

Stepping Stones Academy

Parent Handbook

Mailing Address:

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Affiliations: Licensed by the State of Utah

Purpose and Philosophy

Stepping Stones Academy strives to meet the preschool and childcare needs of the families of Summit County by:

- Providing a developmentally appropriate, discovery-learning environment that meets the needs of every child's healthy cognitive, language, motor, social, and emotional development.
- Providing supportive parenting guidance to every family enrolled in the center.

Stepping Stones Academy practices the Montessori Method which teaches kids to be independent. We also use the Creative Curriculum method which the basic foundation for this method is "children learn by doing." As teachers, we support children in hands-on learning by providing encouragement, staging the environment, and providing ample opportunities for creative expression. Components of a quality program include:

- The appropriateness of the program with regard to children's developmental stages, culture, individual development and characteristics.
- Responsiveness of the environment to children's and family's individual needs and preferences.
- The way in which staff interact with children and families.
- The nature of the curriculum and how it is implemented.

Quality Improvement Plans will be updated annually.

Hours and Closures

Stepping Stones Academy will be open Monday through Friday from 8:00am-5:00pm. Drop off is between 8:00am-8:25am. All children must be here at that time. Unusual circumstances will arise and if you are unable to make it at that time, please wait to drop off at 9:30am, please do not make this a habit. Call or text a teacher if you will not be on time. Having the children begin together at 8:30 starts our community routine. A calendar of school closures will be updated yearly and passed out to parents when they enroll. There will be ½ day Friday's only on holiday weekends. Those times will be 8:00-12:00 pm.

Wait List Procedure

The center will be filled on a first come, first served basis. If we are full, the child's name will be put on a waiting list to fill vacancies as they occur. Enrollment shall be granted without discrimination in regard to gender, national origin, or religious beliefs.

A child with special physical, mental, or emotional requirements will be considered for enrollment on an individual basis. Within the scope of our ability and resources, we will make every effort to meet the special developmental needs of the child in collaboration with Child Find.

Enrollment Procedure

When a vacancy becomes available, we will notify those next on the wait list. If your child is offered a space at Stepping Stones in Kamas, you will be contacted and receive a formal offer of care.

Families have 24 hours to formally accept their child care space. If no response is received Stepping Stones will move to the next name on the list.

If your child is offered a space at Stepping Stones, you will be notified by email 2-3 weeks prior to enrollment date. Upon acceptance of the space, Stepping Stones will email parents a Parent Handbook and Enrollment Documents. Welcome Letters include, but are not limited to information about daily schedule, curriculum, and supplies needed. We encourage parents and their children to visit the classroom prior to their start date to familiarize themselves with the teachers and environment as well as ease the transition from home to school.

A one-time deposit of 2 weeks of child care is due upon the first day child is in care. This can be used for the last 2 weeks the child is in care or refunded when the child exits. The yearly material fee of \$250.00 is non-refundable and due every August for the upcoming year.

Children will not be accepted until at least eight weeks of age and have obtained all immunizations required for their age. If you and your doctor choose to follow a delayed immunization schedule, you must submit a written note from your doctor. These items must be on file with the home facility. In addition, if there is an outbreak of a disease that has a vaccine to combat it, your child must remain out of care until the outbreak is contained and the incubation period is over.

As required by the State of Utah, you will be asked to update your child's paperwork annually. Licensing requires that your child's health form be updated on the American Academy of Pediatrics schedule (2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 18 months, 24 months, 3 years, 4, years, and 5 years). Stepping Stones also requires that you provide copies of any updated immunizations your child receives at the time they are given. If your child does not have a current health form on file, families have 21 days to turn in an updated health form or care will be suspended until the health form is received.

Stepping Stones is currently licensed for children between the ages of 8 weeks and 12 years.

Make-up days

There will be no make-up days. There is no room for added students.

Payment

Tuition payments are due in full on or before the 1st of each month. Payments may be made by check, or Venmo. Tuition is paid by the month, not by the day.

Payment must be received by the 5th of each month. A late fee of \$50.00/ day will be added to your child's invoice starting at 5:01 pm on the 5th. If tuition balances exceed 30 days your child may not return until balance is paid in full.

