

Parent Handbook



Address and Contact Information

985 West Chandler Heights Road, Suite 4
Chandler, Arizona 85248
(480) 738-3346

StrongFoundationsAcademy@gmail.com
StrongFoundationsAZ.com

Owner/Director: Angie Neal

Thank you for entrusting your child's first educational experience to Strong Foundations Academy. We understand the significance of early childhood education, and we are honored to provide a high-quality learning experience for your child. We believe every child deserves the very best. Our highly qualified, certified teachers are dedicated to meeting the social, emotional, and academic needs of each student, ensuring your child develops the essential foundational skills that will support their educational journey.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm.

MISSION STATEMENT

At Strong Foundations Academy, our mission is to equip young learners with the essential skills they will carry throughout their educational journey. Our well-rounded curriculum not only focuses on building the academic skills needed for success in kindergarten but also nurtures the emotional and social development that lays the foundation for lifelong success.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Strong Foundations Academy hires educators with extensive classroom experience. Our teachers are certified to teach in Arizona, and all employees have undergone fingerprinting and thorough criminal background checks.

STATE LICENSING

Strong Foundations Academy is licensed by the Arizona Department of Health Services as a full-day care facility. Inspection reports are available upon request from them at their website (azdhs.gov), offices at 150 N. 18th Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85007, or by calling (602) 364-2539. Notices will be posted 48 hours before pesticides will be used on property. Strong Foundations also follows state requirements for staff to student ratios (1:13 for 3 year olds, 1:15 for 4 year olds) and holds the insurance required by the state (which is available for review on premises).

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

Children entering Strong Foundations Academy must be three years old by September 1st to attend Preschool and four years old by September 1st to attend Pre-K. We believe early school experiences should be positive, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate. During the first month of school, teachers will assess each child to ensure academic, social, and emotional readiness for the classroom environment.

We look for children to show curiosity, independence, and a willingness to participate in activities with both peers and teachers. These early skills help create a smooth and joyful transition into structured learning. If a child is not yet ready to participate successfully in the program, the school may recommend delayed enrollment or withdrawal until the child demonstrates readiness. This decision is made thoughtfully, with the child's overall well-being and future success in mind.

EMERGENCIES

The safety of our children is our top priority. In the event of an emergency requiring immediate medical attention, paramedics will be called first, and parents or emergency contacts will be notified immediately afterward. Parents will be responsible for any costs incurred during such emergencies. For minor incidents, our teachers will administer basic first aid and notify parents via Brightwheel and/or phone.

Emergency drills are conducted monthly to teach students the safest and quickest routes out of their classrooms and the school building. Detailed Emergency Plans are available upon request.

TOILET TRAINING

All students must be fully toilet trained before enrolling in our school. "Toilet trained" is defined as a child being able to use the toilet, wipe themselves, and pull their pants up and down independently. While we understand that accidents may occasionally happen, we ask that parents send an extra set of clothes in a labeled Ziploc bag. Children are given multiple opportunities to use the restroom throughout the school day. Repeated accidents may result in a pause or dismissal from our program.

To be considered toilet trained, students should meet the following criteria:

- **Communication:** Students must be able to communicate the need to use the bathroom in advance, allowing enough time for any necessary waiting or travel to and from the restroom.
- **Clothing Management:** Students should be able to independently manage their clothing (pulling pants and underwear up and down) before and after using the bathroom.
- **Hygiene:** Students should be able to independently handle appropriate bathroom hygiene, including wiping and washing/drying hands.

Note: The use of pull-ups is not permitted as an alternative to being fully toilet trained.

ENROLLMENT AND TUITION

A registration packet must be completed each year. Additional paperwork including the ADHS Emergency, Information and Immunization Record Card and Student Information Form will be required. Tuition is due on the first day of each month. Monthly invoices will be sent out each month via Brightwheel. Our yearly tuition has been divided into equal payments (July is the exception and will be charged at 50%). Upon enrolling we will bill for first and last month tuition. Our school calendar mimics the Chandler Unified School District calendar with closures for fall break, winter break, spring break, and federal holidays. **Monthly tuition will remain the same regardless of breaks, holidays, illnesses, or personal vacations.** A \$20 fee will automatically be charged for tuition that is paid past the 8th of the month. A \$5 fee will be charged for all credit/debit returned payments.

