



Mission Statement: The mission of Emerson Academy is to provide exceptional early education for children of all abilities.

Emerson Academy, a program of The Emerson Foundation, 501 (c)(3), is an inclusive child development center, serving children of all abilities ages 6 weeks to 12 years.

Emerson Academy offers a full-day program as well as part-time programs, including a half-day program (7:00-12:30 pm or 12:30 pm-6:00 pm) and two or three full days per week. Our hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. year-round.

Family Handbook: 2024-2025

Allergies

At Emerson Academy, we make every attempt to avoid the most common allergy triggers in young children. Our facility is cleaned daily to help lessen the children's exposure to dust, mold, and pollen. Monthly extermination lowers the risk of stings from flying insects and ants, but of course, we cannot eliminate insects on the property. The following foods are the most common allergy triggers in young children: peanuts, eggs, milk and milk products. Lists of children with food allergies are posted discreetly in the classrooms and the kitchen so that all staff are aware. Staff are thoroughly trained in preventing and responding to allergic reactions, including the use of auto-injectable epinephrine (Epipen/Auvi-Q). All children with severe allergies must have a current allergy action plan on file and updated as it changes.

Attendance

We encourage families to send their children to school on time every day unless the child is ill. When children are absent or arrive late they miss out on valuable learning opportunities and disrupt the learning of other children. If your child does not arrive at the center at his/her normal arrival time we will attempt to contact your family to ensure the child's safety and well-being. Children must be dropped off by **9:00 am**, unless you have notified the Center in advance about an appointment. **Please notify a Director via email if your child will not be attending: director@emerson-academy.com or send a message through the Brightwheel app.

Biting Policy

At Emerson Academy, the health and safety of ALL of the children is our number one priority. Although biting is a normal aspect of child development, we cannot allow excessive biting to occur. The following is an outline of our procedures for handling biting at our center:

- Biting will be prevented as much as possible by ensuring that the children are not overly tired or hungry and that the children receive regular, positive attention throughout the day.
- Biting will NOT be ignored, but we encourage parents and family members to not

overreact to biting as this may only make the situation worse.

- If biting cannot be prevented the caregiver will:
 1. Say, “No biting! It’s NOT o.k. to bite!” in a firm voice
 2. Calmly remove the biter from the area and place him/her in the Safe Place to calm down.
 3. Tend to the child that was bitten, giving lots of attention and checking for injuries.
 4. Have the biter apologize (with words/sign language) and help the other child feel better (give hugs, hold ice on the bite mark, etc...).
 5. Closely monitor the biter to prevent any further bites.
 6. Notify parents before the end of the day if more than one bite has occurred.
 7. Notify both parents immediately if a bite breaks a child’s skin.
- If biting becomes a problem that is occurring on a regular basis the director will meet with the parents and the teacher to come up with a behavioral plan. In rare cases, a child may be dismissed from our program if his/her biting issue cannot be resolved.

Children’s Product Safety

Child Care Licensing standards require that we certify that there are no unsafe children’s products in use or access to children in the child-care center at any time. Our staff regularly checks the items used by children at the facility to ensure the safety of the children, including reviewing the Consumer Product Safety Commission’s (CPSC) lists of recalled children’s items. You can access a listing of unsafe children’s products through the CPSC Internet website (www.cpsc.gov) or through the DFPS Internet website (www.dfps.state.tx.us).

Closure Days

In the event of a short-term closure (5 days or fewer, due to weather conditions or circumstances beyond our control), Emerson Academy will not issue a refund or credit. If, however, we have an extended closure (more than one week (excluding predetermined Holidays), due to circumstances beyond our control such as a Pandemic or catastrophic loss of property), we will issue a credit for the period of time that our Center is closed. Emerson Academy will not issue refunds in any circumstance if we reopen and there is space for a child to resume care. Credits will be held for up to 90 days from Emerson Academy’s reopening date, and will be forfeited if a child does not resume care.

Clothing and Accessories

Please send your child in comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing that does not inhibit your child from participating in physical activities. Our program emphasizes hands-on learning, which can be messy. Play clothes are recommended because our staff will not discourage children from participating in an activity to protect his/her clothing. **Closed-toe shoes are required for children that are walking age.** Flip-flops or other shoes that do not stay on your child's feet will not be permitted for safety reasons. All children should have a season-appropriate change of clothes at school always. Children that are toilet learning will be expected to have several changes of clothes daily. PLEASE LABEL ALL ITEMS OF CLOTHING AND ACCESSORIES!

Accessories: if you choose to send your child with accessories (hair bows, jewelry, etc.) please ensure that these items do not pose a safety threat or inhibit your child’s learning activities.

**Emerson Academy will not be held responsible for lost, broken or stolen accessories.*

Communication with Families

Daily reports are sent to each child’s parents/guardians via Brightwheel each day. The reports will

let family members know: what/how much was eaten, diaper changes, sleep patterns, general mood, and activities that your child enjoyed. We encourage daily communication for children with special needs for your child's progress. If you would like, we will be happy to provide notes for a particular behavior or activity of interest if requested. **Parents/Guardians are responsible for ensuring that contact information (email address, phone #, address, etc.) is up to date. Families can update current contact information on the Brightwheel app directly.

