STEM ACADEMY PARENT HANDBOOK

OUR MISSION

To provide a safe and secure environment while discovering talents and nurturing young kids for a gifted future. To inspire every child to dream and foster an attitude of, **"Yes, I can do it!"** and engaging every child with project-based learning of interest to promote talents.

OUR VISION

To provide a unique learning experience and platform that follows the cycle of learning through exploration, preparation, development and action, where a child can challenge his/her talent for confidence building. Quality Education is the lifeline for a healthy society and strong nation.

OUR GOAL

To identify the talent and nurture with a strong belief, "Every Child is gifted and talented". To establish a flexible learning center with enriched and varied learning opportunities for all young children to build strong foundations emotionally, academically and physically.

HOURS OF OPERATION - STEM Academy for Young Kids is open and enrolls year round. Our hours of operation are 7am – 7 pm, Monday through Friday.

SCHOOL DAY	8:45 am - 3:30 pm
BEFORE CARE & AFTER CARE	7:00 am - 8:30 am / 3:30 pm - 7:00 pm
PART TIME CARE	8:30 am -12:30 pm

**See additional options on "STEM Academy Program, Schedule, & Tuition" document.*

SCHOOL CLOSED/ EARLY DISMISSAL

STEM is closed on the following holidays: Martin Luther King JR , President's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving & day after, Christmas Day & New Year's Day , In Service Days. When a holiday falls on a Saturday, we will close Friday and when it falls on a Sunday, we will close Monday. Early dismissal on Thanksgiving Eve, December 24th & December 31st is at 1:00 pm.

WEEK OF CHRISTMAS & SPRING BREAK

These are FUN weeks for children staying with us! For those vacationing students, parents should be worry-free as their child won't miss out on academics. Care for school-age children is also available during our School's Out Fall, Winter & Spring Break workshops.

PERSONAL ACCESS CODE

Every family has been assigned a personal access code to enter the school. Everyone should use their own access code to enter the building. Please ask our office staff for your personal code**. DO NOT SHARE YOUR PERSONAL ACCESS CODE.** Please do not hold the door for anyone to enter the facility.

CHECKING YOUR CHILD IN AND OUT ELECTRONICALLY

When arriving to STEM Academy, please park in one of the many designated parking spots. Also be aware of the appropriate lane direction when approaching and leaving STEM. Please follow the corresponding arrows into and out of the parking lot. These procedures are to ensure everyone's safety. Every family has been assigned a personal access code. Parents/Guardians are required to check in and check out their child/ren on a daily basis, using the kiosk by the main office hallway. Each parent will be given a code to process their child's attendance in the center. This system helps us determine attendance in the center and classroom lists for emergency evacuations. Parents will be entering the building, checking your child(ren) in, and dropping your child to their respective classroom.

WHEN PICKING UP YOUR CHILD

At pick-up time, you will be picking your child(ren) up from their classroom, and then checking them out. When you pick up your child from the classroom, you must keep your child under your supervision at all times in the center including places such as the gym, hallway, lobby, staircase, etc. This means your child should be in your visibility at all times. For example, no child should be by the door lobby while the parent is still in the classroom talking to the teacher. We ask that you do not linger in the hallways after picking up/dropping off your child(ren). You must pick up your child at the designated hour indicated at the time of registration. After 10 minutes of the designated hour, you will be charged an additional fee. (Please refer to the 'LATE PICK UP & FEES' section for specific fee amount)

DAILY HEALTH CHECKS

Our staff is required to perform a daily health check of each child upon drop off. This is a simple process of giving a child the "once over" look. We want to make sure your child is free from skin rashes, unusual spots, scrapes, bumps, or bruises and/or fever. Any marks discovered on your child will be will be reflected on the daily sheet.

HEALTH IMMUNIZATIONS AND FLU SHOTS

Updated vaccines including the flu shot for all children attending STEM (from 6 months to Kindergarten) including all registered, aftercare & back up care students **must be submitted by November 30th, 2026.** You will be required to submit a copy of your child's immunization record to the center upon enrollment and a completed Universal Health Form by your child's health provider/doctor. No child may begin prior to STEM Academy receiving all mandatory medical records and medication when applicable. If your child received the flu vaccine in the beginning of 2026, they will still need a flu vaccine for this current flu season. Documentation from the physician is required.

Not providing proper documentation for completed immunizations and flu vaccinations will result in suspended care for your child. **If your child does not receive the flu shot at the latest by November 30th, 2026, they will be excluded from the STEM program for the duration of influenza season (through March 31) until they receive at least one dose of the flu vaccine.**

Remember to update your child's immunization chart as they are completed throughout the year.

CHILD WILL BE ABSENT

If your child will be absent, please call the main phone number at STEM Academy, 732-243-9793 to report their absence. If we are not informed of a child's absence after two days of not attending, STEM will call the parents directly to follow up on the child's wellbeing. This allows us to account for every child, any sicknesses that are going around, be aware of children on vacation, or children who are just spending the day at home. Reporting your child absence assists us on continuing the successful flow to the structure of our program. Remember, attendance is important to your child's success at STEM Academy. Please refer to our sick policy.

UPDATING PARENT INFORMATION

It is vital to our program and the safety of your child to update your personal information whenever the need arises. Your cell, home and work phone numbers must be updated and current at all times in addition to your home and work address, emails and emergency contacts.

PARENT/FAMILY COMMUNICATION & VISITING THE CENTER

We understand the importance of communicating with your child's teacher and encourage clear and constant communication**. EVERY TEACHER'S PRIORITY IS THE SUPERVISION OF YOUR CHILD AND ALL THE OTHER CHILDREN IN THE CLASS AT ALL TIMES.** For this reason, we ask that parents are mindful of the time spent talking to your teacher especially during peak hours. We encourage that if the conversation is not brief, to schedule a time with your child's teacher to discuss the same in detail during "down time". Families are to communicate with their child's teacher by sending a Tadpole message prior to drop off. If you find it necessary to check in on your child, you may also contact the office. The office can forward your message to the teacher. We ask that parents are mindful of the time spent talking to your teacher especially during peak hours.

