to avoid hidden or secluded areas.
- Make sure all interactions between children and staff can be observed and interrupted.
- Required background checks for all employees

**WE PROVIDE A SAFE, SECURE, AND LOVING PLACE TO LEARN**

## **Remind App**

Smart Start Academy uses a communication app called Remind. This is an easy way to communicate with parents in a group setting. Throughout the course of our day, we take pictures of your child learning. I will send a few of these pictures home on almost a daily basis. My hope for you is that you will be able to show your child these photos and open the door to conversation about the science project we did that day or the game they played outside. Often times it is difficult for kids to remember what happened at school. This has proven to be a great way to keep everybody in the loop. You will receive a request to join our classroom on this app soon. Please join in to receive reminders from teachers and photos of your student.

I will only send a request for one parent to join. If you would like another parent to receive these texts, please let me know and I will add the phone number.

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