Communication with Service Providers

In order to provide consistent care for your child, it is important that we have open communication with outside service providers, such as your child's school district or any outside therapists. With your permission, we will communicate with your child's service providers when they visit Emerson Academy, or via email/phone to your child's school teacher.

Conferences

Conferences will be held in April and October to discuss your child's progress and development. Prior to enrollment, conferences will be held for children with disabilities and/or medical diagnoses. Additionally, conferences are held when children move up from the infant and toddler classrooms. This is an excellent opportunity for families to discuss any questions/concerns you have with your child's teacher. Of course, you are welcome to make an appointment at any point during the year to conference with your child's teacher.

Confidentiality

It is essential that every adult involved in Emerson Academy assume the utmost respect for every child's right to confidentiality. Teachers/staff may only divulge confidential information about a child to persons involved in the child's care, such as caregivers, fellow teachers and/or outside service providers. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, disability status, family/parent status, medical information, and involvement in an incident.

Diapers

Family members are responsible for supplying diapers and wet wipes for children that are not yet toilet trained. Please send a package of diapers and a wipe refill to be stored in your child's classroom. Your child's teacher will notify you when the supply is getting low. If your child is cloth diapered, please send individual wet bags for the teachers to deposit wet/soiled diapers.

Discipline and Behavior

At Emerson Academy, we believe that discipline and education go hand in hand. Our expectation is that children, caregivers, and family members will treat one another with respect and dignity. Discipline begins at home and will be strongly reinforced at the center. Emerson Academy collaborates with parents/guardians, therapists and healthcare providers to provide appropriate discipline for ALL children.

Our staff is committed to caring for your child and teaching him/her how to behave appropriately in a school setting. We use developmentally appropriate language in accordance with Conscious Discipline®. Our practices include consistent behavioral expectations, redirecting children to constructive activities, natural consequences (Ex: cleaning up a spill), and encouraging negotiation. Children are taught self-control through the Conscious Discipline® curriculum, which includes calming exercises and use of the Safe Place® until the child is able to calmly return to the group.

There will be no harsh, cruel or unusual punishment or treatment of any child. Parents and teachers will be asked to read and sign an understanding of the complete discipline and guidance

policy in accordance with the Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Chapters 746 and 747, Subchapters L, Discipline & Guidance. If you have not already read and signed this memo of understanding, please ask to do so.

If a child's behavior is disruptive or problematic beyond what one would expect for his/her age, the Director may require that a Behavior Plan is put in place. Additionally, if children require 1:1 support for behavior concerns an hourly fee (\$15-\$18/hour) will be assessed and added to the child's monthly tuition. Children requiring a reduced ratio (i.e. children who are placed in a self-contained classroom in public school) due to behavioral and/or adaptive behavior needs, will be assessed at the adaptive rates. Children attending Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) for a portion of the school day will be charged for before and/or after PPCD care.

Our primary concern is the safety of all children enrolled at Emerson Academy. If a child's behavior threatens the safety of him/herself or others it may become necessary for the child's family to engage outside resources (such as a psychiatrist/counselor) for additional support. The costs of such support will be incurred by the child's family.

Drop-off/Separation

Children in the full-day program should arrive at a consistent time each day. Please communicate with your child's teacher and/or the Directors if your child will be arriving late due to an appointment. You may email director@emerson-academy.com or you can send a message through Brightwheel.

Caregivers are asked to make drop-off time as brief as possible so that the children can transition easily. **Children must be dropped off to a teacher (never left alone in a classroom) so that they are accounted for in the group, and the teacher should be given an update on your child's health and well-being. If your child is emotional at drop-off, please hand your child to the teacher and say goodbye in a loving way. The teachers will reinforce that it is ok to be sad and that Mommy/Daddy/etc. will be back to pick them up. If your child needs a transition object (such as a lovey or pacifier), please bring these items daily to ease the transition.

There may be times, such as during the Pandemic of 2020, when parents and visitors are not allowed to enter the Center unless it is necessary. If that is the case, we will receive children on the front porch, conduct a health screening, and take them to their teachers.

Classes may be combined between 7:00 am-8:00 am and in the evening from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Conversations between teachers and families should be limited during pick-up and drop-off time so that teachers are able to concentrate on supervising their classes.

Emergencies (including medical emergencies)

In the event of an emergency we will call 911 and administer first aid/CPR. Our staff members are certified in first aid, CPR, AEDs, epinephrine auto-injectors. First aid will be administered while another Staff member calls 911, and an additional Staff member will call the parents/guardians. The Staff are trained to implement the Center's Emergency Preparedness Plan for natural disasters and emergencies. Emerson Academy's emergency evacuation site is *Pump It Up*, located at 3918 Gattis School Rd. Suite 100. In the event of an emergency such as a fire or prolonged electricity outage in severe weather, we will evacuate the children and notify families immediately via a Brightwheel alert.