Tuition rates will be reviewed annually. Any tuition rate changes will be announced at least 45 days in advance.

Financial Policy

Stepping Stones will not allow an account balance greater than \$250 to be carried past 30 days. An account is considered delinquent if it is thirty days past the invoice date. If a family's account carries a balance greater than 30 days, the child will be dis-enrolled from the program until their account is in good standing.

Arrival and Departure

Parents are required to sign their child in and out of the program daily. This is the most accurate way for us to ensure that all children are picked up at the end of each day and accounted for in case of an emergency.

Children will only be released to parties who have been listed by the parent/guardian on the registration form. Once a parent signs their child out, the parent is then solely responsible for supervising their child while on SSK property. If a biological parent/guardian is prohibited by the court from picking up a child, a court order is required to be a part of the child's file. Parents must notify us in writing or a phone call with a phone number of the new person who will be picking up their child. Persons who are unfamiliar to our staff will be asked for photo identification before the child will be released to their care.

Drop off is between 8:00am-8:25am. If it becomes a habit that you are dropping off late, a late drop off fee will be charged at \$20.00 per 15 minutes beginning at 8:26 am. Please be here on time so we may begin our lessons promptly at 8:45 am.

Children must be picked up from the center no later than 5:00pm. A late fee of \$20.00 per 15 minutes per child will be charged beginning at 5:01pm. Any late charges incurred will be added to your invoice the following month. If your child is not picked up by 5:10pm, we will attempt to contact you. If you cannot be reached, we will contact the emergency contact noted on your registration form. If the child is not picked up by 5:45pm, the center will contact the Summit County Sheriff or Summit County Social Services.

You may not pick up between 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm. You are welcome to come at 12:45 pm after lunch or by 3:15 pm so kids can wake up, go potty and make their beds.

Gate: Please be sure to lock the gate as you enter and leave the property.

***Cell Phones:** We ask all persons to please finish their cell phone conversation prior to entering the property. The children are excited to see you and need your full attention. Take a minute to enjoy greeting your child and listening to what they have learned that day.

Parent Conduct

Stepping Stones requires the parents and others picking up or dropping off children to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. One of the goals of SSK is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn, and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of SSK but, it is the responsibility of each and every parent or adult who enter the SSK property. All adults are required to behave in manner that fosters this ideal environment. This includes refraining from swearing, threatening, physical/verbal punishment of a child, smoking and confrontational interactions.

Discipline

The staff of Stepping Stones will treat every child with dignity, respect, and encourage children to learn mutual respect for individual differences. We believe that young children need our support and guidance to develop the skills needed to make good choices and understand the consequences of their decisions. Our staff will create an environment that supports self-discipline and that encourages positive social behaviors through modeling. Punishment will not be used as a method of discipline. Your young child is in the beginning developmental stage of learning and acquiring appropriate social behaviors. Instances of inappropriate social behavior are developmentally appropriate as your child learns the difference between behaviors that are acceptable and those that are not.

These behaviors will be immediately addressed by our staff with the individual child/children involved, and appropriate alternative behavior will be modeled. Stepping Stones discipline policy directs staff as follows:

- Redirect children to an acceptable activity by suggesting appropriate alternatives
- Talk on the child's level

- Speak softly and slowly
- Be positive and patient, but firm
- Guide children to resolve their own problems
- Reinforce appropriate behavior
- Remind children of the school rules and the consequences
- Encourage children to think about the impact their behavior has on people, objects, and events Physical punishment or verbal slights are not tolerated

In some cases, children may exhibit a more extreme behavioral issue. In these instances, the staff of Stepping Stones will work with the child and family involved on an individual and confidential basis to develop a Behavior Action Plan. We have many resources available to us, and we may request that the family seek professional advice.

