



# Parent Handbook

## Address and Contact Information

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Thank you very much for entrusting your child's first educational experience to Strong Foundations Academy. We understand the importance of early childhood education, and we are honored to be able to provide a quality educational experience to your child. We believe that children deserve the very best. Our highly qualified certified teachers understand the social, emotional, and academic needs of students and will provide your child with the important foundational skills your child will use throughout his/her educational career.

## Hours of Operation

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

## Mission Statement

At Strong Foundations Academy our mission is to provide our students with the skills they will use throughout their educational careers. We have a strong passion for educating the whole child and we will work tirelessly to give your child the strong foundation he/she needs in order to be successful in school and in life.

## Teacher Qualifications

Strong Foundations Academy hires educators with extensive classroom experience. Our teachers are certified to teach in Arizona. All employees have been fingerprinted and undergone extensive 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](http://azdhs.gov)), offices at 150 N. 18<sup>th</sup> 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, 1:20 for school aged children) and holds the insurance required by the state (which is available for review on premises).

## Emergencies

The safety of our children is our number one priority. In the event of an emergency where immediate medical attention is required, paramedics will be called first. Parents and/or emergency contacts will be notified immediately after. Parents will be responsible for all costs incurred in such emergencies. In case of minor incidents our teachers will perform basic first aid to treat the injury and parents will be notified via ProCare. Monthly fire drills are conducted to ensure students and staff know how to safely exit in the event of a fire.

## **Entrance Requirements**

Children entering Strong Foundations Academy must be three by September 1<sup>st</sup> to attend Preschool, four by September 1<sup>st</sup> to attend PreK and five by September 1<sup>st</sup> to attend Kindergarten. 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 the other children and the teacher.

Students should be potty trained before enrolling in our school. All children are expected to use the bathroom independently with little to no assistance from staff. Assistance with hand washing reminders and clothing fastening will be provided. We will keep an additional change of clothes in a labeled Ziploc bag at school for occasional accidents. Repeated potty accidents may result in a pause or dismissal from our program.

## **Enrollment and Tuition**

A registration packet must be completed each year. Additional paperwork including the ADHS Emergency, Information and Immunization Record Card will be required.

July and May tuition is billed in July. Tuition is due by the 8<sup>th</sup> day of each month. Monthly invoices will be sent out each month via ProCare. 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 be charged for tuition that is paid on or past the 8<sup>th</sup> of the month.

We accept check, cash, and credit card payments (with a nominal convenience fee). Payments can be made online, mailed to the school, or handed to the site Directors. Please do not send payments in your child's backpack. 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 or 11:30-2:30) are \$600 per month and full day programs (8:00-2:30) are \$1050 per month. 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 non-refundable.

## **Re-Enrollment**

Students must be re-enrolled each year. Families with children already attending Strong Foundations Academy will be offered the first chance to re-enroll for the next school year before enrollment is opened to new families.

Re-enrollment packets will be sent home in January for the following school year.

## **Withdrawal**

To withdraw your child from Strong Foundations Academy, please notify your teacher in writing 30 days prior to the last day. The last month's tuition deposit will be used toward those 30 days. Strong Foundations Academy reserves the right to disenroll a child when monthly tuition is two weeks past due, or if the child's behavior is continuously disruptive to the class. There are no refunds on tuition that is not used.

## **Absenteeism**

If your child is going to be absent, please notify your child's teacher in ProCare. For extended absences (three or more days), we will provide distance 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 monthly school newsletter link will be sent via ProCare. We encourage all families to read the monthly newsletter to keep current with our monthly events.

## **Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures**

Quick goodbyes are the most effective way for easing stress during the transition to school. Rest assured that our caring teachers and staff members have your child's best interests as their top priority. You are leaving your child in a safe, secure, and loving environment. State licensing requires that every student be signed in and out of school every day. You will sign your child in/out via our ProCare app.