Expulsion/Suspension

Emerson Academy reserves the right to expel or suspend a child from the center at any point. The safety and wellbeing of ALL of the children is our number one priority, and children who exhibit dangerous or unsafe behavior (such as physical aggression, elopement, etc.) may require 1:1 support in order to continue to be enrolled at Emerson Academy. 1:1 support will be the responsibility of the family, and we suggest an ABA therapist who is trained specifically in working with children with challenging behavior. Directors may always retain the right to expel/dis-enroll a child if it is in the best interest of the child or other children at the center.

Children are very rarely expelled or suspended from the program, and if a child is dismissed from the program, the parents/guardians will be responsible for that month's tuition. **Tuition refunds will not be given under any circumstances.**

Family Participation

Family involvement is an essential component of our program. Guardians/Parents may visit the child-care center at any time during your hours of operation to observe their child, the child-care center's program activities, the building, the premises, and the equipment without having to secure prior approval. Throughout the school year, there will be many opportunities for participation through volunteering and program input. You may wish to send a special snack for your child's birthday or a special occasion that your family celebrates, such as a holiday.

Snacks and treats must be store-bought and/or prepared in a commercial kitchen so that we have accurate ingredient and allergen information. Please remember that our center is peanut-free. Also, please check with your child's teacher about children with special diets and food restrictions in your child's class. Many children with special healthcare needs have dietary restrictions that will need to be taken into account.

Field trips

Caregivers will be notified at least 48 hours in advance of a field trip. We must have a signed permission slip for each child, including permission to transport the child, if applicable. Child Care Licensing requires that parents be notified of any animals that your child may encounter on a field trip. Links to the website of our field trip site will be shared with parents so that they can view a complete list of animals. Children must arrive on time for field trips. If the bus leaves before a child arrives they may not attend that day. Parents/Guardians may not drop their children off on a field trip.

Gang-free Zone

A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where prohibited gang-related activity is subject to increased penalties under Texas law. The specific locations include childcare centers. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of your childcare center. For more information about what constitutes a gang-free zone, please consult sections 71.028 and 71.029 of the Texas Penal Code.

Grievances/Concerns

If you are upset about something that has occurred, or you have a concern, please contact either your child's teacher or one of the directors. Please do not discuss sensitive matters in front of the children (i.e. at pick-up time). The Directors are available during operating hours either in person or via phone/email: director@emerson-academy.com. We will do everything in our power to address concerns in a timely manner.

Health Checks

Staff members in all classrooms conduct routine health checks upon a child's arrival to the Center at the point when a child is signed in. Staff is trained to look for obvious signs of illness (fever, rash, etc.) and ask the parent/guardian how the child is doing (how he slept, ate, etc.) and whether he had or will need any medication during the day. The child's health check will be documented on the Brightwheel app. For questions regarding illnesses that require exclusion from care see "illness and injury."

Hearing/Vision Tests

The state requires that each child in a school setting who turns 4 by September 1 have a hearing and vision screening on file at the school. This is required for all children at Emerson Academy upon enrollment. Please forward copies to be added to your child's school records.

Holidays

Emerson Academy closes for the following *Holidays and Professional Development (PD) days for our teachers:

2024 Dates: New Year's Day (January 1), MLK Day (January 15), President's Day PD (February 19), Good Friday (March 29), Summer PD (May 5), Memorial Day (May 26), Independence Day (July 4) Fall PD (August 12), Labor Day (September 2), Indigenous Peoples PD (October 14), Thanksgiving Break (November 27-29), Winter Break (December 23-27).

2025 Dates: New Year's Day (January 1), MLK Day (January 20), President's Day PD (February 17), Good Friday (April 18), Summer PD (May 5), Memorial Day (May 31), Independence Day (July 4), Fall PD (August 11), Labor Day (September 1), Indigenous Peoples PD (October 13), Thanksgiving Break (November 26-28), Winter Break (December 22-26).

*Please note: dates are subject to change, and in the event of a date change families will be notified at least 30 days in advance.

Illness and Injury

If your child is ill or has an injury that prevents participation in activities, including outdoor play, please do not send your child to the Center. If your child becomes ill while in our care we will contact you to pick your child up. Emergency contacts will be notified if we are not able to reach a parent/guardian. *Children must be picked up within an hour of being informed of the child's illness, as they will be cared for in the office to minimize the other children's exposure to communicable illness.* A late fee of \$10/increment of 10 minutes will be assessed if the child remains in care beyond an hour after the family has been notified.

So-called "nuisance" diseases, such as scabies, head lice (pediculosis), ringworm of the body or scalp, and pinworms are highly contagious and can cause problems in a group care setting. Children and adults with these conditions (except ringworm of the body and pinworms) should be excluded until treated. Family members, as well as adult caregivers and their families, should be aware of symptoms and treated if they become infected.

