

**STEPPING STONES ACADEMY**  
***PRE-KINDERGARTEN***  
***FAMILY HANDBOOK***  
**2025 - 2026**



**35812 N. 7<sup>th</sup> St.**  
**Phoenix, AZ 85086**  
**Phone: 623-465-4910**

**[www.steppingstonesacademy.org](http://www.steppingstonesacademy.org)**

**We are ...**  
**MUSTANG STRONG!**

*Si usted está en necesidad de un intérprete para revisar el manual,  
por favor póngase en contacto con Dedre Stewart-Alliger al 623-465-4910.*

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Revised July, 2025



# **WELCOME TO STEPPING STONES ACADEMY PRE-KINDERGARTEN**

Dear Pre-K Families:

Welcome to Stepping Stones Academy (SSA) Pre-K and your child's beginning on this educational adventure of learning! We know finding the best Pre-K program for your child is important, and we are happy you selected Stepping Stones Academy! It is our goal to provide your child with a successful year in a safe and friendly learning environment, and we look forward to working with you to make this happen.

The Pre-K program prepares your child for Kindergarten by focusing on development in the four areas of cognitive skills, social and emotional skills, language skills, and motor skills. The program follows a curriculum applying what research has discovered -- children learn best by doing. With the help of teachers and parents, children participate in fun and interesting educational activities, make new friends, discover talents, and learn valuable life-long skills.

As school leaders we are delighted to have you as part of the Stepping Stones Academy community! We invite you to stop by our offices, send an e-mail (Dedre Stewart-Alliger - [ddsa@ssa.school](mailto:ddsa@ssa.school) or Tina Panagopoulos - [tina@ssa.school](mailto:tina@ssa.school)), give us a call (623-465-4910), or check out the school's web site at [www.steppingstonesacademy.org](http://www.steppingstonesacademy.org). Thank you for joining us on this journey and welcome to the Stepping Stones Academy community.

We are ... **MUSTANG STRONG!**

Dedre Stewart-Alliger and Dr. Tina Panagopoulos  
Stepping Stones Academy Pre-K Administrators

## **WHOSE CHILDREN?**

"Whose children are these?" we asked one day seeing little children out to play.  
"Mine," said the parent with a tender smile, "Mine to keep for a little while.  
To bathe their hands and comb their hair; to tell them what they are to wear.  
To prepare for them their daily food; to train them that they may always be good."

"Whose children are these?" we asked again as the door opened and someone came in.  
"Mine," said the teacher with the same tender smile, "Mine to keep just a little while.  
To teach them how to be gentle and kind; to train and direct their curious minds.  
To help them live by every rule and do the most they can in school."

"Whose children are these?" we asked once more just as the children came through the door.  
"Ours," said the parent and teacher as they smiled, and each one took the hand of a child.  
"Ours to love and train together. Ours this wonderful task forever."

Author Unknown

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

We envision an environment that provides academic, social, and personal skills children need to become confident and responsible citizens. We believe learning should be based on individualized, relevant activities and frequent assessment to monitor student progress and achievement. We promote high student expectations with consideration and respect for all individuals; thereby, developing life-long learners and productive members of society.



## **PRE-K HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 2025-2026**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I acknowledge the following:

- I have received a copy of the Stepping Stones Academy Pre-K Family Handbook.
- I have been provided the opportunity to review the Pre-K Handbook and review it with my child.
- This Handbook contains important information about my child's rights and responsibilities as a student at Stepping Stones Academy Pre-K.
- Included in this Handbook is information about Stepping Stones Academy's expectations for student conduct and student discipline, including the circumstances in which Stepping Stones Academy may terminate enrollment of a student in its Pre-K program.
- This Handbook is available on Stepping Stones Academy's website, which may be found at [www.steppingstonesacademy.org](http://www.steppingstonesacademy.org).
- I may schedule an appointment with the administrator if I have questions about the information contained in this Handbook.

**WELCOME TO STEPPING STONES ACADEMY PRE-K!**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Name Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Printed Name

## **BEGINNING THE SCHOOL YEAR**

The Pre-K program is designed as a Kindergarten Readiness class and emphasizes development in cognitive, language, motor, and social and emotional skills. Children participate in whole-group lessons, small group projects, and learning centers. The activities provide a multitude of educational experiences, accentuate the children's different learning styles, and better prepare the children for Kindergarten.

### **PREPARING FOR THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**

Pencils, crayons, and a backpack are just a few of the items each child needs for school! To help children be fully prepared, families are asked to review the following information and contact the Stepping Stones Academy Office (623-465-4910) or Stepping Stones Academy's administrators, Dedre Stewart-Alliger (ddsa@ssa.school) or Dr. Tina Panagopoulos (tina@ssa.school), with questions.

**1. School Supplies** – A school supply list is available from the Stepping Stones Academy Office and on the school's web site ([www.steppingstonesacademy.org](http://www.steppingstonesacademy.org)). Items are to be marked in black, permanent marker with the child's first and last name.

**2. School Uniform** – Children are to follow the school's uniform policy. If a child comes to school not in uniform, the parents are contacted so they may bring the child a change of clothes.

**3. Lunch** – Children may bring lunch from home or purchase the school-catered lunch. Information about the lunch program is sent home at the beginning of the year. It is recommended an insulated lunch bag be used for food brought from home. Soda/Pop, candy, and gum are not allowed for lunch. (Note – Children attending half day Pre-K do not need lunch.)