HIGHSCOPE CURRICULUM

STEM Academy for Young Kids follows the HighScope curriculum as well as NJ's Model Curriculum in the older grades. HighScope's educational approach emphasizes "active participatory learning." Active learning means students have direct, hands-on experiences with people, objects, events and ideas. Children's interests and choices are at the heart of HighScope programs. They construct their own knowledge through interactions with the world and the people around them. We then layer STEM emphasis into our classrooms which introduces and engages children to STEM ideas, projects, learning and terminology. STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) will be given strong emphasis in our Pre-K and Kindergarten programs. Infant/Toddler and Preschool age will emphasize on verbal and language skills with STEM activities as their learning path.

MONTHLY CALENDARS AND THEMES

STEM Academy for Young Kids will post monthly calendars. They will reflect the theme of the month of which the curriculum will be based around. The calendar will have important reminders for holidays, days off, celebrations, birthdays, etc.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

STEM Academy offers a wide variety of extra activities. Many activities are included in your tuition and others are parent paid activities. Activities can vary from semester to semester to ensure children are being introduced to a wide range of activities.

UNIFORMS/DRESS CODE

Uniforms are required by STEM Academy for Young Kids for our Preschool, Pre-K & Kindergarten programs. Uniforms must be in good condition - no rips, tears, bleach marks or heavy stains. Footwear: children in all classrooms must wear "CLOSED TOE" shoes, sneakers. Flip-flops, crocs, any type of sandals or open-toe shoes are NOT PERMITTED. Participants in sports and physical activities are required to wear sneakers only. Infants (non-walking) are exempt from this request. Potty-Training classroom is requested to wear "easy pull up and down" pants. Please, no buttons/snaps, onesie-type clothing (i.e. overalls, singlet t-shirts, one piece jump suits, etc.) until potty-training is achieved.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

STEM Academy for Young Kids will hold two (2) formal conferences a year. A sign-up sheet will be posted online to allow you to choose a time slot. If you need additional time, please ask. If at any time during the school year, you (or your child's teacher) feel the need for an additional conference, we will accommodate. For our infant and toddler parents, you will be notified on when teacher communication sessions become available. All conferences will be conducted either in person . Please note each classroom is equipped with a telephone; you may call to check on your child if they had a difficult drop off, are new to STEM, if they are just returning from a long absence, etc. PLEASE KEEP ALL CALLS TO LUNCHTIME as to not disturb the classroom. Infant parents can call daily to check on their infants.

TUITION AND FEES for Preschool & Pre-K will be from September to June. Security deposit will be applied to cover the last 30 days of tuition. This date will vary depending on The Edison Public school's last day. May tuition will be prorated and charged based on the last day of the school session year in June. Security deposit will be applied to the remaining days of May through June. See example given below:

Example: If Edison Public school's last day is June 20th. Security deposit will cover 30 days (May 21st-June 20th) From May 1st-May 20th tuition will be prorated and charged at the end of April.

All deposits are non-refundable if you withdraw your child prior to 90 days of enrollment and month of June for Preschool and Pre-K. Monthly fees will not be prorated if start date begins within first 2 weeks of that month. Infants and toddlers remain monthly because it is a year-round program and tuition remains the same. The tuition month's payments are made in the previous month. (example: January's tuition will be paid in full by the end of December. Tuition is on a bi-monthly schedule. First payment is due on the 15th and the second payment due on the last day of the month. (due to February being a shorter month, March's second payment will be made on the last day of February). Tuition is accepted through the authorized bank account or credit card submitted on the tuition express form. There is a 3.5 % surcharge when paying with a credit card. A late fee of $100 is assessed if payment is not received by the 25th and care will be suspended if not received by the 30th of each month. There are no refunds for days off, vacation time, sick days and/or emergency/snow days. Tuition is subject to change without notice or when revised. Refer to the school calendar.

LATE PICK-UP & FEES
We understand inclement weather, traffic & broken down trains. These "occurrences" are the exception, not the norm. Please call and let us know when such exceptions occur. If these occasions of picking up your child 10 minutes past your scheduled time occur frequently (2 -3 times a week), you will be charged $15 in the first half hour (11th minute -30th minute) and another $15.00 in the next half hour (31st minute – 60th minute). If you need to adjust your pick up time, contact the office.

PICK-UP AFTER 7:00 PM
STEM Academy for Young Kids closes every evening at 7:00 pm. There is a LATE PICK UP FEE of $15 up to the first 15 minutes and an additional $20 for the next 15 minutes. For each additional minute after 7:30 pm, the fee is $2.00 per minute. Late fees are charged to your account with the time of pick-up posted in the comment section. We understand inclement weather, traffic & broken down trains. These "occurrences" are the exception, not the norm. If you need to adjust your pick up time, contact the office.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE: If your family needs to take an extended leave period during the school year, we can make arrangements with the individual family. Parents who leave for 2 full weeks or longer can pay a "Leave of Absence" fee. This fee is 50% of the 1 month's tuition fee. Students returning after a minimum of 1 month vacation must attend STEM a minimum of 30 days before they can submit a withdrawal notice. Students returning after a minimum of 2 months of vacation must attend STEM a minimum of 60 days before they can submit any withdrawal notice. Students will not receive the 50% adjustment should they decide to leave within 6 months. Please note that our withdrawal notice requires to give 45 days of advance written notice. This fee is non-refundable. This fee holds your child's spot in the classroom while they are away with the understanding they will return to school.

WITHDRAWAL – To withdraw enrollment after your minimum of 90 days, you are required to give 45 days of advance written notice. In such case, your security deposit will not be returned; instead, it will be used to charge the tuition fee. All deposits are non-refundable if you withdraw your child/ren prior to 90 days of enrollment. Verbal notice will not be accepted; withdrawal notices must be emailed to the emails listed below per location. All outstanding balances must be paid prior to submitting your withdrawal notice.

KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT is a school year commitment as classes run from September – June. This provides your child a proper introduction to STEM Academy's curriculum. If you choose to withdraw from the program, all payments including the security deposit will not be refunded. The security deposit and the first month are due at the time of registration to secure your spot. It will be posted to your account & the security deposit will be used your June tuition payment.

KINDERGARTEN TUITION follows an advance payment plan for the full year (2 tuition payments/month). A late fee of $50 will be charged if payment is not received by the agreed due dates; this will result in suspension of care if payment is not received by the 30th of each due date month. If care is suspended, no refunds will be issued including the security deposit. No refunds or tuition adjustments will be made for holidays, sick days, and/or when school is closed. Tuition is subject to change without notice. All payment plans are due in full by January 1st, 2027

Initial payment includes: 1 Month Security Deposit (unless the deposit was kept when informing us of your return this Fall) plus first month (September or first month you start) payment (minus the $500 deposit from the online registration)

The remainder of the tuition will be withdrawn as follows:
2 payments will be withdrawn by September 25, 2026. (October & November)
2 payments will be withdrawn by October 25, 2026. (December & January)
2 payments will be withdrawn by November 25, 2026. (February & March)
The Final 2 payments will be withdrawn by December 25, 2026. (April & May)

BACK-UP CARE is offered to families who need care on a day their child is not scheduled or may need back-up care if their home care is disrupted. Back-up care is not to be used for sick children. For children who attend public school and require back up care, they must provide a school calendar. Your child cannot attend STEM if their public school calendar shows they are open on that day.

SUMMER CAMP
STEM Academy offers a Mini Summer Camp for our Preschoolers and a Summer Camp for children 4 years to 13 years. Summer camp is an additional cost and separate from the school year. Children must complete the appropriate registration at www.igostem.com.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES
The following topics are meant only for your information. In case of an emergency, parents or emergency contacts will be informed as soon as possible to prepare for pick-up of your child(ren). Please keep an eye out for communications through email/text and or a phone call. Please refer to the "**Fall Information Packet"** for specific emergency location sites.

HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS
We do our best to teach and celebrate all calendar holidays. Cultures, holidays, celebrations are taught as a matter of fact. "Some families (not all) celebrate this and this is what it entails..." is one example of our approach. Children look forward to celebrations and it makes the school year fun! See your school calendar.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS
STEM Academy for Young Kids always enjoys recognizing all of our children, every day, and especially on their very own special day, their birthday! We look forward to celebrating your child's special milestone in a fun and creative way in school with all their friends and teachers where they spend most of their days. **Our STEM birthday celebrations can include food or edible treats; cupcakes, muffins, AS LONG AS THEY ARE UNOPENED AND SCHOOL SAFE**. Each classroom may also vary its non-food birthday celebration practices. The class will sing Happy Birthday and parents are welcome to drop off a special class activity, game, craft, favorite book...etc. The teacher will have some time set aside for the birthday child. You may also bring something in for your child's friends such as pencils, erasers, anything small and age appropriate. Please communicate with your child's teacher if you would like to join us virtually during the celebration. We will create an extremely enjoyable day surrounding your child's birthday as Student of the Day!

Below you will find examples of how we can celebrate your child's birthday in our classrooms:
- Enjoy class lesson or reading time outside
- Allow child to choose class activity or game
- Present certificate of "achievement"
- Have a class sing-along
- Create class coupons with special privileges (i.e. line leader, helper)
- Allow child to choose music to play for the class
- Child, parent (virtually), or teacher can read a favorite book to the class
- Allow child to choose a theme to wear something fun for their special day: pajama day, hat day, sports day, etc.

OUTSIDE TIME AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Children who come to STEM Academy for Young Kids are expected to be able to fully participate in the daily schedule. Outside time is part of this schedule; any child who comes to school at STEM Academy will be expected to play outside according to state childcare regulations. ANY child who is requested to not participate in outside activity due to weather or illness should remain home until they are able to fully participate. We go outside between temperatures of 35 degrees and 95 degrees. We monitor for air quality alerts and wind chill factors in making our decisions for outside time. Children are expected to get a minimum of 60 minutes a day of physical activity. At STEM Academy strive to help meet this expectation. Your child will have outside/gym time once in the morning and again in the afternoon. Children who stay after 5:00pm will get another opportunity for physical activity either outside or in the gym. Masks will not be worn during outside time in the heat. Please be informed that children Preschool & up will be going on nature walks around the STEM Academy property. Please make sure to sign the waiver attached to our "Welcome Email" prior to your child's start date.

PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

Personal security items can make the transition from home to school a bit easier. During this health pandemic, STEM Academy will only allow items to be brought to school (except infants) that can be wiped clean. These items will be cleaned with a sanitizing solution upon arrival. Children look forward to special days like "show and share". Guns, bow/arrows, action figures, superhero, or other "projectile toys ARE NOT PERMITTED at the center. These types of toys can lead to rough play and in turn can create aggressive (though unintended) play which leads to unwanted situations. If your child is participating in a "show and share" activity, please make certain it is an item they are willing to share with their classmates. Brand new items, birthday/holiday gifts should not be immediately chosen as this can cause unnecessary anxiety in children not quite ready to share. Toys, in general should not be brought to the center to avoid conflict and envy.

SMALL ITEMS

1. Be cautious of any item that is a choking hazard - these items should be avoided at all times.
2. No hair pieces and small pieces of any kind.
3. Please check bags and pockets when dropping off your kids – no coins, small toys, etc.

POLICY ON THE RELEASE OF CHILDREN

When you send someone to pick up your child besides yourself, you must have this person listed as an authorized person to pick up. Make sure to keep this information updated at all times. You must inform the office via email that someone else is picking up your child on said day. Advise the pickup person they must see the office to provide a valid photo ID prior to any pickup and a copy of their photo I.D. will be kept on file. ***They need to ring our door bell and provide a valid photo ID.*** Below please see the Policy on the Release of Children as per the state of NJ.

Policy on the Release of Children (N.J.A.C. 10:122-6.5): New Jersey Regulation

Each child may be released only to the child's parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) to take the child from the center and to assume responsibility for the child in an emergency if the parent(s) cannot be reached.

