

# Star America Preschool

## Parent Handout



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Dear Star America Family,

Welcome to Star America Preschool! Star America is a truly special educational community where your child will thrive and develop a love of learning. We are able to encourage individuality and independence in our children at the same time as we stress each child's responsibility and commitment to Star America. Our diversity builds a spirit of community that complements and reinforces the skills and experience of the faculty. Our beautiful learning environment provides a stimulating setting for learning: we count on everyone to maintain as well as appreciate it.

We expect our children to understand that hard work and respectful behavior are the foundation blocks for good scholarship and citizenship, and even our youngest students will become aware of their responsibilities to themselves and to their school. We look to you as partners in the dynamic and exciting process of educating young girls and boys and appreciate your support of our mission and core values. I look forward to another exciting year together as we cultivate the intellectual, emotional, social and physical development of your child/children.

Educationally yours,

Kevin Wong

President



Welcome to the Star America preschool. We look forward to a rewarding year with you and your child. Please read this Handbook and save it to consult throughout the year, as it will answer many of your questions about the philosophy, policies, practices and procedures at the Star America preschool.

## **HISTORY**

Star America preschool is the one of most professional children daycare center in New York City. Our 6 branches respectively located in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens. Our central is located on 8th Ave, Manhattan, where is next to the Time Square.

Established in 1992, Star America invested a great deal of effort goes into children's early education in our centers .We only have the most passionate, qualified and experienced staff who commit to ongoing professional development. Our teachers are also a big contributing factor to the popularity of our centers as they work tirelessly to ensure children to receive the best possible early childhood education.

## **PHILOSOPHY AND CURRICULUM**

We focus on each individual child and how she/he lives within our group setting. We believe in strong connections with each child's family and seek to create a partnership with you. While we provide a place for children where they can explore their interests and maximize their potential, these goals differ for each child at different times in his/her development. We strongly believe that each day in the child's life is important not just for the future, but for the here and now. The SA is a very special place for young children exploring their world. Those attending the program come from a wide variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The mix of languages and customs provides rich and varied experiences for the children.

We have a huge passion to bring the latest and the most advance education into our classroom because we believe all children should get the best start. We provide a rigorous 21st Century Learning with a strong emphasis on science, technology, engineering, the arts and math (STEAM) to build their strong 4C(Creativity, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication) skills. Our curriculum are deeply influenced by Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory that we firmly believe children have equal potentials in 8 intelligent domains(Linguistic, Logical-mathematical, Spatial, intelligence, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Musical , Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Naturalist). We implement Thinking Routine which from Harvard University Project Zero in our classroom as well as create various activities to help children to See, Think and Wonder during and after each activity. Through documenting their reflection and assessment, we dedicatedly find out and nurture their prominent intelligences.

## **THE DEVELOPMENTAL INTERACTION APPROACH, REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH, EMERGENT CURRICULUM APPROACH**

The core educational philosophy that guides our program is the “Developmental Interaction” approach. “Developmental” refers to our belief that children learn best when they are ready for new experiences. When a child is fully able to experience each stage of development in the social, physical, emotional and cognitive realms, she will then be prepared to move on to new experiences and learn new skills. Each stage is an essential building block in the growth of a child.

“Interaction” refers to the idea that experiences lead to learning when they occur in a socially and physically responsive environment. A carefully planned environment encourages safe, spontaneous, hands-on exploration and supports the development of curiosity, problem-solving, physical development and social growth. Young children learn best when they have many opportunities for interaction with the people and materials in their world. We strive to create an atmosphere that nurtures self-esteem through positive relationships with others along with respect and acknowledgment of each child’s individuality and competence. The SA also embraces elements of the Reggio Emilia approach, which views the child as highly capable and filled with the potential to “co-construct their knowledge” along with highly observant, responsive teachers; children and teachers learn together. Emergent, thematic, project-based curriculum is the cornerstone of the Reggio approach. Mediums such as clay, wire, colored pencil and recycled materials are the means through which children express what they have come to know. Additionally, observational drawings are key in training the child to see carefully and to transcribe that seeing. The process of learning is made visible to children and parents alike through “documentation”, which may include drawings, photos and the children’s or teacher’s descriptions of various aspects of a project.