**4. Snacks** – Each day children are to bring two healthy snacks – one for morning and one for afternoon. Examples of healthy snacks are crackers, apple slices, and pretzels. Soda/Pop, candy, and gum are not allowed as snacks items. (Note – Children attending half day Pre-K need one snack.)

**5. Water Bottle** – Children are to bring a leak-proof, non-breakable water bottle for use during the day. The water bottle is to be marked in black, permanent marker with the child's first and last name. A water fountain is also available and may be used for a drink.

### **FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**

The first day of school is here and it is time to officially begin the journey on this educational adventure. This may be an emotional time for both children and families but by working together – child, parent, teacher, administrator – the transition from home to school becomes an easier and positive experience for everyone. During the first day of class parents are invited to stay for the first fifteen minutes and help their children meet the teacher along with other Pre-K children. Be assured after parents and children say, "good-bye," the outstanding and highly qualified Pre-K teachers are taking excellent care of each child.

### **REMINDERS**

1. Children are to wear school uniform every day to school. On Fridays children may wear Stepping Stones Academy t-shirts.
2. Each day children need a water bottle, lunch, and two healthy snacks. Soda/Pop, candy, and gum are not allowed. (Note – Children attending Pre-K for half day do not need lunch and need one snack.)
3. Upon arrival parents are asked to park in the parking area, escort their children inside of the classroom, and sign-in their child with first and last names. At the end of class parents park in the parking area, walk to the classroom, sign-out their child, and escort their child to the vehicle. Children are not allowed to walk in the parking area without adult supervision.
4. Children may only leave with people listed in the Registration Packet or people listed on the Emergency Card. Parents are reminded to keep these names updated throughout the year. To update names parents are asked to contact the Stepping Stones Academy Office.

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY AND TUITION**

The Pre-K class is designed to prepare the children for Kindergarten --- academically, socially, physically, emotionally --- which is one reason the program emphasizes and develops cognitive, language, motor, and social and emotional skills. These skills are re-enforced with interactive class lessons and fun experiences where children practice what they learn. To best operate the program families are asked to review the following information about class days, tuition, and attendance. This allows everyone to then focus on the most important person -- the child. Parents are invited to contact the Stepping Stones Academy Office (623-465-4910) or Stepping Stones Academy's administrators, Dedre Stewart-Alliger (ddsa@ssa.school) or Dr. Tina Panagopoulos (tina@ssa.school), with questions.

### **CLASS DAYS AND TIMES**

The full day Pre-K class meets five days a week, Monday - Friday, except on designated holidays and vacation days. Class time is from 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. On a few days children are dismissed at 11:30 a.m. due to early dismissal days. Class time on early dismissal days is from 8:00-11:30 a.m.

The half day Pre-K class meets five days a week, Monday - Friday, except on designated holidays and vacation days. Class time is from 8:00-11:30 a.m.

### **TUITION FEES**

Tuition is \$825.00 per month for the full day program and \$625.00 per month for the half day program. There is also a one-time, non-refundable registration fee of \$100.00 which is paid at the time of enrolling the child in the Pre-K class.

Payment is made monthly in the Stepping Stones Academy Office with cash, check, or debit/credit card. All checks are made payable to Stepping Stones Academy. Upon receiving payment, parents receive a receipt.

Tuition is not pro-rated for months with vacation days. Monthly rates are determined by the annual cost of the program divided evenly between the ten months of classes. Families are not credited days due to the child's absences (ie: illness, family vacation) and money is not refunded if a child withdraws before the end of the month or if a child is asked to leave the program.

### **PAYMENT DATES**

At the beginning of each year parents are given a Fees and Payment Schedule which includes the tuition payment dates for each month. Additional copies of this form are available in the SSA Office. Payments are due by the first of each month unless the first of the month is on a week-end or holiday. The payment is then due on the first school day following the week-end or holiday.

Late payments result in children unable to attend class until the payment is made in full. The child may also forfeit the spot in the Pre-K class until payment is made in full. For returned checks, there is a \$25.00 fee. Stepping Stones Academy may request payment be made with cash for returned checks or repeated incidences of returned checks.

### **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES**

Classes begin and end promptly. Families are asked to assist by dropping-off and picking-up children on time. Class time for full day is 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. and class time for half day is 8:00-11:30 a.m. Upon arriving at school children are to report to the Pre-K classroom. Children are to be picked no later than ten minutes after the end of class. If parents are more than ten minutes late an additional fee is charged. Parents are asked to contact the Stepping Stones Academy Office if they are running late so needed supervision arrangements may be made.

### **CHILDREN ARRIVING LATE OR LEAVING EARLY**

Arriving to school on time and attending the entire session allows children to benefit the most from class, but there may be times when children arrive late or leave early. During these times parents are asked to contact the Stepping Stones Academy Office and the Office personnel will contact the classroom teacher.

## **CHILDREN ABSENT FROM CLASS**

When children are absent from school parents are asked contact the Stepping Stones Academy Office by 8:15 a.m. on the day of the absent. For planned or extended absence parents are to notify the Stepping Stones Academy Office about the absence as soon as the dates are known. Activities and projects may be sent home to complete during the child's absence, so the child continues to practice the skills taught in class.

## **TERMINATION OF ENROLLMENT**

In certain circumstances it may be necessary to discontinue a child's enrollment. This decision is based on the best interest of the child, other children in the class, and the well-being of everyone related with the program. Every effort is made to correct the situation before a final decision is made; however, the school administrators maintain the right to end the enrollment of a child at any time. If a child is requested to permanently leave the program, tuition money is not refunded. Termination of enrollment may be the result of any of the following situations:

- \*Abuse of other children, staff, or property by the child or parent
- \*Continued violation of Stepping Stones Academy policies by the child or parent
- \*Disruptive or dangerous behavior by the child or parent
- \*Non-payment of tuition.