Developmental Support

If a child in our care needs additional support (mental health, health, developmental, or educational), Stepping Stones will provide contact information for additional resource agencies. A Parent Resource Guide that includes information about health care providers, insurance, and development assistance is located in the Parent Resource Library. Staff and families will work collaboratively with outside resources to implement support strategies for both home and school. In the event a child needs a referral for further testing or intervention Stepping Stones will:

- Observe child's behavior
- Contact parents to discuss concerns
- Obtain parent consent to have child observed by outside resources
- Support parents and teachers to complete assessments such as the DECA or ASQ ☐ Schedule meetings with parents, administration, and teachers to discuss results
- Participate in the development of an action plan if needed

We expect the family to cooperate with us in our efforts to alleviate the problem behavior. If we feel that we have exhausted our resources and have seen no marked improvement in the behavior, it may be that we are unable to meet the needs of that particular child and a new environment may be best for them and the parents may be asked to withdraw the child from the center.

Medical Emergency

In the event of a medical emergency regarding your child you, and/or the person designated by you as the emergency contact, will be notified promptly. At the discretion of the staff, any immediate emergency medical care and/or transport to Intermountain Health Care will be arranged. If you are unable to be contacted, a licensed physician, dentist, or medical provider will provide the necessary care for your child. In the case of a medical emergency, parents are monetarily responsible for all medical care and transportation involved.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of the staff and children enrolled in Stepping Stones are a major concern. Please review the Stepping Stones Wellness Policy for more information. Your child may NOT attend the center if he/she has displayed any of the following symptoms within the last 24 hours:

- Temperature taken of 100.4 degrees or higher
- Vomiting within the last 24 hours
- Unexplained, frequent (2 or more times) diarrhea
- Flu like symptoms
- Severe colds with heavy coughing, sneezing, and/or constant nasal discharge accompanied by another symptom
- Discharge from the eyes or pink eye may not return until they have taken antibiotics for 48 hours for pink eye/ conjunctivitis
- Croupy (bark like) cough

- Any other health reason, in which the Center Director deems your child not well enough for group care.
- A child with a streptococcal infection may not return until he/she has been taking antibiotics for 72 hours and is feeling better.
- If you choose to not take an antibiotic that is offered for a contagious infection, your child may not return for 2 weeks from diagnosis.

If a child becomes sick at school parents will be contacted and are required to pick up their child within 45 minutes of notification. From the first sign or symptom of any illness your child will be required to be out 3-4 days to prevent the spread. Doctor's notes may be required for return to care in the event of an outbreak.

Please respect the staff and other children of Stepping Stones by keeping your child home if he/she displays any of the above symptoms.

Summit County Health Department will be notified of communicable illnesses. Stepping Stones will notify Public Health of any outbreaks. 435-333-1500.

Medication

Medications will only be administered with written authorization from the child's doctor and with the medication release form filled out by the parent/guardian. All prescription medication must be in the original container with the original label. Prescription medication must include a label with the child's name, dose of medication, frequency, and expiration date. If necessary, ask your pharmacist for a duplicate container to send medication to school.

Parents are responsible for providing all medications and supplies to the child care program. Children may not transport medications to and from child care; this includes medication left in diaper bags or backpacks. Medication that is needed during the day must be left with the program director so that it may be stored according to regulations during the day.

The first dose of medication should be given at home to allow parents time to observe if the child has any type of reaction.

Emergency medications (e.g. epi pen and inhaler) must include a written health care plan signed by the child's doctor. Emergency medications are stored in your child's classroom, out of reach.

Fire/Evacuation Procedures

The procedures for evacuation in case of fire shall be posted in all areas of each site. Alternate routes are practiced at regularly scheduled fire drills 4 times a year or when new staff is hired. All children will be moved as quickly and efficiently as possible to the designated exit areas and wait for directions from the fire department.

Stepping Stones staff and students will also regularly practice a variety of emergency circumstances: fire drill, building evacuation, lock down and lock out, and active shooter.

In the event that students are forced to evacuate our facility, parents will be notified via phone then email. In these emergency situations, we expect full cooperation from parents in a prompt pickup.

In the event that South Summit School District is closed, SSK will follow South Summit and Summit County Government guidelines for closure.

