



# Parent Handbook



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# Introduction & Welcome

## OUR MISSION

At AIM Academy, we work each day to create a thriving and supportive school community as we relentlessly pursue our purpose of preparing children for successes in both life and school through our play based curriculum.

## CORE VALUES



### *Commit to Excellence*

We aim to continuously and rigorously evaluate every aspect of our program to ensure that we are striving for and achieving excellence in all that we do. By following best practices in early childhood development, we strive to ensure our policies and procedures are sound, effective, and utilize the latest tools and technology available.



### *Create a Community*

We aim to create a community for students, teachers, and parents through our shared values and purpose of preparing the next generation for achievement in life and school. Our school community creates opportunities for real human connection as we support one another both inside and outside of the classroom. As an organization, we strive to positively impact our local communities and beyond.



### *Work with Passion*

We aim to build a team that exceeds our expectations and yours. While highly rewarding, teaching young children is hard work. However, we fully embrace the physical, mental, and emotional challenges. We provide our staff with a comprehensive program that includes a thorough orientation, support, mentoring, and professional development. Working with children is our passion, and our career ladder provides a pathway for our teachers to progress professionally based on their personal goals.



### *Play with a Purpose*

We aim to teach young children through purposeful play. Our goal is to provide our students with rich, developmentally appropriate play experiences to challenge and expand their understanding of the world in a meaningful and lasting way. Through play, children enjoy the learning process thus creating an eagerness to learn more.

# Curriculum & Philosophy

## LEARNING BEYOND

Learning Beyond is a highly innovative, 100% digital curriculum that provides our teachers with a robust library of activities and lessons in a developmental progression. Most importantly, Learning Beyond is consistent with our core value of purposeful play as we fundamentally believe play is the vehicle for learning for young children. Through play, children practice and refine their skills, have fun (a necessary component in learning), and try new things. As a result, children learn more quickly through repeated and scaffolded activities that are built upon past experiences. By contrast, rote instructional teaching methods can frustrate young children and are not developmentally appropriate. Children prefer real experiences as provided by Learning Beyond.

Learning Beyond's developmentally appropriate activities are aligned with Alabama's early learning standards. The standards are integrated into each activity with an intentional focus on physical development, social-emotional skills, early mathematics, language, and literacy and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics). Ultimately, Learning Beyond is a 21st century curriculum that provides children with the skills they need to thrive in today's world, including collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

Our teachers are facilitators in your child's individualized learning journey. Their intentional and targeted activities through Learning Beyond are planned to build upon your child's existing competencies. Developmental skills are broken down into smaller steps to challenge them, but also build confidence through practice. Through trial and error, questioning, and exploration, your child will develop the skills necessary to become a successful, life-long learner.

# Admission & Enrollment

Admission is open to children from 6 weeks to 12 years of age. Enrollment shall be granted without regard to a child's race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, or disability; and without regard to a parent or guardian's race, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, gender, pregnancy or disability. We offer both full and part-time enrollment options for children 24 months of age and older. Priority is given to parents needing full-time services. Part-time enrollment may be limited or restricted at any time based on demand for full-time services. If you are required to move to full time to retain your child's space, you will receive a minimum notice of two weeks.

## WAITING LIST

Enrollment applications are accepted on a first come, first served basis, but priority will be given to siblings of children already enrolled and families needing full-time services. If a space for your child is not immediately available, you may join our waiting list. We require a non-refundable \$50 reservation fee to add your child to our waiting list. When an opening becomes available, families on the waiting list will be notified according to the date of their application. Please respond as soon as possible. **Families who do not reply within 48 hours will lose their placement on the waiting list.**

## ENROLLMENT

Initial enrollment is contingent upon receipt of your completed and signed (i) enrollment application, (ii) group accommodation evaluation form, (iii) tuition agreement, (iv) immunization records, and (v) parent handbook acknowledgement form along with your registration fee payment. The enrollment application and tuition agreement are not intended to serve as contracts guaranteeing service for any duration. Continued enrollment is contingent upon you and your child's compliance with the policies and procedures of AIM Academy as outlined herein including, but not limited to, timely payment of all fees and tuition. AIM Academy reserves the right to dismiss any parent or child at any time with or without cause.