## **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

Stepping Stones Academy knows young children learn best by doing and children need time to explore, discover, and investigate. The Pre-K program offers children opportunities to do all of these things through intriguing hands-on experiences, captivating lessons, and innovative activities. Children not only increase social skills, practice problem-solving, and build self-confidence, but also learn academic skills needed for Kindergarten. The Pre-K program is designed as a Kindergarten Readiness class and emphasizes four developmental areas:

1. Cognitive Skills
2. Language Skills
3. Motor Skills
4. Social and Emotional Skills.

Each of these areas is taught, practiced, and reviewed through class lessons, art projects, learning centers, stories, and playtime. The activities are completed in a supportive and safe class environment, where children learn valuable concepts, practice new skills, ask inquisitive questions, and share innovative ideas.

### **COGNITIVE SKILLS**

*Sorting blocks by colors, shapes, and sizes ... Reciting the days of the week ... Illustrating pictures with crayons and paint ... Naming the months of the year ... Identifying beginning sounds in words ... Learning phone numbers and addresses ... Writing numbers, letters of the alphabet, and names using lined paper*

Each day in Pre-K children participate in interactive lessons that teach fundamental skills needed for reading and writing. Children are challenged to apply imagination and creativity to complete each task. After participating in all of the fun-filled educational activities, children leave class each day anxious to return the next class day.

### **LANGUAGE SKILLS**

*Identifying objects by correct names ... Recognizing letters of the alphabet ... Learning new words and meanings ... Listening to stories and answering questions ... Telling stories with pictures ... Identifying main characters in stories ... Retelling stories in sequence*

Children learn these skills as they are taught in specific lessons as well as within the context of other lessons. The skills are practiced in whole-class time, small group activities, learning centers, story time, and one-on-one interactions with the teacher. By the end of the year, children are well-prepared to enter Kindergarten.



## **MOTOR SKILLS**

*Painting pictures ... Jumping on one leg ... Putting together puzzles ... Playing tag ...  
Coloring ... Walking in a straight line ... Playing musical chairs ... Playing catch ...  
Building a tower with blocks ... Skipping ... Cutting out squares and circles*

Activities such as these provide children with opportunities to develop and improve gross motor and fine motor skills. Children practice gross motor skills by swinging, running at recess, and kicking the ball back and forth with classmates. Children increase fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination with activities such as cutting out shapes, tracing letters and numbers, and playing with blocks. Practicing these skills in this non-threatening environment allows children to be more prepared to enter Kindergarten.

## **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS**

*Saying “please” and “thank you” ... Showing kindness to classmates ... Following class rules ...  
Expressing feelings with words ... Playing appropriately with friends ... Waiting  
patiently for a turn to talk ... Helping others ... Following directions*

This is what people see and hear in the Pre-K classroom. They feel the warm and comfortable environment and observe the children actively involved in learning. They watch the children gain confidence as they participate in interesting activities in this encouraging classroom. These experiences help lead children successfully into Kindergarten, so children are provided with many opportunities to practice positive peer relations, increase communication skills, and interact appropriately with others.

## **SCOPE AND SEQUENCE**

In accordance with Arizona rules and regulations, Stepping Stones Academy implements the following types of activities within the classroom to help meet the children’s needs in each of the developmental areas.

*Note - This list is an example of activities. It is not designed to be an all-inclusive list of activities.*

### **Language Development**

Follow directions  
Dictate stories  
Sing songs

### **Creative Expression**

Role-play  
Move to music  
Make models

### **Mathematics**

Distinguish shapes  
Arrange patterns  
Count, sort, and match objects

### **Cognitive Development**

Recognize and say full name  
Solve problems  
Imitate movement

### **Emotional Development**

Use words to describe feelings  
Put objects together  
Show concern for others  
Share with classmates

### **Science**

Observe positions of objects  
Use senses to identify objects

### **Motor Development**

Hop on one foot  
Run and jump  
Throw and catch

### **Social Development**

Practice taking turns  
Experience collaborative play  
Participate in group activities

### **Social Studies**

Explain roles in a family  
Describe careers in community  
Identify city, state, and country

## **CHARACTER COUNTS PROGRAM**

The Pre-K curriculum includes the nationally-recognized Character Counts program. In this program children learn, practice, and apply the six character traits of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

### **\* Trustworthiness - Children are to be trustworthy.**

Do not lie, cheat, or steal	Be reliable	Build a good reputation
Be honest and tell the truth	Do the right thing	Support family, friends, and country

### **\*Respect - Children are to act respectful towards themselves and others.**

Do not hit or hurt anyone	Use good manners	Consider the feelings of others
Do not use bad language	Follow the Golden Rule	Deal peacefully with disagreements

**\*Responsibility - Children are to act responsibly and accept responsibility for actions.**

Give 100% effort	Use self-control	Do what is supposed to be done
Do not blame others	Think before acting	Be accountable for your choices

**\*Fairness - Children are to treat others fairly.**

Play by the rules	Treat everyone equally	Take turns and share
Listen to others	Be open-minded	Do not take advantage of others

**\*Caring - Children are to be caring towards themselves and others.**

Express gratitude	Forgive others	Be tolerant of differences
Help people in need	Be kind	Express gratitude

**\*Citizenship - Children are to be good citizens.**

Cooperate with others	Respect authority	Protect the environment
Obey laws and rules	Be a good neighbor	Help make the community better

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Children and their families encounter many wonderful and exciting adventures on their educational adventure at Stepping Stones Academy! To help provide the best program and safest experiences, Stepping Stones Academy asks families and children to abide by the following policies and procedures.