Inclement/Excessively Hot Weather

In the event of extremely cold (below 15 degrees), strong winds, or rain, your child will be kept indoors and away from the elements. Outdoor play, when the weather permits, will be an important part of your child's day at SSK. He/She will also engage in activities such as art, sand and water play. Consider these things when dressing your child for school. Please do not send designer clothing, expensive jewelry, and toys. We expect the children to play without worrying. Toys will be provided and if they bring a toy in, it will be left in their cubby until the end of the day.

Visitor Policy

Stepping Stones practices an open-door policy for enrolled families and encourages our parents to make visits by appointment to the home. We encourage you to speak with our staff frequently about your child. Ask questions about what you can expect from the child care experience. Please email the director or your child's teacher directly to ask any questions you have.

Transportation

Safety is our primary concern when transporting children. Our van has scheduled maintenance and inspections. All children must be in a car seat, booster or seat belt and remain orderly when riding in the van. There will be no eating in the van and only water in a water bottle.

For students who will be transporting to WSD, drop off at SSA will be at 7:40 am promptly and leave by 7:45. Pick up will be between 3:45-4:00 pm. Late fees will occur beginning at 4:01 at \$20 per 15 minutes per child. On early pick up days, we will be back to SSA by 1- 1:15. Late pick up fees will begin at 1:16. We will keep in contact with parents if weather permits us to be on time. We will follow the WSD school calendar and you will not be charged for school closure dates.

Field Trips

At the time of registration, you will be asked to give your child permission to attend field trips either walking distance or with the SSA vehicles. Parents will be notified in advance of all field trips. Failure to abide by rules will be cause for excluding a child from field trips. All children are required to wear closed toe shoes on all field trips. If a class field trip is scheduled, and you wish for your child not to participate, you may be asked to make other care arrangements for your child for that day. When on field trips, we follow the same teacher/student ratio as in class. Field trip costs will be an additional fee and added into the following months tuition invoice.

While on a field trip, staff will have contact information for the children in their care. A list of all children and staff on the field trip will be kept at the center.

Television Viewing

Videos are not part of the regular curriculum at our school. Videos may be viewed when they are written into a lesson plan or weather permits us to be outside and is used educationally. Director staff must approve the appropriateness of the material content to be viewed by the students.

Stepping Stones will restrict the use of screen time during meals and snack time. Children under 1 ½ years will also not be permitted to view television or tablets during school hours.

Diapering and Toilet Training

Children in diapers will be changed in regular intervals throughout the day, and as necessary between scheduled changing times. An adequate supply of diapers and wipes must be provided to the school. If families do not provide a supply of diapers and wipes, we will charge families \$1/diaper and \$5/travel container of wipes. SSA will not accept cloth diapers.

Toilet training is part of being a toddler. Stepping Stones is happy to partner with families in this developmental milestone. Please talk with us frequently about your child's progress and success in this area so that we may assist you and your child in reaching this important developmental milestone. It is very important that during this time you have multiple changes of clothing for your child.

Stepping Stones staff will help children get into the habit of hand washing after diapering and toilet use.

Items from Home

Stepping Stones discourages toys from home including money. Stepping Stones will provide an adequate supply of play materials and activities for your children during the day.

When teachers request a "Show and Tell" let your child bring a toy for that day only, and please label it. If your child brings an item from home, he/she will be required to place the item in their cubby until nap time or the end of the day.

Outdoor Play

Weather permitting; we will go outside at least once per day. It is extremely important that you provide your child with proper clothing for outdoor play (sunhat, jacket, appropriate shoes, snow clothes, etc.). Please apply sunscreen every day prior to school. Stepping Stones will apply sunscreen prior to going outside in the morning and reapply after nap.

Rest Time

Infants will be on individual nap schedules according to their needs. According to state regulations, all infants must be placed in a crib on their backs for sleeping. We have a safe sleep policy that we follow directed by the state licensing rules and regulations.

Toddlers and preschoolers have a scheduled nap time after lunch. All children at SSK will rest after lunch. Freshly sanitized cots are provided for each child. Your child is welcome to bring a stuffed animal for rest time. All children will lay down for a rest. If your child has grown out of naps or the ability to lay down for 2 hours and rest, they may have grown out of the SSA program.