We may not admit children that have one of the following unless medical evaluation by a health-care professional indicates that the child can be included in the center's activities:

→ Temporal/ear/underarm temperature of 100 degrees or greater, accompanied by

- behavior changes or other signs/symptoms of illness;
- Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill; or
- Any symptoms of a contagious illness that is being monitored by the local health authority (Ex: COVID-19)
- A health-care professional had diagnosed the child with a communicable disease (such as Chicken Pox), and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that he/she is no longer contagious.

Notification of communicable illnesses will be sent out via Brightwheel. Notices of communicable illness will no longer be displayed in the Center.

Immunizations

Safety and public health remain central to Emerson Academy's concern for each child's well-being. Current immunization requirements set forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Center for Disease Control must be met at all times, are required upon enrollment and must be updated as necessary thereafter. Conscientious Objection affidavits will not be accepted for the following immunizations due to public health concerns: DTap, HiB, IPV (Polio), MMR, PCV13 (Pneumococcus), Varicella (Chicken Pox). The following are highly recommended for everyone, and children without these immunizations must have a notarized conscientious objection affidavit on file: Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Influenza. Children experiencing homelessness or foster care may be provisionally admitted for up to 30 days if evidence of immunization is not available.

Exceptions to the Emerson Academy Immunization policy are very rare and require documentation from a physician. For medical conditions, acceptable documentation may include a note from the child's health care professional providing a statement that the required vaccine is medically contraindicated or poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of the child.

Employees of Emerson Academy are required to have a TDap vaccine every 10 years, and they are encouraged to get an annual flu shot. Staff aged 65 or older are encouraged to get the pneumonia vaccine as well. Vaccine records are kept in the Staff confidential files and are available for review by Child Care Regulation. Vaccine schedules for adults can be found online at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/downloads/adult/adult-combined-schedule.pdf>

Information on immunization requirements can be found online at:
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/default.shtm>

Incident Reports

If your child is seriously injured during school hours you will be notified by phone and an incident report will be sent home. For minor injuries, parents/guardians will be notified at pick-up time and will be given an incident report to sign. The center will keep a copy of all incident reports in your child's file for periodic review by the Texas Department of Health and Human Services. If you would like a copy of an incident report we will be happy to provide it.

Infant Feeding and Nursing Mothers

As a licensed childcare facility we are required to have Infant Feeding Instructions for children ages 18 months and younger that must be updated every 30 days or sooner if there are changes

to the infant's feeding schedule. Bottles and infant formula and/or breast milk should be supplied daily, with your child's first name and last initial labeled clearly on each container. If your infant is beginning to eat solid foods, please keep your child's teacher informed as you introduce new foods into his/her diet. Baby food should be sent daily, labeled with your child's first name and last initial.

A refrigerator, microwave, and bottle warmers are available in the infant/toddler classrooms for cooling/heating your child's food and milk. Daily reports will be sent home via email from Brightwheel to provide the following information: feedings (amount consumed and the times), diapers (wet/soiled and the times), sleep (amount and times), mood/observation, a daily photo, friendly reminders, classroom activities and anything special that occurred that day.

Emerson Academy encourages and *promotes breastfeeding by providing designated areas for nursing: the adult-sized rocking chair in the infant room or outdoor seating in the garden; and educating our infant teachers about the proper ways to store and reheat breast milk. Breast milk is stored in separate compartments of the refrigerator, labeled with each infant's name. We use a bottle warmer or warm water to heat breast milk—never a microwave. All parents have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their child while in care.

*Breastfeeding Information and resources are available in the infant/toddler classes, which include useful topics such as breastfeeding support group information, tips on returning to work while breastfeeding, and weaning. Additional breastfeeding information can be found at www.milkcounts.com

Infant Sleep/Safe Sleep Policy

Parents/Guardians of children under the age of 18 months must sign an acknowledgment of our Infant Safe Sleep policy upon admission. As a licensed childcare facility we are not permitted to use blankets, loose bedding, or stuffed animals in an infant's crib under the age of 12 months. We have sleeveless sleep sacks that we provide for each infant. You may want to send warmer clothing such as sleepers for naps. Infants less than 12 months of age will be placed in a safe sleeping position: on their backs to sleep on a firm mattress in a CPSC approved crib. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, swaddling infants when they are in a crib is not necessary or recommended, but rather one-piece sleepers should be used (see Standard 3.1.4.2 for more information).

When a health-care professional determines that it is medically necessary for an infant to sleep in an alternative position (other than sleeping on the infant's back), sleep in a restrictive device (such as a bouncer seat or swing), or needs to be swaddled to sleep, parents/guardians must use form J-800-2710 to ensure that our licensed child-care meets the minimum standards required by Texas Human Resources Code §42.042(e)(8). The standards for childcare centers require the operation to:

- ★ follow the directions of an infant's health-care professional to provide specialized medical assistance to the infant; and
- ★ maintain, while active, this form and any other directions from the health-care professional that the parent provides to the operation [See §746.603(a)(10) or §747.603(a)(9)].

Caregivers will keep the exception form in the infant's classroom, so that all caregivers may refer to the health-care professional's instructions.