### **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES**

Parents are responsible for providing transportation for their children to and from school. To ensure safety in the parking area and on campus, Stepping Stones Academy enforces the following policies.

1. During the school day the speed limit on 7<sup>th</sup> Street in front of Stepping Stones Academy is 15 m.p.h. Flashing lights and roll-out signs are posted along 7<sup>th</sup> Street during school hours. At no time are vehicles allowed to park along 7<sup>th</sup> Street. This includes during non-school hours.
2. Drivers are to be cautious at all times when driving on campus. Drivers are not to exceed the speed of 5 m.p.h. on school grounds.
3. Stepping Stones Academy has two driveways. The north driveway is to enter campus and is marked with an Enter sign. The south driveway is to exit campus and is marked with an Exit sign.
4. When dropping-off and picking-up children parents are to park in one of the parking spaces in the parking lot. Parents may not park in the fire lane or along 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Only vehicles with designated handicapped tags may park in the handicapped parking spaces.
5. When crossing to and from the parking area and sidewalk individuals are to use the crosswalk and follow the directions of the crossing guard and staff members.
6. When dropping-off children parents are to park in the parking area, walk their child to class, and sign-in the child at the designated location. When picking-up children parents are to park in the parking area, walk to the classroom, sign-out their child from class, and escort their child to the vehicle.
7. Stepping Stones Academy may not release a child to anyone except parents, people listed on the registration form, and/or people listed on the emergency card. Anyone other than parents must show identification before leaving with a child. If a child is to ride home with someone not listed on the registration form or emergency card, parents must provide written permission for the child to leave with the individual. Verbal authorization is not acceptable.

### **CLASSROOM RULES**

The Pre-K program follows classroom rules to help children learn and practice acceptable and appropriate behaviors. The six basic rules for the classroom are:

- |                   |                   |   |
|-------------------|-------------------|---|
| 1. Watching Eyes  | 3. Friendly Mouth | 5. Friendly Feet                          |
| 2. Listening Ears | 4. Friendly Hands | 6. Treat Others as You Wish to be Treated |

These behaviors are taught and reinforced in a positive and educational manner. Children are continually reminded of the correct behaviors and provided with opportunities to make positive decisions. Praise, one-on-one conversations, teaching by example, re-direction to another activity, and time-outs are discipline methods utilized in the classroom. Time-outs last only a few minutes, and the teacher always has the child in full view. Physical punishment is never used in the classroom. If children need repeated reminders about appropriate behavior, the teacher contacts the parents.

If the teacher deems a child's behavior warrants a visit with the administrator, the child is escorted to the Stepping Stones Academy Office to meet with the administrator and parents are contacted. The parents may be requested to attend a meeting or may need to pick-up the child from school. Further action may follow. If a child continually chooses to not follow the rules, Stepping Stones Academy may terminate the enrollment of the child. If a child is requested to permanently leave the program, tuition money is not refunded.

Frequent communication between teacher and parents is extremely important. This provides children with a more consistent routine, and the teacher and parent are both aware of how the child is doing. If changes occur in a child's life, parents are asked to inform the teacher. These changes, no matter how insignificant to adults, often affect a child in school. When the teacher is aware of these changes, she is better able to work with the child.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY OF CHILDREN'S SCHOOL RECORDS**

Private information about children and their families is kept confidential. Records may be reviewed by regulatory agencies for information pertinent to a child's safety and well-being. Otherwise, all records are confidential and monitored by the administrator.

### **CUSTODY OF CHILDREN**

In cases where custody or visitation orders involve the school, a copy of the court order must be on file in the Stepping Stones Academy Office. If court papers are not on file, equal rights to the child and information relating to the child are granted to both parents. This policy is in accordance with the laws governing the state of AZ.

### **DAMAGE TO SCHOOL PROPERTY**

The care of Stepping Stones Academy is the responsibility of everyone. Damage to the campus is taken seriously and proper authorities are involved as needed. Parents are responsible for any and all damage their child causes to school property and/or materials belonging to the school. The administrator determines the consequences and/or retribution for damages.

### **DRUG FREE AND TOBACCO FREE CAMPUS**

Stepping Stones Academy is a drug free and tobacco free campus. The possession or use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and/or tobacco products, including vaping products, and/or paraphernalia related to these items on Stepping Stones property is strictly prohibited. No person shall possess or engage in the use of marijuana, including medical marijuana, on the property of Stepping Stones Academy. This policy includes in vehicles when dropping-off or picking-up students, at school activities, or at off-campus school-sponsored events. This policy is in accordance with Arizona state law and applies to all individuals on school property and attending on and off campus school activities.

### **ENROLLMENT IN STEPPING STONES ACADEMY KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM**

For children interested in attending Kindergarten at Stepping Stones Academy, participation in the Pre-K program does not guarantee enrollment in Kindergarten. The Pre-K program is a private operation and is not governed by the same entity as the Stepping Stones Academy charter school (K-8<sup>th</sup> grades). The Arizona Department of Education has rules for charter school enrollment and Stepping Stones Academy is required by law to adhere to these rules. If parents are interested in enrolling in Stepping Stones Academy Kindergarten class, the Pre-K teachers, Office staff, and/or school administrators will happily assist with this process; however, there is no guarantee for placement in the class. Questions about the enrollment process may be directed to the Stepping Stones Academy Office or school administrators.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

The Pre-K class participates in field trips located on the Stepping Stones Academy campus. Children walk for all field trips, such as to the Library, Gym, and Multi-Purpose building. Field trips do not include any form of vehicle transportation. Field trips require written parent permission and forms are provided by the teacher. Verbal authorization is not acceptable.