Students will only be released to parents, guardians, or designated adults with adequate identification. In ProCare, you will create a list of people that will be allowed to pick up your child from school. You can easily add the picture of the person too. Under no circumstances will a child be released to a person without adequate identification or a person not on that list.

## **Late Pick-up Policy**

Late fees will be assessed for arriving after your scheduled pick-up time. A fee of \$1 per minute (beginning at 2:35 pm) for each minute past schedule pick-up time will be automatically charged to your ProCare account. It is essential you call or message if you are running late. If we are not able to contact you or your emergency contacts listed, we may be required to call local authorities to assist. Staff is not permitted to transport children to or from the facility.

## **Communication**

Open communication is imperative to your child's success. Teachers are available through the ProCare app (preferred), by phone and email outside of school hours. If your message is urgent, please send a message through ProCare. You are welcome to send a written note in your child's folder or request a conference outside of school hours. Teachers must focus on their interactions with the children throughout the day and are unable to have extended or private conversations at arrival/drop-off.

Parent-Teacher Conferences will be offered twice a year. In the fall semester, the purpose of the conference will be for teachers to get acquainted with families and to set goals/objectives for the school year. In the spring semester, a second conference will be offered to review the child's portfolio which will contain various samples of classwork to display learning objectives reached during the school year.

## **Discipline**

Our teachers use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourages children to grow in the areas of self-control, cooperation, self-esteem and sharing. Our teachers will:

- Remind a child of the behavior expectations using direct, positive statements and modeling the desired behavior
- Reinforce children when they make good choices and display appropriate behaviors and redirect behavior using positive statements when necessary
- Maintain realistic expectations of children based on knowledge of child development and provide appropriate activities that keep children engaged
- Give children choices between two appropriate alternatives and provide logical and natural consequences for children's actions
- Encourage children to work together to solve problems and encourage children to use their words to solve problems or to elicit peer cooperation
- Use positive encouragement of good behaviors rather than focus on the unacceptable behaviors.

At Strong Foundations Academy, discipline is approached in a caring and respectful manner. Children are encouraged to redirect their actions in a constructive manner throughout their daily activities. If needed, a child will be given the opportunity to take time away from the group to recompose him/herself. This cool-off period will be followed by a review with a teacher of the appropriate behavioral expectations.

If your child continues to exhibit inappropriate behavior, you may be asked to participate in a conference with the teacher and Site Director. Depending on the severity of the inappropriate behavior, you may be asked to pick your child up early or keep your child home for one to two days. If a child's inappropriate behavior persists or is severe enough, we may request that you disenroll your child immediately.

## School Volunteers

We encourage families to be involved in their child's education. Please contact your child's teacher if you are interested in helping in the classroom. There are specific state requirements (forms and a fingerprint clearance card) that must be met before working with our students. Parents will have access to all areas where children are receiving childcare services.

## Medical Information

A completed emergency registration card is required for each student enrolled at our school. This card will include all medical and emergency information for your child. Please contact your child's teacher if there are any changes in this medical information throughout the year.

## Sick Student Policy

Parents and guardians will be contacted immediately to pick up their child under the following circumstances:

- Temperature of 100 degrees or more
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Excessive coughing
- Teary or redness in eyes (suspicion of pink eye)
- Unusual rash or itching of the skin
- Sore throat
- Lice or nits
- Child is too sick to participate in class activities

Please do not bring your child to school if you suspect they are not feeling well. **Students must be fever free for 24 hours before they may return to school.** If your child has been diagnosed with a highly communicable illness such as chicken pox, strep throat, or pink eye, your child must return with a doctor's release. There is no tuition credit or refund given for sick days.

## Medication Policy

We will not give a child over the counter medication under any circumstances. Please do not send any medication of any kind to school with your child. Epi-Pens and rescue inhalers are permitted with a doctor's authorization form. They must be labeled with your child's name and prescription number and be given directly to the Site Director.

## 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

School can be messy when we are learning and playing. School clothes should be comfortable and easy to wear. Please remember that clothes should be easy to remove when using the restroom. It is requested that shorts be worn underneath all skirts and jumpers for modesty during play. Shoes should be closed toed, and they should adhere to the heel, so they do not slip off easily. Shoes should not impede play and should be comfortable to wear.