If a non-custodial parent has been denied access or granted limited access to a child by a court order, the center shall secure documentation to that effect, maintain a copy on file, and comply with the terms of the court order.

If the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) fails to pick up a child at the time of the center's daily closing, the center shall ensure that:

- The child is supervised at all times.
- Staff members attempt to contact the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s); and
- An hour or more after closing time, and provided that other arrangements for releasing the child to his/her parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) have failed and the staff member(s) cannot continue to supervise the child at the center, the staff member shall call the 24- hour Child Abuse Hotline 1-877-NJ-ABUSE to seek assistance in caring for the child until the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the child's parent(s) is able to pick up the child.

If the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) appears to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgment of the director and/or staff member, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released to such an individual, the center shall ensure that:

- The child may not be released to such an impaired individual;
- Staff members attempt to contact the child's other parent or an alternative person(s) authorized by the parent(s); and
- If the center is unable to make alternative arrangements, a staff member shall call the 24hour Child Abuse Hotline 1-877-NJ-ABUSE to seek assistance in caring for the child.

SICK POLICY

STEM Academy's top priority is the health and well-being of its children and staff. For this reason, our sick policy is as follows. Children shall be excluded from care or sent home if these symptoms arise during the hours of operation if/when they experience any of the following symptoms:

Severe pain or discomfort	Red eyes with discharge
Acute diarrhea	Infected, untreated skin patches
Acute coughing	Difficult rapid breathing or severe coughing
Two or more episodes of acute vomiting within a period of 24 hours	Skin rashes in conjunction with fever or behavior changes
Temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher	Weeping or bleeding skin lesions that have not been treated by a doctor
Lethargy that is more than expected tiredness	Mouth sores with drooling
Yellow eyes or jaundiced skin	Stiff neck

Children MUST BE SYMPTOM FREE FOR 24 HOURS without medication before they return to STEM Academy. If your child is sent home from STEM Academy with any of the above symptoms, they are NOT PERMITTED TO RETURN THE NEXT DAY. STEM Academy reserves the right to request a doctor's note to return to school.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

The following communicable diseases can and will exclude your child from attending STEM Academy for Young Kids until a note from their doctor is supplied stating they are no longer contagious or placing others at risk:

- Respiratory Illnesses: Chicken Pox, German Measles, Haemophilus Influenza, Strep Throat, Meningococcus, Measles, Tuberculosis, Mumps, Whooping Cough, Coronavirus
- Gastro-Intestinal Illnesses: Campylobacter, Escherichia coli, Giardia Lamblia, Hepatitis A, Salmonella, Shigella
- Contact Illnesses: Shingles, Lice, Impetigo, Scabies, Coxsackie Virus

STEM Academy may exclude a child, whose illness prevents them from participating comfortably in activities, going outside or results in a greater need for care than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of others.

ADMINISTERING OF PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION
If your child is need of prescription medication while at STEM Academy, the parent must ask for and fill out completely the MEDICATION ADMINISTERING FORM. This form must be signed by the parent (or doctor, if applicable). ALL medication must be handed to the office with a signed release form.

- Medication is in its original container with name and expiration date of prescribed medicine.
- Medication container must have date of when it was prescribed and how it is to be administered.
- Medication must have the name of child who is to receive medication on label.

ADMINISTERING NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION
If your child is need of non-prescription or over-the-counter medication/ointments for the following types of medicines, which must be in accordance with the recommended dosage, age and/or weight of the child as indicated on the label, the director/administrator/nurse will do so ONLY if a non-prescription medication form is completed:

- Antihistamines
- Cough suppressants
- Decongestants
- Non-aspirin fever reducers/pain relievers
- Topical preparations, such as sunscreen and diaper rash preparation

MEDICATION/OINTMENTS OF ANY KIND SHOULD NEVER BE LEFT IN A BACK PACK, DIAPER BAG OR CUBBY BOX AND MUST BE GIVEN TO THE TEACHER OR OFFICE STAFF.

ALLERGY AND/OR ASTHMA INFORMATION

Parents of children with allergies must discuss and / all dietary issues with the director upon enrollment. We strongly encourage parents of children with allergies to supply all their child;s food and bowls unless otherwise agreed upon. All children with severe allergies and/or asthma require the appropriate action plan and medications authorized by a physician. Plans and medications must be updated yearly and will be kept in the child's designated classroom and/ or area at all times. STEM must be notified of any changes to your child's allergy or medication status.

CHILDREN MOVING UP TO A NEW CLASSROOM

During the transition, your child will gradually spend more time in the new classroom, allowing them to become familiar with their new teachers, friends, and daily routine. We will closely monitor your child's progress and communicate with you throughout the process. The transition schedule may be adjusted based on your child's individual needs.

Preschool Behavior Problems and how STEM Academy Helps

Preschool behavior problems are very common depending on the circumstantial situations the child is facing within the family or social unit or emotional setback. Unless it is related to social skill developmental issues that we are made aware of, a behavioral issue can be coincidental, one time or could be consistent. In the calm setting of a classroom or school if a child is acting aggressive, not showing proper conduct in terms of listening and following instructions, this can potentially mean stemming from frustration or underdeveloped skills or behavior issues. Sometimes it can be emotionally overwhelming for a child to be in a school setting, and as a result their frustration comes out through their behavior.

Some of the common behavior problems that can happen are:

- **Emotional outbursts like crying, shouting, temper tantrums**
- **Separation anxiety**
- **Aggressive behavior such as kicking, biting, or throwing objects at peers and/or staff**
- **Refusing to follow rules or instructions**
- **Shouting back and refusing to listen**
- **Showing attitude like Bullying or Bossing constantly**
- **Distracting group activities on a continuous basis**
- **Any action that can self-harm**

If such problems happen daily consistently, professional help may be required at that point, parents will be involved and disciplinary action to remove child from the program may be decided. STEM Admin will reach out to the parents sharing the concerns to help facilitate the child receiving the professional assistance child may need.
STEM Administration and staff encourage positive discipline when behaviors occur. However, they will seek professional help if aggressive behavior becomes consistent even with positive discipline, and they become a threat to themselves and others.
This policy applies to all children enrolled in the preschool program, as well as staff, parents, and visitors involved in the learning environment.