## **GRADUATION CEREMONY**

Stepping Stones Academy hosts a graduation ceremony at the end of the year for children in the Pre-K class who are going into Kindergarten the following year. During the ceremony, the children present a short program, recognize their parents, and receive their Pre-K diplomas. After the ceremony, a reception is held for the graduates and their guests. All parents, grandparents, siblings, and other relatives and friends are invited to attend this special event and celebrate the Pre-K graduates.

## **INSURANCE**

Stepping Stones Academy Pre-K has liability insurance coverage. Parents are responsible for other insurance coverage, such as medical costs for their child due to an injury. In an emergency, Stepping Stones Academy may call the local medical authorities. Expenses for these services are the responsibility of the parents.

## **LICENSING AND INSPECTION**

The Stepping Stones Academy Pre-K is licensed and regulated by the Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS). All inspection reports are available in the SSA Office.

Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS)  
150 N. 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Phoenix, AZ 85007

[www.azdhs.gov](http://www.azdhs.gov)  
Phone 602-542-1025  
Fax 602-542-0883

## **LOST AND FOUND AREA**

At times items are misplaced in the classroom. Items found labeled with the child's name are returned to the child or parent. All items found without a name are placed in the Lost and Found area in the classroom. Unclaimed articles are donated to a local charity at the end of each quarter. Parents are asked to report the loss of any item to the teacher immediately. Stepping Stones Academy is not responsible for items lost or damaged at school.

## **LUNCH, SNACK, AND WATER BOTTLES**

Children have lunch and two snack times each day. It is important for children to eat healthy and nutritional snacks and lunch in order to have plenty of energy for the day's activities. Though the children simply see this as a time to eat, the teacher sees this as a time to teach and reinforce proper manners and appropriate and positive social skills.

It is suggested children bring an insulated lunch bag for lunch and snacks. Lunch containers should include the child's first and last name written in black, permanent marker. For health and safety reasons, children are not allowed to share food or beverages with one another and food left in the classroom is thrown away at the end of each day.

**Lunch** – Children bring lunch from home or purchase the school-catered lunch. Lunch items not allowed are pop/soda, candy, and gum. Lunch is not eaten at school on early dismissal days. (Note – Children attending half day Pre-K do not eat lunch at school.)

**Snacks** – There are two snack times during the day – morning and afternoon. Children need to bring a healthy snack, such as a sandwich or apple slices. Items not allowed are pop/soda, candy, and gum. (Note – Children attending half day Pre-K do need morning snack.)

**Water Bottles** – Children are encouraged to bring a water bottle. Water bottles may contain only plain water and must be leak-proof in non-breakable containers. A water fountain is located on the outside of the Pre-K building, which children may also use with supervision from the teacher.

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Stepping Stones Academy Pre-K welcomes enrollment from all children who are three or four years old on or before August 31<sup>st</sup>. Children are enrolled on a first come basis. Stepping Stones Academy Pre-K does not discriminate on the basis of gender, religion, national origin, ethnic background, disabling condition, or proficiency in the English language.

Stepping Stones Academy Pre-K is a privately funded program. The school does not provide services as defined under the federal special education rules and regulations, which includes evaluations to determine children's eligibility for special education services. Stepping Stones Academy Pre-K reserves the right to refuse enrollment to children with behaviors found to be dangerous or unsafe to others.

## **PARTIES AND BIRTHDAY TREATS**

**Class Parties** - Class parties are held during the year. Before party day information about the party is sent home. The teacher may ask for parent assistance in helping at the parties or providing refreshments. Stepping Stones Academy requests pop/soda and gum not be served at parties.

**Birthday Treats** - Children are invited to bring birthday treats on or near their special day. Children with a summer birthday may bring treats during the school year if they wish. Before bringing treats to school parents are asked to contact the teacher and schedule a time that works best in the class schedule. Children are to bring birthday treats for everyone in the class.

**Private Parties Not Hosted by Stepping Stones Academy** - During the year there may be a time when a family hosts a private party, such as a birthday party, and wishes to invite Pre-K classmates. Stepping Stones Academy, including the classroom teacher, is not allowed to provide personal information about other children, such as names of parents or addresses. In order to help maintain the school's friendly and positive environment, Stepping Stones Academy abides by the specific policies for distribution of party invitations for private parties. Invitations to private parties may be handed-out at school if all of the children in the class receive invitations. If all of the children do not receive invitations, then party invitations may not be distributed on campus. If all of the children receive invitations, the invitations are given to the teacher to distribute. To avoid disrupting class, children may not distribute party invitations during class.

## **PERSONAL ITEMS AND ITEMS NOT ALLOWED AT SCHOOL**

At times during the year the teacher may invite children to bring items from home to use with class activities. Other than these times children are not to bring personal items to school. If a child has personal items at school without permission the teacher removes the item from the child's possession and returns the item to the parent at departure time. Stepping Stones Academy is not responsible for the damage or loss of children's personal items. Children are not allowed at any time to bring real or fake items to school that are considered unsafe, dangerous, and/or illegal.