We accept check, cash, Zelle, credit card and ACH payments. Payments can be made online, mailed to the school, or handed to the site Director. Please do not send payments in your child's backpack or folder. All tuition payments are non-refundable. Accounts that are more than two weeks past due will be closed and your child will be considered withdrawn from the school. You will be charged another registration fee to re-enroll. There are no exceptions to this policy. If you are having issues making monthly payments, please let us know.

Half day programs (8:00-11:00) are \$750 per month and full day programs (8:00-2:30) are \$1,150 per month. Daily Full day tuition is \$67/day and half-day tuition is \$43.75. Extended care is available for an additional \$250 per month (\$100 for 7:00-8:00 am and \$150 for 2:30-5:00 pm). Registration fees for half day programs are \$150 and full day programs are \$250. Registration fees are due at time of enrollment and non-refundable. Drop-In Before or Aftercare is available for \$25/day.

RE-ENROLLMENT

Students must re-enroll each year. Families with children already attending Strong Foundations Academy will have the first opportunity to re-enroll for the upcoming school year before enrollment is opened to new families. Re-enrollment information will be sent home in January for the following school year.

WITHDRAWAL

To withdraw or change programs, please provide written notice to the Site Director at least 30 days in advance of the program change or your child's last day of attendance. In the case of withdrawal, the tuition deposit for the final month will be applied to this 30-day notice period. Strong Foundations Academy reserves the right to disenroll a child if tuition is more than two weeks past due, or if a child's behavior is unsafe or consistently disruptive to the class. Please note that no refunds will be issued for unused tuition.

ABSENTEEISM

If your child is going to be absent, please notify your child's teacher as soon as possible. For extended absences (three or more days), we will provide learning opportunities for students. Tuition will still be due and must be paid prior to your child's extended absence. Accounts that are more than two weeks past due will be closed and your child will be considered withdrawn from the school. You will be charged another registration fee to re-enroll. There are no exceptions to this policy.

SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

A link to the monthly school newsletter will be sent via Brightwheel. We encourage all families to read the newsletter to stay updated on our upcoming events.

DROP OFF AND PICK UP PROCEDURES

Quick goodbyes are the most effective way to ease the transition to school and reduce stress for your child. Rest assured that our caring teachers and staff prioritize your child's well-being. Your child will be in a safe, secure, and loving environment.

State licensing requires that every student be signed in and out of school daily. **You must sign your child in and out using the Brightwheel app each day.**

Students will only be released to parents, guardians, or designated adults with proper identification. In Brightwheel, you can create a list of people authorized to pick up your child, and you can even add their photo for easy identification. Under no circumstances will a child be released to someone without proper identification or to someone not on the approved list.

LATE PICK-UP POLICY

Late fees will be assessed for pickups after the scheduled time. A fee of \$1 per minute will be automatically charged to your Brightwheel account starting at 11:05 AM for AM Half Day or 2:35 PM for Full Day, and for each minute past the scheduled pickup time. It is important to call or message if you are running late. If we are unable to reach you or your emergency contacts, we may need to contact local authorities for assistance. Please note that staff members are not permitted to transport children to or from the facility.

COMMUNICATION

Open communication is crucial for your child's success. Teachers are available through the Brightwheel app (preferred), by phone, and by email outside of school hours. If your message is urgent, please send it through Brightwheel or call (480)738-3346. You may also send a written note in your child's folder or request a conference outside of school hours. Teachers must prioritize interactions with the children during the school day and are unable to engage in extended or private conversations at arrival/drop-off without an appointment.

Parent-Teacher Conferences are held twice a year. The fall conference focuses on getting to know families and setting goals for the school year, while the spring conference allows teachers to review the child's portfolio, which contains various samples of classwork, to showcase the learning objectives achieved during the school year.