## REGISTRATION FEE

Upon acceptance of your enrollment application and annually on September 1st, a registration fee of \$100 for one child or \$150 for two or more children is due. The registration fee is non-refundable and separate from any reservation fee you may have paid to join our waiting list.

## **BILLING POLICIES**

Tuition charges are based on your child's assigned classroom, not necessarily their age. For your convenience, we offer both monthly and weekly billing options. For monthly payers, tuition is due on the last business day of the month prior to the month of service. For weekly payers, tuition is due on the Friday before the week of service. If payment is not received on the applicable due date, services will be suspended. Services can be reinstated by paying a \$35 late payment fee. Parents are responsible for full payment regardless of holidays or absences due to vacation, illness (including COVID), or weather related closings.

## **PAYMENTS**

Payments can be remitted through the Procure app or by logging onto your Procure account at <https://schools.procareconnect.com/login>. We accept payments via debit or credit card or ACH from a bank account. Credit card payments will incur an additional 3% processing fee. Once your form of payment is created, your weekly or monthly charges will be automatically processed for payment on the due date. AIM Academy does not accept cash or checks.

## **COLLECTIONS**

If timely payment is not received, you authorize AIM Academy and/or our agents to contact you by telephone at any telephone number associated with your account, including wireless telephone numbers, which could result in charges to you. We and/or our agents may also contact you by sending text messages or emails using any email address you provide to us. Methods of contact may include using pre-recorded/artificial voice messages and/or use of automatic dialing device, as applicable.

## **WITHDRAWAL**

A two-week written notice is required when withdrawing your child for any reason. Please state your child's last day of attendance and the reason for their withdrawal. If proper notice is received, any unused tuition will be refunded within 14 days of your child's last day of attendance. If the required notice is not given, parents will be charged tuition for two additional weeks.

# Operational Policies

## HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday through Friday - 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM

Early drop is available from 6:30 AM to 7:00 AM for an additional fee.

## HOLIDAYS

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Good Friday (Teacher In-Service Training Day)
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Veterans Day (Teacher In-Service Training Day)
- Thanksgiving Day
- Friday after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day

## EMERGENCY & INCLEMENT WEATHER CLOSING

We will make every effort to operate under most weather conditions. During most snow events, we plan to operate on our normal schedule. If the accumulation is significant or the roads are icy, we may delay our opening or close entirely. If our facility loses power or water, we will close and remain closed until power or water is restored. If our school needs to close in the middle of the day, our staff will attempt to reach each child's parents to arrange for pick up. If we are unable to reach the parents, the persons listed on the emergency contact form will be contacted until pick up arrangements can be made. Parents will be notified via messaging within our Procure app and closing information will be posted on our Facebook page.

## ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

Upon arrival, you or another authorized adult must check your child in at the check-in device located in the lobby.

After completing the check-in process, escort your child to their classroom and assist them as they put away their belongings and wash their hands before joining their classmates. We encourage you to speak with your child's teacher to share any pertinent information.

Some children may exhibit separation anxiety especially when they start a new program. If this is the case with your child, our teachers are prepared to comfort them during this anxious time. We encourage you to keep your goodbye brief as an extended departure can increase their anxiety.

## **DEPARTURE PROCEDURES**

- All children must be picked up by 6:00 PM.
- After retrieving your child and their belongings from their classroom, you or another authorized adult must check your child out at the check-out device located in the lobby.
- Once a child is checked out, the parent or authorized person is solely responsible for supervising their child while on the premises.
- Both parents will be allowed to pick up your child as well as any other authorized individuals listed on your child's enrollment application. If either parent has a legal custody order, we must have a copy of the court order or other legal documentation on file in order to enforce a custody arrangement.
- Any changes to the persons authorized to pick-up your child must be made in writing. Email is also acceptable. Authorizations' may not be day-by-day, meaning approved for today, but not next week. To keep your child safe, we must insist on consistent pickup arrangements.
- If our staff is unfamiliar with a person picking-up your child, they will be asked for photo identification.
- In the event that we believe a pick-up person's abilities are impaired, we will respectfully ask the individual to leave and contact another authorized individual to pick-up the child. If the impaired individual refuses to leave and insists they be allowed to depart with the child, we will ultimately allow the individual to leave with the child. However, we will immediately contact 911 and report the situation.
- A fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for late pick-ups.
- Your child's enrollment could be terminated for excessive late pick-ups.