Items considered to be unsafe and/or disruptive are not allowed in class or on school grounds at any time. If children have one of these items at school, the item is confiscated, turned-in to the administrator, and parents are notified. Parents may pick-up the item from the Stepping Stones Academy Office. The item will not be sent home with the child. Illegal items or items representing or simulating illegal items are not allowed on campus by children or adults. If these types of items are found on campus, the items are confiscated, turned-in to the school administrator, and appropriate action is taken, including the involvement of law enforcement officials if necessary. Items include, but are not limited to:

1. Items Displaying Any Type of Pornography (ie: pictures, magazines)
2. Fake/Simulated and/or Real/Authentic Weapons, Drugs, Tobacco and Vaping, Alcohol, or Products Associated with these Materials (ie: paper gun or sword, squirt gun, pocket knife, cough drops, aspirin, prescription medication)
3. Fake and/or Simulated and/or Real/Authentic Firecrackers, Lighters, Other Explosives, or Products Associated with These Materials (ie: firecrackers, matches, sparklers)

## **PETS AT SCHOOL**

For the safety of the students, pets and other animals may not be brought to school. Pets are not to be removed from vehicles while on campus, including during arrival and departure times.

This policy does not apply to service animals. Stepping Stones Academy does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities who use service animals if the tasks performed by the service animal are directly related to the individual's disability. Individuals with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their service animal in all areas of Stepping Stones Academy where activities or other people are allowed. A service animal shall be under the control of its handler and have a harness, leash, or other tether. The owner of the service animal is liable for any harm/injury caused by the animal to students, staff, visitors, or school property. Stepping Stones Academy is not responsible for training, feeding, or grooming of the service animal and the administrator must approve any person who is authorized by the owner of the service animal to assist in care and supervision of the service animal while on school property or attending school events. A request for an individual with a disability to be accompanied by a service animal must be submitted to the administrator at least three (3) days prior to bringing the service animal to school or a school-sponsored event. Request Forms are available by contacting the Stepping Stones Academy Office. Service dog requests must provide vaccination proof of DHLPPC (distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parainfluenza, parvovirus, coronavirus), bordetella, and rabies. Miniature horse requests must provide vaccination proof of equine infectious anemia (Coggins Test), rabies, encephalomyelitis, tetanus, rhinopneumonitis, influenza, and strangles. All service animals must be spayed or neutered, treated for and kept free of fleas and ticks, and kept groomed to avoid shedding and dander. Owners of the service animals are liable for any harm/injury caused by the animal to students, staff members, visitors, or property.

## **PLAYGROUND RULES**

The Pre-K playground is located outside of the Pre-K building and is separated from the rest of campus by a fence. The playground area includes play equipment such as swing set, slide, sand area, and lots of room to run and play. To ensure children safety, the children are supervised when they are on the playground. Children choosing to not follow the rules receive consequences, such as a verbal warning, time-out from the activity, or loss of a privilege.

## **SCHOOL PICTURES**

Stepping Stones Academy contracts with a professional photography company for student pictures. Families have the option of purchasing picture packages. Individuals, excluding staff members using photographs for educational purposes, are not allowed to videotape or photograph students, staff members, or school grounds without prior permission from the administrator.

## **TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

Stepping Stones Academy does not provide transportation services for children. Parents are responsible for dropping off and picking up their children.

## **VISITING THE CLASSROOM**

Stepping Stones Academy invites parents to visit the classroom and observe children participating in fun and exciting lessons. The lessons are also teaching important skills for learning cognitive, language, motor, and social and emotional skills. Stepping Stones Academy enforces the following policies:

1. Individuals wishing to visit the Pre-K classroom are to schedule a specific date and time with the teacher. This helps minimize the disruption of the classroom routine and avoids having too many visitors on one day. All visitors must be 21 years or older.
2. Before going to the classroom visitors are to stop in the Stepping Stones Academy Office to sign-in and receive the designated name tag. When the visit is completed individuals are to stop in the Stepping Stones Academy Office and sign-out. Note – Individuals may drop-off items in the Stepping Stones Academy Office and the item will be delivered to the Pre-K classroom.
3. Visitors are not to bring additional children with them.

4. Anyone considered by the administrator to be in violation of these rules or persons who engage in disorderly conduct of any kind as determined by the administrator shall be instructed to immediately leave the Stepping Stones Academy property and may be subject to additional penalties, including removal and exclusion from Stepping Stones Academy. Failure to obey the instruction may subject the person to criminal proceedings pursuant to A.R.S. 13-2911 and to any other applicable civil or criminal proceedings.

### **WEAPONS AT SCHOOL**

No student is allowed to carry or possess a weapon or simulated weapon on Stepping Stones Academy's premises. No student shall use or threaten to use a weapon or simulated weapon to disrupt any activity of Stepping Stones Academy. Any employee who observes any person in possession of a weapon or simulated weapon on school premises shall immediately report the matter to the administrator. The administrator shall immediately take appropriate safety and disciplinary actions in accordance with Stepping Stones Academy's policies and shall immediately report a violation of this policy to law enforcement officials and/or other legal authorities, pursuant to A.R.S. 15-515, if the weapon is a deadly weapon or the student is a minor in possession of a firearm.

### **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY**

Stepping Stones Academy strictly follows the school's Code of Conduct and enforces a zero-tolerance policy for issues relating to the health, safety, and well-being of children, staff members, and visitors. This means possession or use of weapons or related items is strictly prohibited on campus. This policy is in accordance with the Arizona Department of Education and the laws governing the state of Arizona.