FIELD TRIPS

Strong Foundations Academy does not have planned field trips off campus. We will have guests and special programs come to our school instead.

DRESS CODE

At Strong Foundations Academy, learning often means getting messy! Please dress your child in comfortable, gender-appropriate clothing that allows for movement, play, and easy restroom use. Guidelines:

- Clothing should be easy for your child to remove independently when using the restroom.
- Shorts must be worn under skirts or jumpers for modesty during active play.
- Clothing that exposes the midriff or buttocks is not permitted.
- Attire must provide adequate coverage to support full movement without exposing skin or undergarments.
- Shoes must be closed-toed, secure on the heel, and comfortable for play. Flip-flops, slippers, or shoes that easily fall off are not appropriate.

Comfort and safety help children focus on learning and having fun!

BACKPACKS

Each student should bring a backpack to school each day to carry their take-home folder and personal belongings. Please ensure the backpack is large enough to fit a standard-sized folder, which will be provided by the teacher.

To avoid distractions and potential loss or damage, toys from home should not be brought to school. Strong Foundations Academy is not responsible for lost or damaged personal items.

DISCIPLINE

At Strong Foundations Academy, our goal is to create a safe, nurturing, and positive learning environment for all students and staff. We use positive discipline methods that promote self-control, cooperation, self-esteem, and empathy. Our teachers are trained to:

- Use direct, positive language and model expected behaviors
- Reinforce good choices and redirect behaviors using supportive guidance
- Maintain developmentally appropriate expectations and keep children actively engaged
- Offer children appropriate choices and apply logical, natural consequences
- Encourage children to solve problems together and use words to resolve conflicts
- Focus on and encourage positive behaviors rather than dwell on negative ones

Discipline is always handled with care and respect. When necessary, a child may be given a brief time away from the group to calm down and reflect. Afterward, a teacher will review appropriate behavior expectations with the child to support growth and understanding.

While our goal is always to work collaboratively with families to support each child's success, certain behaviors may lead to suspension or expulsion if they pose safety risks or consistently disrupt the learning environment. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Repeated physical aggression toward peers or staff (biting, hitting, scratching, or pushing)
- Consistent unsafe behaviors that endanger the child or others (running away from the classroom or playground, use of profanity, throwing furniture or objects, etc.)
- Severe or ongoing defiance that prevents staff from safely supervising or managing the group
- Destruction of property or materials that compromises classroom safety
- Frequent, uncontrolled emotional outbursts that significantly disrupt classroom routines after multiple interventions have been attempted
- Inability to participate safely in group activities even with support and redirection
- Behavioral needs that exceed the scope of our program's resources and staff ratios

Behavior infractions may be documented using a Behavior Infraction Form. If inappropriate behavior continues, the following steps may occur: A conference with the teacher and Site Director may be scheduled. Suspension: You may be asked to pick your child up early or keep them home for one to two days. Expulsion: In cases of severe or persistent behavior issues, permanent removal from the program may be required.

SNACK AND LUNCH POLICY

Each day, your child will be provided with a healthy snack as part of our daily routine. A monthly snack calendar will be posted for your reference. To help keep things fair and consistent for everyone, we kindly ask that, unless your child has an allergy or specific dietary need, they enjoy the snack provided by the school. Please be sure to list all food allergies on the ADHS medical form to ensure your child's safety.

Students enrolled in after-school extended care will receive an additional snack in the afternoon. Full-day students are required to bring a packed lunch from home each day. Please note that refrigeration and microwaves are not available, so pack items that are safe to eat without heating or chilling. We recommend using an insulated lunch bag with an ice pack or a thermos if needed. Food deliveries (UberEats, DoorDash, etc.) for student lunches are not permitted.

BIRTHDAYS

We welcome families to celebrate their child's birthday with a special treat! All food items must be store-bought and in their original packaging to comply with safety guidelines.