1. Respect for Others

- Children must use kind words and actions towards peers and staff, taking turns, and listening when others are speaking are expected behaviors.
- Physical aggression (hitting, pushing, biting) will not be tolerated and will be addressed with guidance and support.

2. Safety

- Children must follow teachers' instructions to keep themselves and others safe.
- Running indoors, climbing on furniture, or other risky behaviors are discouraged to prevent accidents.

3. Responsibility

- Children are encouraged to take care of their personal belongings and classroom materials.
- Cleaning up after activities and helping peers when appropriate is always encouraged

4. Positive Communication

- Children are like sponges what they see and hear they absorb and translate that in their behavior. Staff and any support staff must abide to a positive communication protocol at all times with children
- When conflicts arise, children are guided toward peaceful resolution.

5. Inclusion and Acceptance

- Bullying, teasing, or exclusion are not tolerated by a child or any other staff or support members.

6. Guidance and Support

- Teachers use positive reinforcement to encourage good behavior.
- When behavior challenges occur, staff must gently redirect and re-engage work with parents to support the child's development.

7. Role of Parents and Guardians

- Parents are encouraged to reinforce positive behavior at home and partner with teachers in addressing any concerns.

Communication between home and school is vital to support each child's well-being.GUIDLELINES FOR POSITIVE

DISCIPLINE POLICY *(page 1 of 2)*
Positive discipline is a process of teaching children how to behave appropriately. Positive discipline respects the rights of the individual child, the group, and the adult. Methods of positive discipline shall be consistent with the age and developmental needs of the children, and lead to the ability to develop and maintain self-control.

Positive discipline is different from punishment. Punishment tells children what they should not do; positive discipline tells children what they should do. Punishment teaches fear: positive discipline teaches self-esteem.

You can use positive discipline by planning ahead:

- Anticipate and eliminate potential problems.
- Have a few consistent, clear rules that are explained to children and understood by adults.
- Have a well-planned daily schedule.
- Plan for ample elements of fun and humor.
- Include some group decision-making.
- Provide time and space for each child to be alone.
- Make it possible for each child to feel he/she has had some positive impact on the group.
- Provide the structure and support children need to resolve their differences.
- Share ownership and responsibility with the children. Talk about our room, our toys.

You can use positive discipline by intervening when necessary:

- Re-direct to a new activity to change the focus of a child's behavior.
- Provide individualized attention to help the child deal with a particular situation.
- Use time-out -- by removing a child for a few minutes from the area of activity so that he/she may gain self-control. (One minute for each year of the child's age is a good rule of thumb).
- Divert the child and remove from the area of conflict.
- Provide alternative activities and acceptable ways to release feelings.
- Point out natural or logical consequences of children's behavior.
- Offer a choice only if there are two acceptable options.
- Criticize the behavior, not the child. Don't say "bad boy: or "bad girl". Instead you might say "That is not allowed here."

You can use positive discipline by showing love and encouragement:

- Catch the child being good. Respond to and reinforce positive behavior: acknowledge or praise to let the child know you approve of what he/she is doing.
- Provide positive reinforcement through rewards for good behavior.
- Use encouragement rather than competition, comparison or criticism.
- Overlook small annoyances, and deliberately ignore provocations.
- Give hugs and caring to every child every day.
- Appreciate the child's point of view.
- Be loving, but don't confuse loving with license.

Positive discipline is NOT:

- Disciplining a child for failing to eat or sleep or for soiling themselves
- Hitting, shaking, or any other form of corporal punishment
- Using abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating or frightening treatment or any other form of emotional punishment of children
- Engaging in or inflicting any form of child abuse and/or neglect
- Withholding food emotional responses, stimulation, or opportunities for rest of sleep
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for an inappropriately long period of time

Positive discipline takes time, patience, repetition and the willingness to change the way you deal with children. But it's worth it, because positive discipline works.

GUIDLELINES FOR POSITIVE DISCIPLINE POLICY *(page 2 of 2)*

STEM Academy for Young Kids teaches "POSITIVE GUIDANCE" and "REDIRECTION". We want to teach children to "use their words" when age appropriate and staff will use their words to communicate wanted behavior. We want to teach children to problem solve and conflict resolute when the situation presents itself. We want to empower children to stand up for themselves (and others) and encourage them to make positive choices. We understand and expect developmentally appropriate acting out and will handle each case as it arises. We teach our staff that behaviors, not the child need to be focused on in the event of such an incident. Safety is our number one priority! Unless, your child is a threat to themselves or others around them, all situations are handled in the classroom. A child may sit (or be asked to sit) in the library or quiet area to regain composure and then reintegrate into group activity. In extreme cases, when a child is unable to calm themselves or with the aid of the teacher/director, we will "take a walk" around the classroom or the school until calmness is achieved - the child will be returned to their classroom to rejoin the group. Furthermore, a child's emotions should not be ignored, rather they should be allowed to express disagreement, anger, sadness, crying etc. and learn to manage and gain self-control of those feelings, through help from the teacher, parent or fellow classmate.

- STEM Academy staff WILL NOT negatively discipline any child for not eating/sleeping/a "potty accident".
- STEM Academy staff CAN NOT FORCE a child to eat, sleep or use the potty.
- STEM Academy staff WILL NOT hit, use foul/inappropriate language, shake, embarrass, shame, threaten, exploit, abuse or neglect any child in their care. Corporal Punishment is not allowed. These actions are grounds for termination of the employee.
- STEM Academy staff WILL NOT keep "outside time" from any child.
- STEM Academy staff WILL NOT use FOOD for reinforcement (positive or negative) including with potty-training.
- STEM Academy staff WILL praise children for desired behavior.
- STEM Academy staff WILL notify parents of children's behavior.
- STEM Academy staff WILL treat children equally.
- STEM Academy staff WILL create appropriate consequences for rules of the class.