## **ABSENCE NOTIFICATION**

If your child will not attend on a scheduled day or will arrive later in the day, we request you notify a member of our management team before 9:30 AM. If your child's absence is due to illness, we ask that you disclose the nature of their illness or diagnosis. (See also Illness and Confidentiality Policy.)



## **OPEN DOOR POLICY**

Parents are welcome and encouraged to visit their child(ren) at any time. If you wish to meet with the Director or a teacher, we request you make an appointment.

## **CLASSROOM ASSIGNMENTS**

Classrooms are assigned based on your child's age while also considering their stage of development. Lead and assistant teachers are assigned to specific classrooms, but are cross trained to work with all age groups. We will make every effort to announce any permanent teacher changes in advance.

## **CLASSROOMS TRANSITIONS**

Planning for transitions helps children adjust to their new settings and demonstrates respect for their unique needs. Once we determine it is developmentally appropriate for your child to advance to the next classroom, we will meet with you to create a transition plan. Commonly, your child will "visit" the next classroom for short periods of time for one to two weeks prior to fully transitioning to their new classroom.

## **DISCIPLINE**

One of our main goals is to help your child develop a sense of responsibility and self-regulation. Our teachers set clear, consistent, and fair limits for children's behavior and hold them accountable to standards of acceptable behavior. To the extent that a child is ready, teachers engage them in developing rules and procedures for the class. Teachers redirect children to more acceptable behaviors or activities, or use children's mistakes as learning opportunities, patiently reminding children of rules and their rationale, as needed. Teachers listen and acknowledge children's feelings and frustrations, respond with respect, and guide children to resolve conflicts and solve their problems.

We will not tolerate any form of physical or verbal abuse, or withholding or threatening to withhold food as a form of punishment.

## MEALS & SNACKS

We recognize it is important to create nutritious eating habits in childhood for a lifetime of good health. Beginning with toddlers, our meal program includes a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack each day. Weekly menus are posted on the parent board in your child's classroom and are available via our Procure app. Our menus change seasonally to take advantage of seasonal produce and expose your child to different tastes and flavors. To the extent that your child has any dietary preferences, you are responsible for providing alternative foods as needed.

### *Food Allergies*

Upon enrollment, parents must provide written notification of any known food allergies along with a detailed treatment plan in the event of an allergic reaction. See the Group Care Evaluation included in your enrollment materials. The treatment plan should include the names, doses, and methods for administering any medication. Parents will be notified immediately of any suspected allergic reaction or the ingestion of or contact with the problem food, even if a reaction does not occur. AIM Academy will provide substitutions for any foods that your child cannot consume due to an allergy. Alternatively, parents are welcome to provide alternative foods as needed. See additional guidance below.

### *Infants*

Parents are required to complete a weekly feeding schedule or as your child's feeding requirements change. All food items including baby food, snacks, and bottles of formula or expressed milk must be labeled with your child's name and the current date. Please prepare one more bottle than you think your child will consume in a day to assure that your child won't run out. Prepared bottles must be stored in the designated refrigerator and will be warmed in a water bath prior to feeding. All bottles must be taken home at the end of each day. A private breastfeeding room is located next to the Infant I classroom. Mothers are welcome to utilize this space as needed.

## REQUIRED PERSONAL ITEMS

- *Infants:* An extra change of clothes, diapers, wipes, bottle bag, and unopened jar food and box cereal labeled with your child's name. If needed, diaper creams must be turned in to the front desk with a medication slip attached.
- *Toddlers and Twos:* A blanket and extra change of clothes labeled with your child's name, diapers, & wipes.
- *Threes and Pre-K:* A blanket and extra change of clothes labeled with your child's name.