## **CORE PRINCIPLES OF PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM**

A program of integrated, exploratory activities meets the developmental needs of each Preschool child. Because young children learn through rich and varied play, an important time of the day is activity/free-play time, when each child chooses from areas such as blocks, dramatic play, art, books, manipulative materials, drawing/writing center, water/sand play and group activities such as cooking or planting. Each group has an active play period on the playground as well as several group times for story, snack, music and movement and discussions. Special teachers join us twice per week for music and creative movement. The two oldest groups have art in small groups with a specialist teacher once per week.

The curriculum for preschoolers is centered on supporting children’s social, emotional, physical, language and cognitive development. Some key elements and examples are listed below:

Social/emotional development:

- Build strong, trusting relationships between children, parents and teachers
- Provide a physically and emotionally safe and responsive environment
- Support children in positive problem solving/conflict resolution

- Support greater independence, responsibility and choice
- Implement daily routines to give children a sense of predictability and security
- Acknowledge and label children's feelings

**Physical development:**

- Provide abundant opportunities for gross motor play and exploration, both indoor and outdoor
- Provide a variety of activities and materials to challenge and strengthen fine motor skills
- Challenge children with physical problem-solving activities during Music and Movement classes

**Language development:**

- Increase children's vocabulary through stories, songs, thematic studies, group discussions
- Provide opportunities to play with language through rhyming, word games and stories

**Cognitive development:**

- Support curriculum based on children's interests, current developmental issues and naturally occurring phenomena
- Build on children's natural creativity, curiosity, wonder and delight in problem-solving, using symbols and thinking more abstractly
- Plan for enriching science, social studies, math and literacy activities
- Science: utilize scientific method, garden program, life cycle, simple machines, weather, cooking, class pets
- Social studies: All About Me, family curriculum, visiting other classrooms or offices, community tours
- Math: sequencing, categorizing, patterning, graphing, voting, counting songs, number puzzles, geoboards, Unifix cubes, working with blocks, calendar
- Literacy (which includes speaking, listening, writing, reading): reading fiction and non-fiction books, letter puzzles, tracing, storytelling, sharing at meeting time, drawing/painting, making individual and group books, taking dictation

Examples of emergent, thematic curriculum in Preschool:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The seasons – fall, winter, spring, summer                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Solar system         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insects   | <input type="checkbox"/> Light and dark       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patterns  | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel and geography |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art, Artists and Illustrators: Pollack,<br>Picasso, Pointillism, Eric Carle | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural traditions  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rhyming & Poetry  | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Five senses / the human body  | <input type="checkbox"/> Ice, water, steam    |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Weaving and sewing   |

## **STAFF QUALIFICATION**

All SA teachers meet or exceed the New York State Department of Education (MSDE) licensing requirements. All of the lead teachers hold a four-year college degree and have completed required basic coursework in early childhood education. Some teachers hold a master's degree. Every year, the director, teachers, and assistant teachers must complete a required number of continued training hours. All of the staffs have experience working with young children in a supervised program. In addition, our staff members truly love and understand child development and our play-based philosophy

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality plays a vital role in promoting respect for every individual and fostering a strong community. SA takes confidentiality very seriously and makes every effort to protect each family's privacy. Communications among staff and parents about children should be kept confidential at all times. SA recommends that conversations about a child, behavior, or incident should be conducted in private, away from the child and other members of the SA community. Discussions in the hallways should be kept to a minimum. If a parent has a question or concern, we suggest that this parent first contact the teacher via email or in person to arrange a time to discuss.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Classroom Information:

- Monthly newsletters and weekly recaps from each class are sent via email to parents.



- Each teacher will place a note outside the classroom at the end of each school day so that parents will know what activities were included in the day.
- Weekly lesson plans are posted in the classroom.
- For information about bringing food for birthday and classroom parties, please make sure to review the “Food at SA” policy. In accordance with our Class Party and Birthday policy, only store-bought foods can be served, and the food provided must be preceded by a completed list of ingredients and food label notifications, submitted to the teacher at least 2 class days before the food is served. Food must adhere to our nutfree policy
- Please be sure to check the contents of your child’s backpack each night so that you can find important notes, art projects, and so forth.
- Artwork from different classes will rotate on the hallway bulletin boards throughout the year.