BITING POLICY

Biting is a developmentally and age appropriate form of response from a child. NOT all children will bite. In the event that a child bites or has been bitten, BOTH parents/guardian are informed of the incident, NAMES WILL NOT BE PROVIDED! Incident reports will be given to BOTH sets of parents/guardians. We are very aware parents may not see biting occur at home. We ask just that you remind your child that, "teeth are used for eating" and we should not use "teeth for biting". If a child bites or is bitten repeatedly, "shadowing" will be conducted in the classroom to investigate and provide solutions for the situation. "Shadowing" is when a teacher or director becomes the child's buddy to observe the actions of the child, classroom, teacher & other children. The "shadow" can than give ideas, suggestions, and possible solutions to the issue. If shadowing is unsuccessful, on occasion biting can be a cause for expulsion. However, an action plan will be put in place 30 days (unless safety does not permit) prior to expulsion, so parents, teachers and the director can together approach and hopefully resolve the situation or alternative arrangements can be made.

SUSPENSION / EXPULSION POLICY

Unfortunately, there are reasons we have to ask that a child be removed from our program either on a short term or permanent basis. We want you to know, we will do everything possible to work with the family of the child(ren) in order to prevent this policy from being enacted.

PARENTAL ACTIONS FOR CHILD'S SUSPENSION / EXPULSION

- Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payment.
- Failure to complete required forms including the child's immunization records.
- Verbal abuse to staff and/ or student
- Parent threatens physical or intimidating actions toward staff members or students.

CHILD'S ACTIONS FOR SUSPENSION / EXPULSION

- Failure of child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time.
- Uncontrollable tantrums/angry outbursts.
- Ongoing physical abuse to staff or other children.
- Unable to toilet train in our three year old program.

WHEN A CHILD IS HAVING A PROBLEM IN THE CLASSROOM

- Staff will try to redirect child from negative behavior.
- Staff will reassess classroom environment, appropriate of activities, supervision.
- Staff will always use positive methods and language while disciplining children.
- Staff will praise appropriate behaviors.
- Staff will consistently apply consequences for rules.
- Child will be given verbal warnings.
- Child will be given time to regain control.
- Child's disruptive behavior will be documented and maintained in confidentiality.
- Parent/guardian will be notified verbally.
- Parent/guardian will be given written copies of the disruptive behaviors that might lead to expulsion.
- The director, classroom staff and parent/guardian will have a conference(s) to discuss how to promote positive behaviors.
- The parent will be given literature or other resources regarding methods of improving behavior.
- Recommendation of evaluation by professional consultation.
- Recommendation of evaluation by local school district child study team.

SCHEDULE OF SUSPENSION / EXPULSION

If after the remedial actions above have not worked, the child's parent/guardian will be advised verbally and in writing about the child's or parent's behavior warranting a suspension / expulsion. A suspension / expulsion action is meant to be a period of time so that the parent/guardian may work on the child's behavior or to come to an agreement with the school. The parent/guardian will be informed regarding the length of the suspension / expulsion policy. The parent/guardian will be informed about the expected behavior.

FEEDING UTENSILS, BOWLS, BOTTLES AND CUPS

We encourage parents to pack all that is necessary for your child in a wipe-able (not fabric) or disposable bag. Infants & Toddlers must provide all bowls, plates, eating utensils and enough sippy cups/bottles for the child throughout the course of a day! LABEL EVERYTHING! Bottles must be labeled with name and today's date. We cannot reuse any bottle or sippy cup after initial use. BAGS, BOXES, SNACK BOXES AND SIPPY CUPS MUST BE LABELED WITH NAME AND TODAY'S DATE! For children purchasing lunch or having school snacks, utensils, napkins and cups will be provided. We serve water throughout the day. We DO NOT serve juice due to high sugar content. Here at STEM Academy we feel it is our responsibility to encourage healthy eating (and drinking). Please help us as well and limit sugary and unhealthy snacks. Ask your child's teacher for healthy alternatives for picky eaters. Please visit the website: http://www.choosemyplate.gov/ for more information on portion sizes, food ideas, alternatives, etc.

FOOD ITEMS

1. We are a peanut/tree nut free school. This means **NO** nuts of any kind including peanuts and tree nuts. No Nutella.
2. Make sure to cut food items appropriate for your child's bite size. No solids that are whole such as whole grapes, no hot dogs, no sausage, no popcorn, no carrots, baby potatoes, etc.
3. No snacking in the lobby or hallway. Please do not give the snack to your child while they are waiting to enter or leave the facility.
4. No bottles with small caps on them.
5. Keep your teacher/s and records updated with any allergies/dietary restrictions that may arise.
6. Please put food items that need to be heated in a separate microwaveable container from the rest of the lunch items provided.

MEALS AND SNACKS

We serve breakfast between 8:30-8:55 am every morning. Children who arrive at 9:00am or later should have already eaten breakfast at home. Lunch is served (depending on the class/age of children) at 11:30, 12:00 or 12:30. Lunch is catered into our center and can be PRE-PURCHASED for $7 per day. Infant formula (or breast milk for nursing infants) is provided by parents. Parents are also required to provide all food for their child until 18 months of age.

NAP TIME AND REST TIME

Children in our Infant, Toddler, and Preschool rooms will be given time to nap during the day. For children 12 months of age and younger, the center shall provide for each child a crib, that complies with the Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) Federal Safety Standards for Full-Size and Non-Full-Size Baby Cribs. In our Infant rooms, infants nap according to their own individual schedules. We also practice "BACKS TO SLEEP" in our center. Children shall not use pacifiers with straps or other types of attachment devices . ALL children are required to be placed on their backs, initially to sleep. Once a child is old enough to roll/turn over they will be allowed to sleep on their sides. Swaddling of children during rest and sleep is prohibited. In our Toddler and Preschool Rooms, nap is scheduled into the day's routine. Children are not forced to sleep rather they are provided a cot that complies with the Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) Federal Safety Standards . Parents MUST supply a standard crib sheet and a small blanket for their child to use at nap time. SHEETS AND BLANKETS are REQUIRED by licensing. They can be taken home on Friday to be washed and returned on Monday. Nap times can range from 12 to 2:30 daily. Some children use all of it, some of it, and/or none of it. A child is required to have rest time on their cot for approximately 30 minutes. If your child does not fall asleep or makes it clear they will not sleep, they will be given a book on their cot or placed at the table for quiet time activity. This allows napping friends to nap peacefully. Teachers will sit next to your child to provide comfort, when necessary.