## **SCHOOL UNIFORM POLICY**

Stepping Stones Academy's uniform policy fosters a professional and positive environment, creates a safer and more pleasant school culture, encourages and supports positive peer relations, avoids inappropriate attire at school, and supports the school's philosophy of,

*"School is the job of the students, and students are expected to dress appropriately for this learning and work environment ... an environment that provides academic, social, and personal skills students need to become life-long learners and responsible and productive citizens."*

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

The uniform policy is in effect each school day. Students are to wear school uniform to school and school activities. Students are notified in advance if the uniform policy is altered for a special event. Students not in proper uniform report to the Stepping Stones Academy Office and families are contacted to bring appropriate uniform attire to school. Students do not return to class until they have appropriate uniform clothing. Attire that may not be worn at any time includes, but is not limited to:

1. Clothing deemed as disrupting the learning environment
2. Clothing that does not fit correctly, such as too short, too tight, too loose, or revealing in any way (i.e. exposed midriff) or is faded, stained, frayed, torn, or ripped
3. Clothing with gang-related apparel
4. Clothing with obscene pictures or sayings, messages or logos including or referring to alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, violence, or weapons.

The administrators have the authority and is responsible for making final decisions about issues relating to the uniform policy.

**GUIDELINES FOR PANTS** - *Pants refer to long pants, shorts, skirts, jumpers, overalls, and similar clothing items.*

1. Pants must be the tan shade of khaki and must be a plain khaki color.
2. Pants must be worn at the waist with no undergarments showing.
3. Pants must have a sewn hem, fit appropriately, and may not drag on the ground. Sagging, oversized, baggy, or tight-fitting pants are not allowed.

4. Pants may not have holes or tears in them or show bare skin.
5. Shorts/Skirts may be no more than 4" above the top of the knee. Slits in dresses/shorts are not allowed.
6. Leggings or tights may be worn under khaki shorts or skirts. With leggings or tights the shorts or skirts must be no more than 4" above the top of the knee. The leggings or tights are not to be worn with too short of shorts or skirts (more than 4" above the top of the knee).
7. Leggings and tights may be any color or Stepping Stones Academy appropriate design, but may not have holes or tears in them or show bare skin.

**GUIDELINES FOR SHIRTS** - *The traditional style of polo shirts is required. Shirts do not need to be Polo brand.*

1. Shirts are to be one color. Any solid color is acceptable.
2. Shirts may include the manufacturer's logo but the logo must be on the upper left side of the shirt. No other words, logos, or designs may be on the shirt.
3. Shirts must have buttons at the neckline. Shirts may not have snaps or zippers.
4. Shirts are to fit appropriately. The length of the shirt must be long enough so when arms are raised directly above the head, bare skin and/or undergarments do not show.
5. Short sleeved shirts worn under the polo shirt (i.e. t-shirt) may not show.
6. Long sleeved shirts worn under the polo shirt may have sleeves showing. The sleeves must be one color and may not contain any writing, pictures, logos, or designs. If the length of the shirt is longer than the polo shirt the undershirt must be tucked in. The undershirt must be "shirt" material and may not be sweatshirt or jacket material. Shirts may not have a hood.
7. Stepping Stones Academy t-shirts may be worn on Fridays and other designated days.

**GUIDELINES FOR SHOES**

1. Students are required to wear shoes to and from school.
2. Shoes must have a back or strap across the back and must be worn with the strap across the back of the foot.
3. Shoes may be any color and include Stepping Stones Academy acceptable pictures, logos, designs, and words.

**GUIDELINES FOR SWEATSHIRTS** - *Sweatshirt refers to all style of clothing worn inside over the polo shirt.*

1. Sweatshirts must be Stepping Stones Academy sweatshirts. No other style of sweatshirt may be worn.
2. The shirt worn under a sweatshirt must follow the Stepping Stones Academy uniform policy (i.e. polo style shirt).
3. Sweatshirts must fit appropriately. Oversized or cropped sweatshirts are not permitted. The sweatshirt may not hang longer than the waist of the student. The length of the sweatshirt must be long enough so when arms are raised directly above the head bare skin or undergarments do not show.
4. Hoods may not be worn inside. Hoods may not cover the eyes or block the vision of the student.

**GUIDELINES FOR HAIR COLORS AND HAIR STYLES**

1. Hair color must be a "natural" color. Examples of "natural" hair colors are brown, black, red, and blonde.
2. Hair may be dyed one "natural" hair color.
3. Hair may be highlighted a "natural" hair color. Highlights must be a similar color of the current hair color and blended evenly into the hair. The definition followed by Stepping Stones Academy for highlights includes, "... pieces of hair lighter than the natural color. Highlights partially color the hair by enhancing it with tones which are discreet. ..." Note - Pictures of acceptable and unacceptable highlighted hair are available in the SSA Office.
4. Hair attachments may not be worn. Mohawks, faux hawks, spiked hair, hair extensions, and other similar hair styles are not allowed. Words, numbers, designs, and pictures may not be shaved into the hair.
5. Hair must be cut or styled so hair is out of the eyes.



## **GUIDELINES FOR HATS, CAPS, AND OTHER HEADWEAR**

1. Caps, hats, and hoods may be worn outside. The bill of the cap must face the front. Caps may not be worn sideways or backwards. Caps, hats, and hoods may not be worn inside.
2. Caps may be any color and must include Stepping Stones Academy acceptable pictures, words, logos, or designs.
3. Bandanas may not be worn. Headbands that lay flat on the head may be worn. Other styles of headbands may not be worn.
4. Sunglasses may be worn outside. Sunglasses are to be removed and put away when entering a building.