Individual Education Plan (IEP) and Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)

An Individual Education Plan (IEP)--for children ages 3-6 years--or an Individual Family Service

Plan (IFSP)--birth to three years—should be provided by the parents/guardians for children with disabilities who qualify under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) prior to enrollment. The IFSP/IEP is a developmental assessment that documents your child's strengths and areas for improvement. Each classroom teacher will plan and implement activities based on each child's IEP/IFSP. Please remember that parents/guardians are responsible for providing updated IEPs/IFSPs as your child's plan changes.

Licensing Information

Emerson Academy's License number is 881992. You may contact the local Licensing office at (512) 834-3426 and the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) website is www.dfps.state.tx.us. The DFPS abuse/neglect hotline is 800-252-5400. You may review a copy of the minimum standard rules in the office or online http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_care/ as well as Emerson Academy's most recent Licensing report on the bulletin board in the hallway or online at:

https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Search_Texas_Child_Care/ppFacilitySearchDayCare.asp

Meals/Nutrition

Emerson Academy participates in The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federal program that provides reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks to eligible children and adults who are enrolled for care at participating child care centers, day care homes, and adult day care centers. CACFP contributes to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of young children and adults in the United States. Emerson Academy is sponsored by PCCPA, and we provide breakfast, lunch and afternoon snacks to every child attending our program. Parents and Guardians must complete all paperwork in its entirety in order for their children to be enrolled in the Food Program.

The infant formula that we provide is Similac Advanced Infant Formula Milk-Based Powder with Iron. Infants who are on solid foods will be provided with cereal (mixed with breastmilk or formula), pureed fruits and vegetables, and milk. Toddlers, preschoolers and school-aged children will be provided with whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, vegetables and milk daily. Toddler food items will be diced up into small, bite sized pieces and choking hazards will be replaced with appropriate, toddler friendly options (ex: puffed corn instead of popcorn).

We are able to accommodate children with food allergies who have documentation from their medical providers. Safe foods will be substituted, and Emerson Academy will ensure that we meet the child's dietary needs, regardless of how similar the substitution is to the menu item for that meal. Ex: If breakfast is scrambled eggs and fruit and a child has an egg allergy, we will serve a grain and the fruit. Parents/Guardians have the option to opt out of the Food Program and provide all meals and snacks if their child has a life-threatening dietary need, with a note from the child's medical provider.

**Parents/Guardians may choose to send additional food items for children who are selective eaters, but those food items must meet the USDA guidelines for child nutrition.

https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2019-05/2015-2020_Dietary_Guidelines.pdf

Ex: lean proteins, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, dairy/dairy substitute;

Please limit items with added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium. Please note: **ALL** children will be served every meal that Emerson Academy offers first, then they will be allowed to eat their additional food items from home that meet the dietary guidelines. It is challenging for caregivers

to encourage children to eat healthy, nutrient-dense foods when they see their peers eating items like cakes, toaster pastries or potato chips.

Medication

In case of an emergency, we need to be able to provide information to emergency personnel concerning your child's medications. The following guidelines must be followed if you administer medication to your child or request that we administer medication:

- The school must be notified when medication has been administered at home.
- If medication is to be administered at the center, parents must sign an authorization and include times for center employees to administer each medication according to label directions.
- All staff are trained in the safe handling and dispensing of medication annually.
- Medications are stored in a medication container in the Staff Workroom, with the exception of emergency medications (such as Epi-Pens or seizure meds) which are kept in Ziploc bags high on the walls in the child's classroom for easy access by teachers in case of an emergency, and refrigerated medications which are stored in the kitchen refrigerator.
- Medication may not be left in purses, lunch boxes or backpacks that can be accessed by children!
- Medication must be in the original container labeled with the child's full name and the date brought to the center. Expired medication will be sent home.
- Any medication that states "please ask a doctor" (typically for children under age 2) must have an accompanying doctor's note with the appropriate dosage, and this must be updated every year or as the child's dosage increases.
- Medications may only be administered to the child for whom it is intended. If you have more than one child at the center, you will need to provide each child with his/her own medications (including over-the-counter meds used on an as-needed basis).
- If your child has periodic and recurring medical problems, such as asthma attacks or allergic reactions, a medical authorization may be signed by a caregiver or health-care professional allowing Emerson Academy to administer the medication when symptoms occur. The authorizations need to be updated every *six months* and must include symptoms to look for.

*Nut-free policy

Peanut and treenut allergies are becoming more and more prevalent in the U.S. In order to protect the health and safety of ALL of the children at Emerson Academy we have a very strict no nut policy.

Lunches provided from home for children with medical needs may not include peanuts in any form. Food sent to the school that contains nuts will not be served. We will call and ask that you bring an alternative that is nut-free.

Operational Policies

Emerson Academy's Operational Policies (aka our Family Handbook) is updated annually, or sooner if necessary, and families will be informed in writing of any policy in writing, via email, or through Brightwheel.