## **NAP/REST TIME**

With the exception of infants, all daily classroom schedules include a nap or rest period following lunch. Please see your child's classroom schedule for specific times. Children are allowed to rest on their cot with their blanket and one plush, non-musical toy (if needed). The children are not required to sleep, but must remain on their cot during naptime. If a child does not want to sleep, the child may be given a quiet activity to do on his or her cot during naptime. Blankets are sent home for washing on Friday.

## **OUTDOOR PLAY**

Outdoor play is an important and integral part of a high-quality early childhood education program and is required by Alabama DHR. If your child is well enough to attend our program, he or she is well enough to go outside. Children will go outside on most days except in extreme cold. On rainy days, the covered patio area will be used. Please ensure that your child is dressed appropriately for outdoor activities including a coat or jacket as needed.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

As part of our summer camp program, school-age students will take field trips to area attractions. Please see our summer camp calendar for specific trips and venues. Prior to each trip, a permission slip must be completed, signed, and returned to the teacher. Parents are encouraged and welcomed to attend, but are not permitted to transport any child including their own.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

AIM Academy uses multifunction school activity buses (MFSAB) to transport students (i) to and from local elementary and private schools as part of our before and after school program and (ii) for field trips during our summer camp program. A MFSAB is a small bus specifically designed to meet the stringent federal safety standards for school buses. Unlike standard school buses, these buses feature smaller padded seats with seat belts age appropriate for preschool and elementary age children.

During the school year, transportation is available for Pike Road Elementary School, Pike Road Intermediate School, and Saint James (Pike Road Pre-K).

## **BIRTHDAYS**

Many parents wish to acknowledge and celebrate their child's birthday or other special occasions at AIM Academy. Parents must schedule all celebrations with their classroom teacher at least one week in advance. A cake, cupcakes, and/or ice cream is acceptable.

All baked goods must be store bought. Parents or teachers are not allowed to serve homemade items to the children. Parents should also check with the teachers regarding any children with allergies or special dietary needs. If parents decide to serve food as part of a birthday celebration, it must be accessible to all children including those with allergies.

Families must provide plates, cutlery, and napkins for their child's birthday celebration. Balloons and candles are prohibited. Classroom celebrations are not a substitute for a home or family birthday party, but a time to recognize each child's birthday within our program.

## **PICTURE & VIDEO AUTHORIZATION**

As a condition of enrollment, you authorize AIM Academy to photograph and stream video of your child through our partnership with WatchMeGrow. Access to our online streaming video feed is limited to families enrolled at AIM Academy that have registered with WatchMeGrow. For more information on WatchMeGrow, please see separate promotional material that outlines this additional service.

Pictures and videos of your child may also be used as part of our marketing program including, but not limited to newsletters, social media, our website, and print material. If you don't wish for images of your child to be utilized for our marketing purposes, please provide a written statement with your completed enrollment application.

## **PARENT CONCERNS**

If you ever have a concern, we encourage you to speak directly to your child's lead teacher. If needed, you are welcome to schedule a teacher conference to discuss your issue in greater detail. If the matter remains unresolved or persists, please schedule an appointment to speak with the Director. We will make every effort to work collaboratively with our parents to the benefit of our program and all students.

# Health & Safety

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

AIM Academy strives to protect everyone's right to privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to: names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and health or disability information for anyone associated with AIM Academy. Confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees of AIM Academy who have a "need to know" in order to safely care for your child. Outside of AIM Academy, confidential and sensitive information about your child will only be shared once you provide express written consent, except where otherwise provided for by law.

## **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES**

AIM Academy accepts children in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and any other applicable local, state or federal laws pertaining to individuals with disabilities. We review each child's needs on a case-by-case basis and will make reasonable accommodations for any child we believe can safely participate in our group care environment. To assist our evaluation of your child's individual needs, you must complete our Group Care Evaluation Form. We will discuss your child's specific needs prior to enrollment to ensure we can safely accommodate your child's needs.