Nap time is extended to our Pre-K and Kindergarten classes. Children are not forced to sleep rather they are provided a cot. Parents MUST supply a sheet and a small blanket for their child to use at nap time. SHEETS AND BLANKETS are REQUIRED by licensing. They can be taken home on Friday to be washed and returned on Monday. Nap times range from 1 to 2:30 daily. Some children use all of it, some of it, and/or none of it. A child is required to have rest time on their cot for approximately 30 minutes. If your child does not fall asleep or makes clear they will not sleep they will be given a book on their cot or placed at the table for quiet time activity. This allows napping friends to nap peacefully. Teachers will sit next to your child to provide comfort, when necessary.

DIAPER CHANGING POLICY

Diapering & Morning Drop off guidelines

To support the health, comfort, hygiene, and well-being of all children, families are asked to follow the center's morning diapering guidelines.

1. Arrive in a Clean Diaper
Parents and guardians are asked to ensure that children who require diapers arrive at the center wearing a clean, dry diaper. If your child poops or leaks heavily on the way to daycare, inform the staff right away and ask to use their changing area or change them in your car if necessary, A fresh diaper at drop-off helps ensure that your child begins the day comfortable and allows teachers to accurately follow the classroom's diapering routine and will change diapers as needed. Diapers will also be changed promptly whenever they are soiled or when a child requires a change outside of the regular schedule.

2. Supplies
Families are responsible for providing an adequate supply of diapers and any other required diapering supplies requested by the center. Please ensure that supplies are clearly labeled with your child's name and replenished as needed.

Our goal is to provide a clean, comfortable, and hygienic environment for every child. We appreciate families' cooperation in following these guidelines.

Diaper Changing policy in 8 STEPS

1. PREPARE. Before bringing the child to the diaper changing area, gather and bring supplies to the diaper changing area (diaper, wipes, cream, extra clothes, bag for soiled clothing), caregiver must wash hands, put gloves on.
2. Carry the child to the changing table, keeping soiled clothing away from you to minimize contamination, cover changing pad with table paper, place the child on the paper covered pad, keeping 1 hand on the child at ALL times.
3. Undo diaper, leave soiled diaper under child. Clean the child's diaper area. Using a damp, clean wipe; swipe from FRONT to BACK, replacing wipe as needed, be sure not to re-contaminate cleaned areas. Remember to lift child by legs to reach to the lower back, higher buttocks area. Checking for soiled clothing as well.
4. Remove the soiled diaper and clothing without contaminating any surface not already in contact with stool or urine. Fold diaper inward onto itself, containing all used wipes. Toss diaper into trash bin using a hands-free lid opener. Fold the table paper "up" over itself, so a clean surface is now under the child's buttocks. Place any soiled clothing into a plastic bag and knot it. Change gloves if necessary!
5. Use a CLEAN wipe to wipe your hands clean, Put on a clean diaper (using glove or a tissue to apply diaper cream) and dress the child.
6. Wash the child's hands and return the child to a supervised area.
7. Remove the paper and toss in trash bin. Clean and disinfect the diaper-changing surface.
8. Wash your hands with soap & water, dry them and record the diaper change on the child's daily log.

TOILET/POTTY TRAINING

At STEM Academy for Young Kids, we will aid in potty training for your child. Parents are strongly encouraged to follow up with training children at home, it is crucial for Parent and Teacher to be on the same page for ultimate success! Potty-training formally begins with children who are 2 years old. A child will begin to have their diaper changed inside the bathroom standing up. At this time they will be asked/encouraged to sit on the potty (even if they just sit for a moment, we will praise their efforts). Children in our 2's room will be asked every 45 minutes or so to come to the potty and "try". Their diaper will be removed and they will be assisted to sit on the potty. After each attempt, children will be asked to wash their hands to promote and associate proper hygiene. As your child begins to be successful, the time will be lengthened to 1 hour, 1 hour 15 minutes, etc. until they can reach 2 hours. If your child is able to stay dry for 2 hours and successfully use the potty when asked for 5 straight days, at this point, we will consider your child "toilet/potty-trained". When your child's teacher and you have this conversation, the teacher will then (with you) decide when diapers should be discarded and "underwear" can be attempted through the day. Several sets of underwear, pants, socks and shoes should be in their cubby or backpack for accidents. Two (2) accidents by your child in underwear will require them to be placed back into a diaper for classroom hygiene purposes. This is a simple guide - parents may discuss potty-training with the teacher or administration on a case by case basis.

Children MUST be fully potty-trained and 3 years old to enter the preschool program (baring developmental/physical delays or issues). Nap time diapers are allowed and we are aware that an occasional accident will occur. Children who are not fully potty trained will remain in our Young Preschool room until full success at potty-ing is achieved. We discourage the use of Pull-ups during the training process. If a parent chooses to use Pull-ups, STEM Academy requires them to have Velcro sides. Please continue to use diapers throughout this time. NO one piece outfits, overalls, button pants etc. Children need to be able to freely pull their pants up and down to encourage independence.

CLASSROOM BATHROOM POLICY

For School age we follow the District's guidelines for use of bathroom for school age children.
For Preschools, we follow NJ licensing guidelines for child's bathroom use and as below -
All children in Preschool age or up (on need basis) must be accompanied to bathroom for any bathroom help a child may need and also for supervision. If a staff is unable to help a child, that must be reported to Administrators so another staff can attend the child in the bathroom. All children in Preschool and up must not share the bathroom with any other child unattended. At all times all children must be supervised by teachers in classrooms or inside bathrooms.
Teachers have to be CARI reviewed and Fingerprinted to attend a child's personal needs all times. All bathrooms in classrooms must have half doors in bathrooms to be clearly visible from top and cannot be latched. Only adult bathrooms in hallway are to be with full door and latched.