Outdoor Play and Physical Activity

At Emerson Academy we value time spent outdoors as often as possible so that children have opportunities for physical development. As a child development center, we ensure that children

have a minimum of two hours/day of physical activity. For children of all ages, Childcare Licensing requires that children have daily opportunities for outdoor play in the morning and afternoon as weather permits. If/when the weather does not permit outdoor activities, the teachers provide opportunities for music and movement, yoga, exercise classes, etc. so that children remain physically active.

During the summer months we take the following precautions to keep children safe: applying sunscreen before going outdoors (6 months and up), applying insect repellent (1 year and up), taking frequent water breaks, limiting time spent outside, and encouraging the children to cool down in the shade. Both sunscreen and insect repellent are provided by parents and must be labeled for each individual child so that they can be stored safely in each child's classroom. Aerosol sunscreen and insect repellent are not allowed because they can damage children's lungs, especially children with asthma; please send cream sunscreen or insect repellent.

Physical Activity:

- Infants will be given opportunities for physical activity, including supervised tummy time.
- Toddler age children will participate a minimum of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play each day.
- Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten children will participate a minimum of 90 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play each day.
- School age children who are in attendance for a full day will participate a minimum of 90 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play each day. School age children who are only in attendance after-school will participate a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play each day.

All children will participate each day in:

- Two occasions of active play outdoors when weather permits.
- Two or more structured or teacher-led activities or games that promote movement over the course of the day.
- Continuous opportunities to develop and practice age-appropriate gross motor and movement skills.

During cold weather we ensure that the children are dressed appropriately (jackets, long sleeves and pants, hats, gloves or mittens, socks and warm shoes or boots).

**The temperature outside is one of many factors used to determine if it is appropriate to play outdoors, but this decision is ultimately left up to the Directors' discretion. If the heat index is above 100° infants and toddlers will remain indoors. Butterflies and older may go outside for brief periods of time (no more than 15 minutes) if the heat index is above 100°. School-agers may participate in water activities when the heat index is above 100°.

**If the wind-chill factor is below 15° infants and toddlers will remain indoors. Butterflies and older may go outside for brief periods of time (no more than 15 minutes) if the wind-chill factor is below 15°. School-agers may participate in outdoor physical activities when the wind-chill factor is at or above 10°.

Parking

When dropping off/picking up your child, please park on the right-hand side of the driveway or along the street. To ensure the safety of ALL children, please do not use your cell phone while driving in or out of the Emerson Academy property. Please drive slowly, with careful attention to

the road. Event parking—please park along the street or in the Staff parking lot east of the Center.

Parties

Birthdays and holidays are an especially exciting time for young children and the Center will be pleased to help your child celebrate with classmates and staff if arrangements are made in advance. Parent participation is welcome, but not required. Party planning should attempt to minimize disruption of routine and prevent unwarranted anxiety for the children. Balloons are a choking hazard for young children and should not be brought into the Center (if you absolutely cannot do without balloons, Mylar balloons are acceptable).

Since licensing regulations prohibit any type of open flame in the Center, birthday candles are not permitted. If your child is having a birthday party outside of school, please ask your child's teacher to distribute invitations in order to minimize disruption. Treats shared among children must be commercially prepared or prepared in a kitchen that is inspected by local health officials, per Texas Rising Star requirements.

Payments

Tuition is due by the 1st of each month. There is a 4-day grace period for late payment, but arrangements will need to be made in advance. **After the 5th day that tuition is late \$20 will be added to that month's charges.** If payment cannot be collected by the 10th, your child may be dismissed from our program. Emerson Academy reserves the right to suspend your child's participation in the program any time your account is past due. There is a \$25 charge on returned checks.

Parents/Guardians will be invoiced 5 days before the 1st of the month via Brightwheel. Payment options include Check, Cash, Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express and ACH through your bank. **Refunds will not be given under any circumstances.**

Pets

For the health and safety of our children and staff, children's pets are not permitted on the premises. Service dogs and certified therapy dogs are welcome, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). From time to time the children will have the opportunity to visit with animals for special events and science lessons. With permission from the Director, teachers may have classroom pets for observation purposes.

Children at Emerson have the opportunity to interact with classroom pets, dogs, pygmy goats, and potbellied pigs. Immunization records are kept on-site for Quincy. Please inform your child's teacher and a Director of any allergies to pets that your child may have. This information should also be noted on your child's Health Statement.

Pick-up

Emerson Academy closes promptly at 6:00 pm. All children must be picked up at the end of their designated enrollment time (12:30 pm for mornings, 6:00 pm for afternoon/full-day children). If your child is picked up later than their designated program time, there will be a \$5 charge for every 1 minute that the child remains in our care after 12:30/6:00 pm.

Children must be picked up within an hour of being informed of the child's illness, as they will be cared for in the office to minimize the other children's exposure to communicable illness. A late fee of \$5 per minute will be assessed if the child remains in care beyond an hour after the family has been notified. Parents/Guardians will be expected to sign a late pick-up form at the time of pick-up and may either pay in cash or be billed the following day.

If a parent/guardian and/or emergency contact cannot be reached by 6:30 pm Emerson Academy will call law enforcement to help locate an appropriate caregiver.