Birthdays

Your child's birthday is a special time for him/her. If you wish to celebrate at school, please discuss your plans with your child's teacher so that you are aware of any special concerns (i.e., allergies, healthy snacks).

For parties outside of school, no invitations may be distributed via the children's cubbies/mailboxes unless all children are invited. Addresses and phone numbers are part of the confidential information in a child's file and will not be given out by the school. Please ask for the class email list if you wish to distribute invitations or announcements.

Snack/Lunch

During the school year, Stepping Stones will provide morning snack, lunch and an afternoon snack.

Summer program, Stepping Stones will provide morning snack, lunch and an afternoon snack.

All the meals will be regulated by the state.

(2) If food for children's meals or snacks is supplied by the provider, the provider shall ensure that: (a) the meal service meets local health department food service rules; (b) the foods that are served meet the nutritional requirements of the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) whether or not the provider participates in the CACFP; (c) the provider uses the CACFP meal pattern requirements, the standard department-approved menus, or menus approved by a registered dietitian, and that dietitian approval is noted and dated on the menus, and current within the past five years; (d) the current week's menu is posted for review by parents and the department; and (e) if not participating or in good standing with the CACFP, keep a six-week record of foods served at each meal and snack.

Parent-Teacher Communication

Communication between home and school is vital to your child's success. Stepping Stones values the child's home language. If an interpreter is required to communicate Stepping Stones will help seek out resources for this situation. Please speak with your child's teacher daily so that you are both aware of the events in your child's life.

Conferences will be offered twice a year, in spring (May-June) and fall (October-November). However, conferences may be set up on an individual basis to discuss a child's progress or behavior. Newsletters will be sent home via email on a monthly basis to keep you apprised of events in your child's classroom as well as the school.

Ensuring Where Children Are At All Times

Staff will take a head count every time they transition to a new activity or place to ensure that all children have remained with the group. Staff members will do a head count every 30 minutes when the children are on school premises to be sure they are all accounted for. If a classroom is off site (out of the building or outside the perimeter of our fence), our staff will conduct a head count every 15 minutes to ensure that all children have remained with the group.

At the end of the day, staff will ensure that all children have been picked up from the center by referring to the sign-in/sign-out sheet.

Lost Child

In the event a child becomes lost, all available staff will search the premises immediately. If the child is not located after a thorough search of the building and grounds, a call to 911 will be made and a report of the lost child will be given to police. Please keep your emergency cards updated!

Caring for A Child Who Arrives Late to the Center

UNDER STATE LAW, it is the responsibility of the parent or individual transporting the child, to sign the child in/out of the program. In the event that the child's teachers are not in the building (i.e., field trip), a sign will be posted on the classroom door stating the time of departure, destination, and approximate time of return. The parent or individual transporting the child may choose to meet us at our destination, wait for our return, or continue to care for their child for the remainder of the day. Stepping Stones must be notified of the child's absence for the day or will be late arriving.

Media/ Photography

Stepping Stones will photograph children to document special events as well as regular daily activities. The photographs may be displayed within the school, used on the Stepping Stones website, used in your child's journal, printed in the local newspaper and/or displayed on the Stepping Stones social media pages.

Parents will need to sign a media waiver allowing Stepping Stones to take photos of their children.

Child Abuse

All early childhood professionals are legally required to report any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect to the State or County Department of Social Services immediately.

Termination of Child Care Services/Withdraw

Stepping Stones reserves the right to terminate childcare services for past due accounts, non-compliance with school policies, and/or unacceptable behavior by children or parents. If any of these situations occur, a conference with the director and related staff will be scheduled to discuss resolutions. However, if the problem is not resolved in an agreed upon time period, the child will be dismissed.

If you are withdrawing your child from Stepping Stones, we request a minimum of two weeks' notice in writing. You may use your deposit as your final 2 weeks or you will receive a reimbursement of your deposit after the 2 weeks are up.

Grievances

Families who have concerns regarding a teacher or other staff member should go directly to that person to discuss the issue. If the problem remains unresolved, families should then go to the director staff to discuss the issue.

To report suspected child abuse or neglect please speak with the center Director or you may contact: Child Protective Services at 801-538-4100.