



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 by September 1st to attend Preschool, four by September 1st to attend PreK. Early school experiences should be positive. Children will be assessed in the first month of school to ensure their academic and social readiness. We are looking for children to show interest in participating in activities with both their peers and the teacher.

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. July and May tuition is paid at enrollment. 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%). 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 your child from Strong Foundations Academy, please notify the Site Director in writing at least 30 days prior to the last day of attendance. The tuition deposit for the last month will be applied to these 30 days. Strong Foundations Academy reserves the right to disenroll a child if monthly tuition is more than two weeks past due, or if the child's behavior is unsafe or consistently disruptive to the class. There are no refunds 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.

TRANSPORTATION

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

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.

SNACK AND LUNCH POLICY

Each day, your child will be provided with a healthy snack, which is included in our daily routine. A monthly snack calendar will be posted for your reference.

Please be sure to list all food allergies on the ADHS medical form to ensure your child's safety.

Students enrolled in afterschool 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: Refrigeration and microwaves are not available, so pack items that are safe to eat without heating or chilling. We recommend using insulated lunch bags with ice packs if needed.

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 two 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.

Violence or threats—including hitting, kicking, spitting, throwing objects, or verbal aggression—will not be tolerated.

Behavior infractions are documented using a Behavior Infraction Form. If inappropriate behavior continues:

- A conference with the teacher and Site Director will be scheduled.
- You may be asked to pick your child up early or keep them home for one to two days.
- In cases of severe or persistent behavior issues, immediate disenrollment may be required.

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.

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 are deeply committed to building a strong foundation in reading. You can support this effort by reading with your child every day.

Why Reading at Home Matters:

- 26% of children who were read to 3–4 times a week could recognize all letters of the alphabet, compared to only 14% of those read to less frequently.
- Students with more reading materials at home demonstrate higher reading proficiency.
- Children who read more at home also tend to have higher math scores.

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.

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.

EMPOWER PROGRAM

Strong Foundations Academy is proud to be an Arizona Department of Health Services Empower Childcare site. The Empower program is a voluntary program that we participate in to empower young children to live healthy lives. As an Empower site, we will integrate the 10 Empower Standards that encourage physical development, sun safety, healthy eating, overall nutrition, positive oral health, continued staff professional development and a tobacco-free lifestyle for all families. Through this program, we aim to support the overall well-being and healthy development of every child in our care.

Curriculum

Children are natural learners—like sponges, they absorb knowledge quickly, even at a very young age. That's why we've developed a curriculum that both challenges your child and nurtures a lifelong love of learning. Our balanced approach builds essential academic skills for kindergarten readiness while also supporting the social and emotional growth needed for success in school and beyond.

As reading specialists and former kindergarten teachers, the educators at Strong Foundations Academy have carefully crafted this curriculum to meet the unique needs of each child. While academics are a core part of our day, we place equal importance on play and social interaction. Through hands-on experiences, children develop fine and gross motor skills and build social competence in a joyful, engaging environment.

MATH

We offer an accelerated math program designed to meet students where they are and challenge them to grow. In this program, preschool students work on Pre-K concepts, while Pre-K students engage with Arizona's kindergarten math standards. Through this approach, students will develop foundational skills such as:

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| <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 |
|---|--|

READING

Teaching a child to read begins with a strong foundation in key literacy components: the alphabetic principle, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and print concepts. At Strong Foundations Academy, we use the Spalding method for phonics instruction. Our teachers are trained in the Spalding approach to provide your child with a solid and structured phonics foundation.

Spalding also emphasizes correct letter formation, vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and print awareness. Reading instruction is delivered through whole-group lessons, daily small-group sessions, and one-on-one support tailored to meet each child's individual needs.

WRITING

Our program includes daily writing instruction that scaffolds learning from basic tracing to independent writing. Students progress through stages including letter formation, directed drawing with added details and color, and labeling with beginning sounds. Ultimately, they learn to write simple sentences using sight words that have been introduced in class.

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.

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.

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 one of the most important decisions you can make for your child's early development. At Strong Foundations Academy, we are certified elementary educators with years of experience supporting the academic and emotional needs of young learners.

We are passionate about educating the whole child. Our mission is to provide a nurturing, engaging environment where your child can build a strong foundation—academically, socially, and emotionally—that will support their success in school and in life.