## **INFANT SAFE SLEEP POLICY**

Prior to placement in their crib, all bibs and garments with ties or hoods will be removed. Infants will be placed on their backs to sleep unless written medical instructions from your child's pediatrician direct otherwise. Infants capable of turning over by themselves will remain in the position they attain while in their crib. All crib mattress will be covered by a tight-fitting sheet flush with the sides of the crib. Loose bedding, blankets, bumper pads, pillows, toys, and sleep positioning devices not medically prescribed are not permitted.

Infants will not be allowed to sleep in car seats, bouncy seats, infant swings, or highchairs. If your child falls asleep outside of their crib, they will be immediately moved to their designated crib.

## **CLOTHING**

Play is a child's work. It is important that children come to school appropriately dressed for their work. This work involves painting, gluing, molding, building, climbing, running, and jumping. Therefore, comfortable play clothes are most appropriate. Every child should maintain a full change of clothing including undergarments in their assigned cubby. We also recommend that you label all apparel. AIM Academy is not responsible for lost or damaged clothing. Please check our lost and found for any missing items.

Children are required to wear well-fitting shoes with a back on the playground. Shoes that do not fit well may result in injury.

Children in Early School (under 2 ½ years of age) are not permitted to wear jewelry or earrings as they can injure other children. We recommend all children avoid wearing jewelry. Loose jewelry may be removed by teachers for safety.

## **ILLNESSES & COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

If your child is displaying signs or symptoms of fever (temperature of 100.4 or higher) or nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, they must remain at home. Children with these symptoms will not be admitted to the school and/or will be sent home if the above symptoms appear while at school. If the symptom(s) do not fully resolve within 24 hours of onset, the child will be allowed to return to school with (i) clearance from a medical provider to return to a group care setting or (ii) until the child is fever free (without the use of medicine that reduce fevers) and the symptoms have improved for at least 48 hours.

*In addition to the above symptoms, your child must remain home if they have any of the following conditions or illnesses:*

Condition or Illness	Exclusion	Can Return
Unexplained rash	Return when feeling better	Child may attend if able to take part in school activities, is fever free, has no open weeping wounds
Vaccine preventable diseases (measles, mumps, pertussis)	ADPH guidelines	Doctor's note required
Diagnosed illness (RSV, roseola, hand foot & mouth)	ADPH guidelines	Doctor's note required
Strep Throat	Return 24 hours after starting antibiotics	Doctor's note required
Lice	Presence of lice or nits	Return after treatment and free of lice & nits
Pink Eye	Return after starting medication and/or drainage has cleared	Child may attend if able to take part in all school activities, is fever free, has started medication (if necessary) & the drainage is contained to the eye.

Parents who repeatedly fail to follow policies related to keeping children at home, providing proper documentation to return, or not following isolation or quarantine guidelines when they or their child are ill may be subject to disenrollment from the center.

If your child is absent due to illness, we request that you notify the Director. If your child has a communicable disease, we will ask that you share the diagnosis so that we may properly notify other parents of the potential exposure. Consistent with our confidentiality policy, the name of your child will not be disclosed.

## **BITING**

While distressing to adults, it is not uncommon for young children in our Early School classrooms (30 months and younger) to bite when they feel angry, frustrated, threatened or just teething. With this understanding, our teachers and staff take an active role to minimize biting incidents. Despite our best efforts, we can never completely eliminate biting. When biting occurs, our teachers attempt to identify the circumstances which may elicit this behavior so they can help prevent it in the future. Parents are expected to assist our teachers to identify methods and strategies to curb this behavior.

While much less common, children in our Preschool classrooms (30+ months and older) may occasionally be involved in a biting incident. Preschool children are less impulsive, more verbal, and are able to respond to a wider range of behavior modification methods. Unfortunately, a Preschool child who bites repeatedly or who bites in such a way as to seriously harm another child may be subject to suspension or dismissal. In all cases, we will meet with parents in an effort to determine the underlying causes and work collaboratively to develop strategies to eliminate the behavior before considering suspension or dismissal.

If your child is bitten, you will be notified by incident/accident report that a biting incident occurred during the course of the day. In accordance with our confidentiality policy, the identity of the biting child will not be disclosed.