## Backpacks

Each student should bring a backpack to carry his/her folder and belongings to and from school each day. The backpack must be large enough to hold a standard sized folder (which will be supplied by the teacher). Students should not bring toys from home to school.

## Snack and Lunch Policy

Your child will be provided with a healthy snack (or two snacks for students that attend afternoon extended care) each day. The snack calendar will be posted for your information. Please remember to list all allergies on the medical form.

Full day students will be required to bring their own lunch each day. Refrigeration and microwaves will not be available for student lunches, so please pack accordingly.

## **Birthdays**

You are more than welcome to bring a special treat for your child's birthday. Any food items that are brought in must be store bought and in the original package. We recommend bringing in a goody bag or small toy instead of a food item due to food allergies and our limited time at school. If you would like to bring a treat, please check with your child's teacher.

If you would like to plan a birthday party outside of school and you wish to hand out invitations via school, you must invite the entire class. We do not use ProCare to communicate birthday party information, please print invitations and your child's teacher can distribute them in Take-Home folders. If every student is not invited, you must mail the invitations or find an alternate way to distribute them.

## **Homework**

Please check and empty your child's folder every day. Teachers may send home notes or other important information. This is also a great way to have your child show off learning accomplishments and curriculum. Teachers might also send home supplemental materials such as books or additional practice for concepts that your child might be struggling with.

We are very passionate about giving your child a strong reading foundation. You can help with this by reading with your child every day.

- 26% of children who were read to 3-4 times in the last week by a family member recognized all letters of the alphabet. This is compared to 14% of children who were read to less frequently.
- The National Center for Educational Statistics also reported that children who were read to frequently are also more likely to: count to 20 or higher than those who were not (60% vs. 44%), write their own names (54% vs. 40%), and read or pretend to read (77% vs. 57%).
- The more types of reading materials there are in the home, the higher students are in reading proficiency (Educational Testing Service).
- Students who do more reading at home are better readers and have higher math scores (Educational Testing Service).

We encourage you to take advantage of the Little Library located in our lobby. Simply Read, Return and Repeat.

## **Quiet Time**

Quiet time is an important opportunity for growing. Active children need to rest and re-energize during their day. All full-day preschool and PreK students are asked to rest quietly in the afternoon but are not required to sleep. Children are encouraged to relax by a variety of methods: dimmed room, quiet music or story tapes. Non-nappers are asked to rest quietly on their cot for 20-30 minutes. After that time, they may get up and participate in quiet activities in a designed classroom space. We ask that full-day parents bring a small soft blanket and a crib sheet. We will launder these items weekly.

## **Media Release**

Photos and video footage of students add significantly to the communication values of Strong Foundations Academy's publications, media presentations, and website. Unless notified in writing of an objection by a parent or legal guardian, photographs and video footage of students may be posted in school-produced materials including printed publications, media productions, and our website.

## **Empower Program**

Strong Foundations Academy is proud to be an Arizona Department of Health Services Empower Child Care site. The Empower program is a voluntary program that we participate in to empower young children to live healthy lives. As an Empower site, on a daily basis, 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.

# Curriculum

Children are sponges. Even the youngest of learners will soak up so much knowledge in a school day. For this reason, we have created curriculum to challenge your child and inspire a lifelong love of learning. Our balanced curriculum teaches your child the academic skills necessary to be successful in kindergarten and also the social and emotional skills to succeed in school and in life.

As reading specialists and former kindergarten teachers, the Directors of Strong Foundations Academy have meticulously planned and created the curriculum to meet your child's needs. While academics are an integral part of our day, play and social interaction are also valued. Students learn through hands on experiences, strengthen both fine and gross motor skills, and develop social skills through play.

## Math

We offer an accelerated math program, where preschool students will be learning pre-k concepts and pre-k students will be following Arizona kindergarten math standards. Students will develop skills such as:

- 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)
- 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

Kindergarten students will use the Saxon math curriculum at a first-grade level.