Preventing and Responding to Abuse/Neglect

Emerson Academy works tirelessly with our Staff, in collaboration with the community and our families, to help prevent and respond appropriately to abuse and neglect of children, including: at least 2 hours of annual training for employees; sharing information and resources with employees and families to raise awareness of issues regarding child abuse and neglect, including warning signs that a child may be a victim of abuse or neglect and factors indicating a child is at risk for abuse or neglect; providing educational opportunities to increase employee and parent awareness of prevention techniques for child abuse and neglect, such as the use of Conscious Discipline for families; coordinating with community organizations, such as the Williamson County Child Advocacy Center; and informing the parent of a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect about the actions they should take to obtain assistance and intervention, including procedures for reporting child abuse or neglect.

Program Philosophy, Curriculum and Goals

Emerson Academy's approach to early education is an eclectic blend of teaching methods common to Montessori, Waldorf, Reggio Emilia, and Play-based models. Emerson's program emphasizes hands-on, authentic experiences that encourage learning through all of the senses. This multi-sensory model makes learning accessible to children of all abilities, including children with disabilities and children with advanced cognitive development.

The primary goals of Emerson Academy are to provide enriching learning experiences that prepare ALL children for the next step in their schooling. For children with disabilities, Emerson Academy works with the family to advocate for appropriate school placement and services and ensures children have the consistency they need across settings.

Emerson Academy uses Creative Curriculum® in our classrooms for infants, toddlers, preschool and Pre-K.

The framework that guides The Creative Curriculum® for Infants, Toddlers & Twos has routines and experiences at its center. That's because the routines and experiences that structure each day, and responsive care and teaching provided during these times, are what enables children to develop a secure attachment with the important people in their lives and gain confidence in themselves as learners.

With The Creative Curriculum® for preschoolers (ages 3-6), children are immersed in learning through purposeful play-based experiences on topics they're familiar with from their everyday lives. Children find opportunities for rigorous skill development like counting, measurement, and language comprehension while also developing positive relationships, gross-motor skills, and problem-solving abilities.

Emerson Academy incorporates Conscious Discipline® strategies to support social and emotional intelligence and, in turn, cognitive performance. The Conscious Discipline® curriculum is used in all age groups to teach self-regulation and to help children become an integral part of our "school family." For articles, videos and free printable resources to use at home, visit: <https://consciousdiscipline.com/about/parents/>

Records

The Center is required to maintain the following records up-to-date for each child: Emergency Contact Information, Enrollment Questionnaire, Admission Information, Authorization for

Emergency Medical Care, Child Release Information, Daily Attendance (attendance records are kept in Brightwheel for three months), Health Statements and Immunization Records. We rely on parents to provide the above information and keep records current upon Emerson Academy's request. Health Statements must be updated annually, and vaccination records must be updated as a child receives immunizations.

Parents must notify the directors immediately if any of the child's pertinent information changes, such as emergency contact information or health issues/concerns. Parents may notify the directors via email (director@emerson-academy.com) or by written note delivered to the office.

Rest/Sleep Time

Infants will follow their own individual schedules for sleep and playtime, as well as meals and bottles. Every child over the age of 12 months will be provided a supervised rest/sleep period after lunch. It is essential that children be well rested, so we will encourage the children to sleep or participate in a quiet activity daily. Children will not be forced to sleep during this time (code 746.2905 of TDPRS minimum standards). If your child has a special blanket and/or comfort object that may help him/her rest please feel free to send those items labeled with your child's name. Blankets and other items used for rest time should be taken home at the end of the week to be washed and returned the following week.

School Bus Transportation

Children with disabilities attending public school programs may be eligible for transportation by school buses provided by the School District to and/or from Emerson Academy. Children who leave Emerson Academy during the school day that are transported by the school bus will be escorted by Emerson Academy Staff and handed off to the school bus driver/monitor, then signed out of care. When children arrive on the school bus, Emerson Academy Staff receive the child from the bus driver/monitor and escort the child to his/her classroom where they are signed into care. The Staff member responsible for the child ensures that their care needs (medication, toileting, etc.) are met before dropping them off in the classroom. If your child does not arrive within 15 minutes of his/her normal arrival time we will contact the transportation department for the School District, then contact the parents/guardians immediately.

Screen Time

Emerson Academy is a play-based program, utilizing best-practice in the field of early education. Children under the age of 2 ½ will not have screen time at Emerson Academy. Our preschoolers and school-age students will occasionally watch videos or clips pertaining to the theme that the children are learning about, but screen time will not exceed 1 hour/day under most circumstances.

Snow/Inclement Weather

We strive to accommodate the needs of our working families while also valuing the safety of the children in our care and our staff. Emerson Academy reserves the right to close at any time due to severe weather conditions, or for other emergencies or natural disasters. In general, Emerson Academy will close for severe weather if/when the Round Rock ISD/City of Round Rock offices close. We reserve the right to do a delayed opening and/or early closure if the weather either deteriorates during the day or improves. Unfortunately, no refunds are given due to inclement weather closings.