## **INCIDENT / ACCIDENT REPORTS**

If your child is involved in or sustains minor injuries (e.g., bumps, scrapes, or bruises), a trained staff member will administer first aid. You will also receive a detailed Incident / Accident Report that explains how the incident or accident occurred. The classroom teacher will be able to discuss the matter with you at pick-up. For more serious issues, a parent teacher conference can be scheduled to review the matter in greater detail.



## **FIRE/EMERGENCY PLAN**

AIM Academy conducts monthly fire and emergency/evacuation drills. Evacuation routes are posted at the classroom exit. Parents, staff, and children will not be made aware of drill dates or times, as this is the most effective way to assess the effectiveness of fire and emergency/evacuation plans. During a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency situation, parents may not sign children in or out of the program. Parents must wait until the drill is complete and children have returned to the building to sign their child into the program. Parents may feel free to wait with the child's class in the designated safe-zone outside of the building until the drill is complete.

## **ALTERNATE LOCATION**

If our facility is determined unsafe for any reason, the staff and children will be evacuated to Grace Episcopal Church or an alternative safe location as designated by emergency personnel. Once the children are assembled and fully accounted for, we will begin contacting parents or emergency contact persons for pick up. We request parents make every effort to pick-up their child as quickly as possible.

## **DISPENSING MEDICATION**

- AIM Academy will only dispense doctor-prescribed medication in original, labeled containers, and is accompanied by a doctor's note with explicit dosage and administration instructions.
- Medication will only be given to the child for whom the doctor's note is written and for whom the medication container is labeled. One doctor's note per course of treatment is required. If a child, for example, is to be given a course of antibiotics for 10 days, the doctor's note must identify the dates that the medication is to be given.
- Medication Authorization forms (DHR-CDC-1949) can be obtained from the front office. Parents are required to complete a new authorization form each week that medication is to be dispensed. Completed authorization forms, doctor's notes, and the medication should only be given to the administrator in charge when dropping off your child. All medication will be stored in a locked cabinet until it is administered. Any unused medication must be removed from the center at the end of each week.

## **TOYS FROM HOME**

With the exception of infants, children are permitted to bring one plush, non-musical toy for use at nap/rest period. No other toys from home are permitted unless specifically requested by your classroom teacher to support a learning activity or concept. All toys brought from home will be inspected for safety and appropriateness and may be prohibited at the sole discretion of AIM Academy. Toys that represent weapons will not be permitted. In addition, AIM Academy is not responsible for toys that are lost or damaged.

## **CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

Under Alabama law, AIM Academy teachers and staff are defined as mandatory reporters. If a member of our team has reasonable cause to believe or suspect that a child has been abused or neglected or observes any child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse, they are required to report the matter directly to Alabama DHR or law enforcement. Mandatory reporters are required to report the facts and circumstances that led them to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected. They do not have the burden of providing proof that abuse or neglect has occurred. By law, if a mandatory reporter fails to report suspected child abuse or neglect, they could be subject to a misdemeanor punishable by six months in jail or a \$500 fine.

## **PARENT CONDUCT**

Creating a supportive school community consistent with our core values is not only the responsibility of our AIM Academy team, but also every parent and adult that enters our facility. We respectfully request all parents and extended family to act with decency and courtesy at all times. AIM Academy reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment due to (i) parent or family member misconduct or (ii) failure to follow the policies and procedures outlined in our parent handbook.

## **SMOKE FREE FACILITY**

AIM Academy is a smoking free facility including all outdoors areas on our campus.

# Parent Handbook Acknowledgement

I/We, \_\_\_\_\_, the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I/we have received a copy of the AIM Academy Parent Handbook and have been given the opportunity to read the manual, ask questions, and understand the policies contained therein. Furthermore, I/we agree to abide by the policies set forth in the manual.

I/We understand that the policies described in the Parent Handbook are conditions of enrollment and the language does not create a contract with AIM Academy. AIM Academy reserves the right to alter, amend or otherwise modify these guidelines, in its sole discretion without prior notice.

**Signature**

**Date**

**Print Name**

**Signature**

**Date**

**Print Name**