Please see the “Emergencies” section of the handbook and our Emergency about how communications will occur during a school-wide emergency.

## **ADMISSION**

SA admits students of any race, color, and national and ethnic origin. There is no entrance exam. If parents have any major educational, social, or developmental concerns about their child entering SA, parents need to discuss these concerns with the director before the child’s first day of class. It is important that a positive and appropriate learning environment be established for each child. In an effort to create the best fit for your child and family, SA reserves the right to place children in classes by age, gender, and developmental level. SA does not discriminate in administration of its educational and admission policies.

## **PROCEDURES FOR ENROLLMENT AND WITHDRAWAL**

### **Enrollment:**

- Registration for enrollment begins in February.
- Enrollment priority is given to current students, their siblings, and alumni families.
- When registration takes place, applications are taken on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Class placement is made on the basis of age and gender (in order to maintain a reasonable balance of boys and girls in each class).



- There is a supply fee for each child that is due by August 1. All applicants, regardless of entry date, will be charged the full fee for supplies.

#### **Withdrawal:**

- Written notice must be provided to SA at least 30 days prior to withdrawal.
- During the summer, you must notify SA by July 1 in order to be excused from paying September's tuition on August 1.
- If a child is withdrawn, there will be no refund after monthly tuition has been paid.
- The registration fee and June's advance tuition are not refundable.
- If written notification is less than 30 days, the family is responsible for tuition 30 days after the written notification.

**PLEASE NOTE:** On occasion, a program is not an optimal fit for a child or family. SA is a school that will make every effort to work collaboratively with families to resolve any challenges that arise. Additional resources may need to be used to support a child's success in the school environment. If, after all reasonable efforts are exhausted, and a problem cannot be resolved, SA reserves the right to dismiss a child from the program.

### **REQUIRED FORMS FOR ENROLLMENT**

These forms must be on file before a child attends class.

1. Health Inventory
2. Emergency Form
3. Emergency Preparedness Form
4. SA Parent Signature Page
5. Enrollment Agreement
6. Child Questionnaire
7. Cultural Diversity Questionnaire
8. Parent Interest Survey
9. Medication Authorization Form (if applicable)

## **THE DAY AT THE STAR AMERICA**

The day begins at 8:30 a.m. at the SA with parents bringing their children to their rooms or to the Big Kids' Playground (Blue and Gold Rooms). It is important that you arrive on time as activities begin promptly at 8:30 AM. Children should arrive no later than 9:00 a.m. We can have a difficult time assimilating into the group and miss a good portion of the morning activity.

Each group has a regular daily schedule of activities which alternate between more and less teacher-directed ones. There are times when the children function as a group: story time, music, movement, snack time and there are times when the children make their own choices: activity/free-play period, outside playtime. Some of the activities among which the children can choose include art, block building, puzzles, dramatic play, water play and cooking.

The teachers are aware of each child throughout the day and how each child's day flows. The teachers give children plenty of opportunities to figure things out for themselves whenever it is constructive to do so, becoming more actively involved when it seems appropriate. We are helping the child learn to exert control over him or herself and to solve his or her own problems. This applies to social skills as well as to cognitive and physical ones. Children feel good when they know they have some control over themselves and their environment.

At the SA, the environment includes inviting, creative classrooms. In the classroom, teachers help the children discover changes and occurrences happening around them: the seasons, nature, animals, friendship, families, themselves and more through art materials, books and activities. Children are supported to see more fully, to ask questions and to guess at the answers. In the play space, they create their own worlds in and around the climbing structures.

The SA Children's Garden is an on-going way for children to experience the rhythms of nature and the life cycle through planting seeds, tending plants, harvesting and preparing fruits and vegetables, exploring the many insects and worms that live above and below ground and turning the soil to prepare it for the next season. Time in the garden is extended by cooking projects using harvested vegetables, reading books and making drawings of what is observed there.