The purpose of this bathroom policy is to ensure children's health, safety, privacy, and independence while supporting their developmental needs during toileting routines.

1. Supervision

- A staff member will visually monitor children entering and leaving the bathroom area while maintaining appropriate staff-to-child ratios in the classroom.
- Staff will not enter a bathroom stall with a child unless assistance is required.
- When assistance is needed, two staff members will be aware of the situation, and the door will remain partially open to maintain safety and transparency.

2. Independence and Support

Children are encouraged to use the bathroom independently to the best of their ability.
Staff will provide help with:

- Clothing fasteners
- Wiping (if the child requests or is not yet able)
- Handwashing reminders and support

Teachers will offer verbal guidance to promote self-help skills while respecting each Child's comfort level.

3. Hygiene Practices

- Children must **wash hands with soap and water** after using the toilet.
- Staff wash their hands after assisting a child with toileting.
- Toilets and sinks are cleaned daily and additionally as needed.
- Diaper changes (if applicable) follow separate **state-regulated sanitation procedures**.

4. Scheduled and As-Needed Bathroom Use

Bathroom breaks are offered:

- Before & After meals/snacks
- Before & After outdoor play
- Before & After Centers
- Before & After Gym time

Children may use the bathroom whenever needed and are never denied access.
Teachers observe children for signs that they may need to go and gently prompt them.

5. Accidents

- Accidents are considered a normal part of development.
- Staff respond calmly, respectfully, and without shame.
- Children will be cleaned and changed into **clean clothes** from home or the classroom supply.
- Soiled clothing will be sent home in a sealed bag.

6. Privacy and Respect

- Children are taught to respect each other's personal space.
- Only one child will be allowed in each bathroom stall at a time.
- Half door should be partially open if a staff member is inside alone with a child.
- If a teacher is alone with a class and needs to assist a child with the bathroom, the door should be open, and the teacher's body needs to be positioned in a direction where all children can be seen.
- Staff models appropriate hygiene and privacy expectations.

7. Family Communication

- Families will be informed of toileting routines and any notable concerns.
- If a child is potty-training, teachers will collaborate with families to maintain **consistent routines and language.**

8. Safety Measures

- Only state-approved cleaning products are used in the bathroom.
- Floors are checked frequently for spills or wet areas.
- Children must always wear shoes in the bathroom**.**

BABYSITTING AND OUR STAFF

We do understand the natural bond established with your child and their teacher. It is this bond that makes it a natural choice for a parent to ask for babysitting services. We do not have a problem with this request. However, STEM Academy for Young Kids accepts no responsibility for this AFTER HOURS request. We do not accept responsibility of employees while they are on their own time, away from the center. Parents may be required to sign a waiver form to this effect. If you, the parent, hire a staff member to work for you in a private setting and said employee resigns their position with STEM Academy in order to work for you privately, you the parent will be required to pay STEM Academy a $1,500 finder's fee.

POLICY ON METHODS OF PARENTAL NOTIFICATION

When you first register, you are provided with a parent handbook that lists our email address and phone number. It is vital to our program and the safety of your child to update your personal information whenever the need arises. Your cell, home & work phone number MUST BE UPDATED AND CURRENT AT ALL TIMES. This includes home and work addresses, emails and emergency contacts. In the event of closures, delays or inclement weather, we will notify you via email. If your child gets hurt or is sick, we will call parents first and then emergency contacts when we cannot get in touch with a parent. We will follow up with an email to the parents.

POLICY ON THE USE OF TECHONOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

At STEM Academy, we believe in and use technology. The use of technology such as television, computers and other video equipment will be used as an additional tool to enhance curriculum and educational/instructional activities and will not be used as a substitute for planned activities or for passive viewing. Material must be age/developmentally appropriate for children over the age of two years old.

The center:

- prohibits the use of television, computers and other video equipment for children under the age of two.
- limits the use of television, computers and other video equipment for children 24–36 months for up to, but no more than 20 minutes during the course of the day at STEM unless being used in a virtual classroom.
- limits the use of television, computers, Smartboard and other video equipment for children over the age of three years old for up to, but no more than 60 minutes during the course of the day at STEM.

At times, a lesson plan may include video equipment that goes beyond 60 minutes, a parental notification must be sent out with approval from the directors. All music content is to be individually assessed as to the appropriateness of the content, prior to playing in the children's presence.

All STEM families complete and sign a photo consent form at the time of registration. This form indicates clear direction as to how we are able to utilize photos, videos, etc. In order to adhere to this policy, parents/children are not authorized to take photos or video recording on their personal devices and will be enforced by all STEM staff members. In the event where you would like a moment captured as a photo or video, such as a birthday party celebration, etc., you may request that we capture it through our STEM devices. Please ask any STEM staff member to assist you.

Cell phone use is strictly prohibited by all students and staff. In the case of bringing your own electronic device, STEM is not responsible for any damaged, stolen, and/or lost products or services. These personal technologies will be used at the risk of the owner(s) of the device.

An individualized developmental plan for students with special needs or partaking in a virtual lesson/classroom may require the use of technology. STEM believes in empowering all children in the classroom, and under the advisement of the professionals, STEM will implement such plan. Please call with any inquiries.

PHOTO/VIDEO POLICY

All STEM families complete and sign a photo consent form at the time of registration. This form indicates clear direction as to how we are able to utilize photos, videos, etc. In order to adhere to this policy, **PARENTS ARE NOT AUTHORIZED TO TAKE PHOTOS OR VIDEO RECORDING ON THEIR PERSONAL DEVICES**. In the event where you would like a moment captured as a photo or video, such as a birthday party celebration, etc., you may request that we capture it through our STEM devices.