If you would like to distribute birthday party invitations at school, the entire class must be invited. We do not use Brightwheel to share birthday information. For full-class invitations, please provide printed copies—your child's teacher will place them in Take-Home Folders. If you are inviting only a portion of the class, we kindly ask that you distribute invitations outside of school. A Parent Directory can be found in the Brightwheel app.

TAKE-HOME FOLDERS

Please check and empty your child's folder daily. Teachers may send home important notes, reminders, or student work. This is also a wonderful opportunity for your child to show off learning accomplishments and stay connected with what's happening in the classroom.

In some cases, teachers may include supplemental materials—such as books or extra practice—to reinforce concepts your child is working on. We encourage families to take advantage of the Little Library in our lobby—just Read, Return, and Repeat!

QUIET TIME

Quiet time provides children with an important opportunity to rest, recharge, and grow. Active little learners benefit greatly from a mid-day break to help them stay focused and refreshed for the remainder of the day. All full-day Preschool and Pre-K students are asked to rest quietly in the afternoon, though sleep is not required. To help children relax, we create a calm environment using dimmed lights, soft music, or story recordings. Children who do not fall asleep are asked to rest on their mats for at least 30 minutes. After that, they may participate in quiet activities in a designated classroom space.

We kindly ask that full-day families provide:

- A small, soft blanket
- A crib sheet (to cover the nap mat)

These items will be laundered weekly by our staff.

TRANSPORTATION

Strong Foundations Academy does not transport children. Families are responsible for their own transportation.

MEDIA RELEASE

Photographs and video footage of students play an important role in showcasing the learning experiences and community at Strong Foundations Academy. These images may be used in school-produced materials such as printed publications, media presentations, and on our website to highlight our programs and activities.

Unless we receive a written objection from a parent or legal guardian, your child's photo or video may be included in these materials.

Curriculum

Children are natural learners—like sponges, they absorb knowledge quickly and with curiosity. That's why we've developed a curriculum that both challenges your child and nurtures a lifelong love of learning. Our balanced approach builds the academic foundations needed for kindergarten readiness while also supporting the social and emotional growth essential for success in school and beyond. The educators at Strong Foundations Academy have thoughtfully designed our curriculum to meet the developmental needs of each child. While academics are an important part of our day, we place equal value on play, creativity, and social interaction. Through hands-on experiences, children strengthen fine and gross motor skills, practice problem-solving, and build social competence—all within a joyful, engaging learning environment.

MATH

Our accelerated math program is structured to support students at their individual readiness levels while promoting steady academic growth. Preschool students explore essential Pre-K math concepts, and Pre-K students begin working with Arizona's kindergarten math standards to ensure a strong transition into elementary school. Through this approach, students will develop foundational skills such as:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding size, shapes, and patterns• Ability to count verbally (first forward, then backward) and skip count• Identifying more and less of a quantity• Understanding one-to-one correspondence (matching sets or knowing which group has four and which has five)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number recognition, number formation, cardinality, and estimation• Sorting, graphing, and measurement• Basic addition and subtraction skills• Decomposing numbers• Finding unknown addends to make ten• Problem solving
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READING

Teaching a child to read begins with a strong foundation in essential literacy skills, including the alphabetic principle, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and print concepts. At Strong Foundations Academy, we use the Spalding method to teach phonics and early reading. Our teachers are trained in the Spalding approach, ensuring students receive systematic, explicit instruction that builds a solid and confident foundation for reading.

The Spalding method also emphasizes proper letter formation, vocabulary development, reading comprehension strategies, and print awareness. These skills are taught through a balanced structure of whole-group lessons as well as daily small-group instruction. In addition, students receive individualized, one-on-one support as needed to ensure every child progresses at an appropriate pace.

WRITING

Our program provides daily, developmentally appropriate writing instruction that nurtures early literacy skills and builds confidence in young writers. Instruction is carefully scaffolded so children progress at their own pace through foundational stages of writing.

We begin with essential fine-motor and pre-writing skills, including correct pencil grip, hand strength activities, and basic tracing of lines, shapes, and letters. As students grow more comfortable, they move into intentional practice with proper letter formation, using a variety of multisensory tools and teacher-modeled demonstrations.