## **DISMISSAL & PICK-UP**

- Attendance sign-out: Upon arrival, please record time and initials on your classroom attendance sheet.
- It is important that all children be picked up on time. Our staff members have responsibilities both before and after class sessions, so it is important that parents be mindful of dismissal times in order for our school day to go smoothly. It is also upsetting to your child when he or she is unexpectedly the last person in the class to be picked up.

- Late pick-up: Please keep SA's phone number, (212)-262-4896, programmed in your cell phone in case you are running late so that the teacher can let your child know that you are on your way. If you are late picking up your child, you will be charged a dollar a minute. Payment will be due upon arrival to office.
- Early pick-up: Be sure to follow the regular attendance sheet sign-out procedures—time and initials on class attendance sheet.

### **Authorized pick-up:**

- Anytime someone other than the typical pick-up person picks up your child, please let your teacher know.
- If your child is to be picked up by someone other than a parent or the “persons authorized to pick up child” (listed on your child’s Emergency Form), you must provide written notification via note or email (email to [Nikki.tang@staramericakids.com](mailto:Nikki.tang@staramericakids.com) only please) to SA in each instance. Give the person’s full name and related information.

## **LUNCH& SNACK**

**\*SA provides meals are catered in from catering companies who follows the DOH guidelines and nutrition for young children.**

**\* Children in SA bring their lunches and a fresh snack for the afternoon. See Food policy.**

Each group has a rest time after lunch. Teachers promote rest time in a variety of ways: turning off the lights, reading to children, playing quiet music or story tapes. According to New York City Department of Health regulations, the SA is required to have each child rest for at least one hour every day. Children are not required to sleep but are expected to stay on their cots or mats and use quiet voices when speaking so as not to disturb those who do sleep. We have found that the children who stay for the Full Day program often sleep and have a more productive afternoon when they do.

Parents supply sheets and blankets for rest time. They will be sent home weekly to be laundered. After rest time the children may have an activity or story time before some leave at 2:30 p.m. Children staying for the full day have an activity time, playground time and snack in the afternoon.

Being able to handle one’s bodily functions is an important learning experience. Children who have learned to use the toilet on their own will be encouraged to continue to do so. If children are using diapers, parents are required to send diapers and wipes to school clearly marked with their child’s name. We do not recommend “pull-ups” for daytime use as children generally respond to them as they would a diaper. Please work with your child’s teacher when you feel your child is ready to start the process. A planned,

collaborative effort is supportive of your child in toilet learning. Your child's teacher can be a source of information and guidance in the toilet learning process.

## **ILLNESS**

- Germs spread quickly in a preschool environment. All children and staff stay healthier when sick persons stay at home. Common sense must prevail in the case of colds, which can range from a mild case of sniffles to a full-blown sinus infection or deep cough.
- We use the EMERGENCY FORM to contact parents or another designated adult if your child develops symptoms of illness while in class. We will isolate your child in a comfortable, supervised place until he/she can be picked up.
- If one or more of the following symptoms is present in your child, we will call you to pick up your child from preschool:
  - o temperature higher than 100°F
  - o loss of appetite
  - o nausea or vomiting
  - o red, pink, or crusted eyes
  - o stomach ache
  - o earache
  - o diarrhea
  - o rash/infection of skin
  - o pale or flushed face
  - o headache
  - o thick or greenish mucus from nose
  - o cough
  - o loss of energy/decrease in activity/falling asleep
  - o sore throat

**IF YOUR CHILD IS NOT WELL ENOUGH TO PARTICPATE IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE DAILY SCHEDULE, PLEASE KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME.**

**24 HOUR RULE: ANY CHILD WHO HAS SHOWN SIGNS OF ILLNESS IN THE PREVIOUS 24 HOURS MAY NOT ATTEND CLASS.**

- **Fever free:** A child should be fever free for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medicine
- **Antibiotic timeline:** A child should be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning to school
- **We strictly observe this health department regulation for children (and staff) to protect the health of everyone at SA.**

- **Parent must notify the office immediately if a child:**

- o Is diagnosed with any **communicable diseases** including strep throat, pink eye, lice, pinworms, or any other of the diseases common to a school environment. The notification is important so that SA can inform the parents within your child's classroom to be on the lookout for symptoms. Please remember that SA will not release the name of the child or family involved. We simply post "There has been a case of \_\_\_\_\_ reported ...."