## Reading

Teaching a child to read requires a strong foundation in the alphabetic principle, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and print concepts. We use Spalding for our phonics instruction. Our teachers have been trained by Spalding to provide a strong phonics foundation for your child. Spalding also focuses on the correct formation of letters, reading comprehension skills, vocabulary acquisition, and print concepts.

Students will be taught reading skills whole group and in small groups. Our highly educated and qualified reading specialists will meet with the small groups daily. Each child will also work with our teachers individually in order to meet their unique needs.

## Spanish

We are proud to offer Spanish instruction to our PreK and Kindergarten students. Early language instruction is one of the best ways for children to become bilingual - a privilege that has shown to have life-long benefits. At Strong Foundations Academy we take advantage of the critical time in early development when acquiring language skills comes naturally and easily. A child's capacity to pronounce unfamiliar, foreign sounds and to absorb new grammar rules is highly enhanced prior to age six.

Our research-based Spanish curriculum allows students to develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills through a wide range of interactive activities. Students will enjoy their Spanish experience as we use custom visual aids and music resources to guide learning, share the Hispanic culture, and reinforce language concepts. Students are frequently encouraged to become actively involved in lessons through TPR-style responses and participation, which addresses the needs of kinesthetic learners.

## Play

Play is an integral part of our day. Play in preschool promotes the development of strong language and vocabulary skills. Children learn a significant amount just by listening to instructions, stories, or typical conversations between others. By repeating words and sentences in order to engage in a discussion, supports the discovery of new vocabulary terms and their meanings. With practice and participation, children begin to understand how language and vocabulary can facilitate communication, express feelings, and improve dialogues within a group.

Imagination and creativity can also be strengthened through organized play in preschool. Arts, crafts, and dramatic play sessions are ways to encourage and support open-ended creative expression. Simply handing children a blank piece of paper and a few crayons or setting the stage for some pretend play scenarios can be inspiring. By supplying the necessary tools and making suggestions for opportunities to expand their imaginations, helps young learners to develop a sense of independence, self-confidence, and feelings of accomplishment.

In addition, preschool play builds both gross and fine motor skills. Whether playing inside with lacers and sensory bins or outside with balls and ride-ons, children are strengthening their muscles big and small. Using tiny hand muscles to hold a jump rope or large leg muscles to run around, children are building these skills without even knowing it.

Furthermore, encouraging preschoolers to challenge themselves physically, whether it is balancing on a narrow beam or jumping about a chalk drawn hopscotch board, motor development is supported through numerous types of play.

Problem solving skills and mathematical concepts are also enriched through play activities in preschool. Building block work, puzzles, and games can introduce a variety of challenges that require the need for problem solving, as well as, create situations that foster early lessons in the subject of math. Providing circumstances that concern areas of balance, weight, shape, and size, children start to engage in decision-making thought processes that can enhance educational curriculum through play.

## Social Emotional Learning

"The #1 predictor of a child's future happiness and success is their emotional intelligence." When children feel safe and connected, they are ready and able to learn! Children aren't born knowing how to regulate their emotions any more than they are born knowing how to tie their shoes. Regulation is a skill, so we teach it!

We understand we have an essential role in supporting children's social and emotional learning (SEL). Per decades of research, it is the development of these interpersonal skills that assist our children's brain development for a lifetime of happiness and success. As parents and educators, it is more important than ever to recognize and value what SEL brings to children, not only in support of the stresses they may be facing currently but for the positive impact it is shown to have on children's future health and wellbeing.

## Why Should You Choose Strong Foundations Academy?

It is important to choose the right preschool that will meet the educational and emotional needs of your child. As certified elementary school teachers and reading specialists, our teachers understand the unique needs of each child and have many years of experience meeting those needs in an educational setting. We have a strong passion for educating the whole child, and we will work tirelessly to give your child the strong foundation he/she needs in order to be successful in school and in life.