Students also participate in directed drawing activities where they learn to add details, use color purposefully, and tell simple stories through their illustrations. As their phonemic awareness develops, children begin labeling their drawings with initial sounds, progressing to writing beginning and ending sounds, and eventually attempting full phonetic words.

Throughout the year, students are introduced to high-frequency sight words during whole-group lessons, centers, and circle time. These words become the building blocks for early sentence writing. By spring, many students are able to independently create simple sentences that combine sight words with their own phonetic spelling.

Our goal is to make writing an enjoyable, meaningful part of each child's day. We celebrate progress at every stage and provide the individualized support each learner needs to grow as a confident, capable writer.

PLAY

Play is an integral part of our day at Strong Foundations Academy. In preschool, play promotes the development of strong language and vocabulary skills. Children absorb a great deal simply by listening to instructions, stories, and conversations. When they repeat words or sentences to participate in discussions, they begin to discover new vocabulary and understand its meaning. Through regular practice and engagement, children learn how language can be used to communicate, express feelings, and interact meaningfully with others.

Organized play also nurtures imagination and creativity. Activities such as arts and crafts or dramatic play provide valuable opportunities for open-ended expression. Whether children are handed a blank sheet of paper and crayons or guided into a pretend play scenario, these moments inspire creativity. By offering tools and suggesting ways to expand their imaginative thinking, we help children build independence, self-confidence, and a sense of accomplishment.

In addition, play supports both gross and fine motor development. Whether manipulating small objects like lacers and sensory bin tools indoors, or running, jumping, and riding outside, children strengthen a variety of muscle groups. They may not realize it, but they're practicing important skills—like holding a jump rope with fine motor control or using large leg muscles to run and balance. Encouraging children to challenge themselves physically, such as walking across a balance beam or hopping through a chalk-drawn hopscotch grid, promotes coordination and confidence.

Play also enhances problem-solving skills and introduces foundational math concepts. Building blocks, puzzles, and games present challenges that foster critical thinking and early mathematical reasoning. As children explore concepts like balance, weight, shape, and size, they begin to make decisions and engage in thought processes that naturally support cognitive development through play.

SPANISH

We are proud to offer Spanish instruction to our full-day Pre-K students. Early exposure to a second language is one of the most effective ways for children to become bilingual—a gift that offers lifelong cognitive, academic, and cultural benefits. At Strong Foundations Academy, we take full advantage of the critical early developmental window when language acquisition occurs naturally and effortlessly. Before age six, children are especially adept at recognizing unfamiliar sounds and internalizing new grammar patterns.

Our research-based Spanish curriculum helps students build listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills through a variety of engaging, interactive activities. Lessons incorporate custom visual aids and music to introduce vocabulary, reinforce language concepts, and celebrate Hispanic culture. We also use Total Physical Response (TPR) techniques to actively involve students in learning—an approach that is especially effective for kinesthetic learners.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

"The #1 predictor of a child's future happiness and success is their emotional intelligence."

-Dr. John Gottman

When children feel safe and connected, they are better able to learn and thrive. Just as children aren't born knowing how to tie their shoes, they also aren't born knowing how to regulate their emotions—emotional regulation is a skill, and like any other skill, it must be taught.

At Strong Foundations Academy, we recognize the essential role we play in supporting children's social and emotional learning (SEL). Decades of research show that developing these interpersonal and self-regulation skills significantly contributes to brain development and lays the groundwork for a lifetime of happiness and success.

As both educators and parents, it is more important than ever to recognize the critical value of SEL—not only to help children navigate the challenges they face today, but also to support their long-term health, well-being, and resilience.

Why Choose Strong Foundations Academy?

Choosing the right preschool is an important decision for your child's early development. At Strong Foundations Academy, our certified elementary educators bring years of experience supporting young learners academically and emotionally. We are committed to educating the whole child. Our mission is to provide a nurturing, engaging environment where children build strong academic, social, and emotional foundations for future success.