## **GUIDELINES FOR JEWELRY, COSMETICS, AND OTHER ACCESSORIES**

1. Body piercings (temporary or permanent) excluding pierced ears are not allowed. Students with body piercings, excluding pierced ears, must remove the earrings or conceal the piercings.
2. Excessive jewelry is not allowed. Rings, bracelets, necklaces, and earrings with spikes, sharp points, or other dangerous objects may not be worn. Magnet earrings, spiked earrings, gauged earrings and earrings with large loops may not be worn.
3. Cosmetics, excluding lip gloss and chap stick, are not to be brought to school. Make-up is not to be worn in excess.
4. Students are not to draw on themselves or others.
5. Tattoos (temporary or permanent) are not allowed. Students with tattoos must conceal the tattoos while on campus and attending school events.
6. All accessories, including backpacks, purses, and other bags, must include Stepping Stones Academy acceptable pictures, logos, words, and designs.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES**

The health and safety of children is important to everyone at Stepping Stones Academy. To ensure the well-being of all children the following policies are enforced.

### **EMERGENCY CARD**

Children must have an emergency card on file in the Stepping Stones Academy Office before attending school. This card provides important information, such as health concerns relating to the child and names of people to contact in case the child becomes ill or is injured. Parents are asked to keep this information current throughout the year. If changes need to be made to this information parents are to contact the Stepping Stones Academy Office.

### **EVACUATION AND LOCK DOWN POLICIES**

In the event of an emergency requiring an evacuation, such as a fire, or the need to secure campus, such as a lock-down, Stepping Stones Academy adheres to guidelines established in accordance with Daisy Mountain Fire Department and Maricopa County Sheriff's Department. An evacuation map is posted in the classroom. Fire drills are held on a monthly basis and campus security drills are held periodically.

### **ILLNESSES AND INJURIES**

It is typical for children to contract common childhood illnesses. Parents are requested to not send children to school if they are ill or displaying any of the following symptoms: fever, constant cough, nasal discharge, sore throat, skin rash, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. Parents are contacted if a child becomes ill while at school and may need to pick up their child. Stepping Stones Academy requests parents contact the school if their child contracts chicken pox, pink eye, lice, strep throat, or other contagious illnesses.

Stepping Stones Academy school personnel are trained in basic First Aid and CPR. If a child is injured or ill the child is attended to immediately by the teacher. If needed, the child is taken to the Stepping Stones Academy Office for additional care. In accordance with Arizona state law, only soap and water are used to clean injuries. Parents are contacted about illnesses and injuries involving their child and may need to

pick-up their child from school. Stepping Stones Academy does not employ a nurse; however, the school has access to local medical authorities. For an emergency or more serious injury or illness, medical authorities are immediately called. Expenses for these services are the responsibility of the parents.

## **IMMUNIZATIONS**

Stepping Stones Academy follows Arizona state law (A.R.S. 15-872) relating to the rules and regulations for immunization requirements.

1. Children must have all of the required immunizations and a current immunization form must be on file in the Stepping Stones Academy Office before the child attends school. The information on the form needs to include the child's name, birthdate, dates and dosages of the immunizations, and name of the physician or health agency administering the immunizations. If a child does not have the required immunizations or the immunization form is not on file, the child may not attend class.

2. Children are required to have the following immunizations before attending school:

- \*MMR (Mumps, Measles, Rubella) – 1 dose
- \*Polio – 3 doses
- \*DTaP (Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus) – 4 doses
- \*Varicella (Chicken Pox) – 1 dose
- \*Hepatitis A – 2 doses
- \*Hepatitis B – 3 doses
- \*HIB – 3-4 doses

3. Stepping Stones Academy allows for exemptions to the immunization requirements for medical reasons, religious beliefs, and personal beliefs. Any family wishing to be exempted must have on file in the Stepping Stones Academy Office a state approved document explaining the reason. If an immunization cannot be given due to medical reasons, a medical exemption signed by a physician must be on file. As per state law, children with immunization exemptions may not attend school if an outbreak of an illness occurs. Tuition is not pro-rated for absences occurring due to an outbreak of an illness.

## **MEDICATIONS**

Children may not bring any type of medication on campus, including prescription and over-the-counter medication such as aspirin or cough drops. Stepping Stones Academy requests parents give the child needed medication before coming to school.

## **PESTICIDE APPLICATION**

A Pesticide Application Notice is posted at least 48 hours in advance in the Stepping Stones Academy Office and Pre-K classroom. The Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) are available for review in the Stepping Stones Academy Office.

## **REPORTING CHILD ABUSE**

Employees of Stepping Stones Academy are required by law to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Department and/or Department of Children's Services (DPS) in the Department of Economic Services. This includes suspected non-accidental injuries, sexual molestation, abuse, and/or neglect. This is in accordance with Arizona state law (A.R.S. 13-3620).

## **SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

It is the policy of Stepping Stones Academy individuals associated with the school conduct themselves to provide an environment free from discrimination, bullying, and harassment, including verbal, physical, and sexual harassment. This includes children, parents, volunteers, staff members, and administrators. Stepping Stones Academy has a zero tolerance level for discrimination, bullying, and harassment, and there is not to be any inappropriate verbal or physical contact between children, children and parents or campus volunteers, or children and staff members or administrators. People feeling they experience discrimination, bullying, and/or harassment while on the Stepping Stones Academy campus or at school-sponsored events are to report the situation immediately to the administrator.