- o Has any **allergies** or if you have any concerns about any aspect of your child's health.

- o Is taking **medication**, as medicine may affect your child's behavior.

- If a child is absent for three days or more due to illness, the parent must provide a written statement from the physician stating that the child is well enough to return to school.

- Unless we receive a doctor's note requesting a child to stay indoors, we expect every child to participate in outdoor play.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY**

School closing and delays are made to assure the safety of our children.

You must make your own judgment about driving in hazardous weather situations. If bad weather begins and you wish to pick your child up early, please feel free to do so.

## **EMERGENCIES**

SA has an emergency preparedness plan that provides guidelines for a wide range of unlikely emergency situations from a naturally occurring weather condition to a terrorist attack. The SA Emergency Preparedness Plan is posted on the SA website at [www.staramericakids.com](http://www.staramericakids.com) and in the school's hallway. SA educates parents about the emergency plans at Parent Orientation and Back-to-School Night at the beginning of the school year. The safety of the children and staff is always the school's primary concern.

## **Types of Emergencies**

The types of emergencies that SA prepares for include fire and explosions, severe storms, flooding, winter storms, earthquakes, unexpected utility failures, hazardous and radioactive materials, terrorism and other potentially violent situations, medical emergencies, and family/community concerns and/or violence.

## **Communication With Parents of an Emergency Situation**

SA will communicate with parents during an emergency through either a text message sent to cell phones and/or a phone call from a member of SA staff and/or email. If possible, staff will leave a message on the SA voice mail and/or a sign on the door.

## **Emergency Phone Contact Information for Each Child**

SA maintains emergency phone and email lists to notify parents of any unexpected events, such as a school closing or an evacuation. The Emergency Preparedness Information Form and the Emergency Form will be supplied during the enrollment process. These forms must be completed and returned to the office before the child's first day of class. It is important, if possible, that parents provide an emergency phone that can receive text messages. If your phone cannot receive text messages, please let SA know so that the school can make other arrangements for reaching you.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

- Field trips can be an important enriching experience for our children. Teachers plan trips appropriate for their class that will provide a well-rounded experience.
- Information and permission slips will be sent home in school bags each time a field trip is planned. In order to attend a field trip, each child needs a signed permission slip and/or payment of any necessary fee.
- Each parent will drive his or her child directly to and from the field trip destination and remain with their child for the duration of the field trip.
- Any child in the class who requires any type of emergency medication (for allergic reactions, etc.) should be accompanied by one of his/her parents who will bring the child's necessary medication for the field trip.
- No siblings may accompany you and your child on the field trip. A sibling is a distraction for the chaperoning parent and for the group and can present a liability for everyone.
- For each field trip there must be adults with CPR and First Aid training. A First Aid kit and Emergency Forms will be taken on the trip.
- Cell phones must be turned off while driving and should only be used for emergencies on field trips.

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

SA encourages parents to become involved in the preschool. Teachers regularly include parents in special celebrations and welcome parents who want to share special talents with the class. SA also asks that parents share their talents and time to help make the school the special community it is. Here are some ways you can help:

- Class representative/room parent
- Fundraising
- Computer (website, assisting staff with database software, etc.)
- Parent directory
- School beautification
- Outreach/marketing
- Newsletter
- Graphic design
- Sewing
- Library support
- EBay/Craigslist selling

## **FUNDRAISING**

SA holds fundraising events to earn money for specific improvements or classroom equipment. These fundraisers will be outlined in written communication. We request that 25 families participate in these events and, in so doing, promote community spirit and financially support our high-quality program.

Some of our past fundraisers have included:

- **Trike-a-Thon**
- **Family Picnic**
- **Silent Auction**
- **Sally Foster**
- **Kids Creations**



- **Scholastic Book Fair**

- **Restaurant Nights**

Please feel free, in lieu of participating in the fundraising events, to make a one-time taxdeductible donation to the Early Childhood Center. We will be happy to provide you with all the necessary paperwork to submit with your annual taxes.

**Tax Identification:** The Star America, Inc. federal tax ID number is 11-3408553

**Hope you and your children enjoy the journey in Star America Preschool.**