Thirty Day Notice

If for any reason your family decides to no longer have your child/children enrolled at Emerson Academy you will be expected to give the director a written 30-day notice. Tuition will be prorated from the date that written notice was received by a Director. Families utilizing Child Care Services (CCS) through Workforce Solutions are required to give 2-weeks notice before disenrolling.

Toys from Home

Toys from home tend to cause disruption during the school day, and destruction or loss of toys can be very upsetting to young children. We ask that children leave their toys and/or treasured items at home unless the teachers have asked for children to bring items for a specific activity, such as show and tell or a learning project. The exception to this rule is that a child may need a special lovey (blanket or small stuffed animal) to make the transition from home to school and/or for rest time.

Transportation

Emerson Academy transports children ages 4 and up for field trips and school events, as well as in the case of an emergency. Please update your child's Admission paperwork if your consent for transportation changes.

Tuition and Fees

Emerson Academy depends entirely on family tuition and fundraising to provide exceptional care for your child. Tuition is generally set for a one-year period, with increases taking effect on September 1st. The Emerson Foundation determines when/if tuition increases will occur. Families are notified at least one month in advance of a tuition increase.

Tuition rates are dependent upon a child's chronological age, level of need, and full/part-time status. Children attending Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) for a portion of the school day will be charged for before and/or after PPCD care.

FEES: Fees may include Adaptive Behavior (toileting, feeding, behavior etc.) Support (1:1) @ \$10/hour and/or Behavior Consultation @ \$150/hour. Children requiring a reduced ratio due to behavioral and/or adaptive behavior needs will be assessed an hourly rate for services above and beyond accommodations made by Emerson Academy that are necessary for the child to participate safely in the program.

VACATIONS: We are committed to providing consistent classroom coverage so our expenses remain the same, whether or not your child is here. We do not decrease tuition for vacation or illness. If you wish to withdraw your child for an extended period of time, your child's spot will not be held. Please refer to "Termination" below for more information on withdrawing your child.

CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES: Emerson Academy enrolls a limited number of children who receive child care subsidies from DFPS or Texas Workforce Commission. You are required to pay all parent fees by the 1st of the month, and Emerson Academy is required to report non-payment by the 5th. You also need to tell us immediately of any changes in your subsidy or copayment. If your family is experiencing hardship, please speak with your caseworker and make payment arrangements with a Director.

TERMINATION: **30 days written notice is required to withdraw your child from Emerson Academy.** You will be responsible for tuition payment for those 30 days. If payment is not received by the 5th day of the 30-day notice period, the credit card on file will be charged. If final payment is not received within 60 days of termination, your account will be turned over to a collection agency. In the unlikely event that a child is dismissed from the program, the parents/guardians will be responsible for that month's tuition.

ENROLLMENT FEES: The purpose of our enrollment fees is to assure full enrollment so that Emerson Academy can continue to provide our quality service to families. Upon enrollment Emerson Academy requires a registration fee of \$150 per family. **Enrollment is not confirmed until the registration fee has been received.**

Families that have more than one child enrolled will receive a 10% discount, which will be applied to the older child's/children's tuition. There are a limited number of scholarships available through The Emerson Foundation for families that have children with special needs. Further financial assistance may be available through Texas Workforce Solutions Child Care Solutions (Rural Capital or Capital Area): <http://www.workforcesolutionsrca.com/child-care/parents/>.

Waiting List

Our waiting list operates on a first-come, first-serve basis with the following exception: priority is given to families that have children currently enrolled at the center. Families that are expecting another child through birth or foster care/adoption should place their child on the waiting list based on the expected age of the child and the expected enrollment date. A deposit of 50% of the first month's tuition is required in order to hold a child's spot on the waiting list.

Water and Sensory Activities

Emerson Academy is committed to your child's overall growth and development, including his/her sensory development. Part of our curriculum is aimed at exposing children to various, multi-sensory activities that promote this development. At times, your child will participate in activities involving water such as sensory tables, sprinklers, and slip-n-slides with your consent. Your child will also be involved in a variety of hands-on activities with materials that will help to strengthen his/her sensory development. School-age children will participate in various water activities, including swimming pools and water park slides. At the beginning of the summer Camp Emerson campers will have a swim test to determine whether or not they will be required to use a life vest for all swimming activities, or if they are independent enough in the water to handle swimming without a life vest. All swimming activities will take place in public pools where lifeguards are present at all times.

The Emerson Foundation dba Emerson Academy is an equal opportunity organization. It will not allow discrimination based upon race, color, national origin, age, disability, socioeconomic status, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation.

Family Handbook Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Emerson Academy Family Handbook. I am aware of my responsibilities as a parent/guardian of a child enrolled at Emerson Academy and I am fully aware of all policies and procedures, including the *peanut-free policy.

I was given a copy of the Emerson Academy Family Handbook on _____.
(Date)

Children's Name/s:

Parent/Guardian # 1 (Print and Sign)

Parent/Guardian #2 (Print and Sign)