

Smart Start Academy

Preschool and Kindergarten Readiness

205 W. 5th Street*Emmett, Idaho 83617



PURPOSEFUL PLAY AND GUIDED LEARNING

Parent Handbook

2025-2026

Welcome to Smart Start Academy!

Welcome to Smart Start Academy!

Hello, my name is Becky Brown, and I am the Owner and Director of Smart Start Academy of Emmett, LLC. I also have the joy of serving as the lead teacher for our Pre-K classes. It is a true privilege to welcome you and your child to our program. I'm excited to get to know your family and to support your child's growth during this important stage of their development.

With over 15 years of experience in education, I bring both passion and dedication to the classroom. I earned my Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with a minor in Reading from Carroll College in Helena, Montana, in 2003. Smart Start Academy is the result of years spent teaching, parenting, and dreaming about what an ideal early learning experience should be.

At Smart Start, we believe in creating a joyful, play-based environment where children are free to explore, imagine, and learn. Our curriculum is thoughtfully designed to build foundational skills that will help children thrive both academically and socially as they transition into kindergarten. I strive to create a classroom where every child feels safe, valued, and inspired to grow.

Supporting this vision is our incredible team of highly trained and dedicated educators. Each member of our staff brings unique strengths, a deep understanding of child development, and a shared commitment to nurturing the whole child. Together, we collaborate to create an engaging and supportive environment where every child can succeed. Our staff regularly participates in ongoing professional development to ensure we remain at the forefront of early childhood education practices.

I deeply respect the trust you place in me by choosing Smart Start Academy for your child's early education. I understand how important this decision is, and I am committed—alongside my team—to providing a nurturing and enriching experience that supports your child's unique learning journey.

Thank you for being part of the Smart Start family. I look forward to an exciting year ahead and can't wait to watch your child flourish!

Warm regards,

Becky Brown

Owner/Director & Lead Pre-K Teacher

Smart Start Academy of Emmett, LLC

Smart Start Academy Guidelines and Policies

The following forms must be completed and returned before a child enters the program:

- ☐ Registration form
- ☐ Up-to-date Immunization Records
- ☐ Non-refundable annual fee of \$75
- ☐ Pick up authorization form
- ☐ Release of liability waiver
- ☐ Tuition contract
- ☐ Snack Fee Plan arranged or paid

A child is not considered enrolled until all forms are returned.

Tuition

Monthly tuition: \$185 (Pre-K) or \$145 (Age 3–4).

Payments due on the 1st of each month (September–May).

\$20 late fee after the 10th.

Accepted: Cash or check. Credit card payments add \$5.

Tuition is due in full regardless of holidays, snow days, or illness.

Arrival and Pick Up

Please arrive and pick up promptly! Arrival time is 8:45 am or 12:15 pm. Pick up time is 11:15 am or 2:45 pm. If you are going to be late picking up your child, please call your teacher directly and leave a text or voicemail if we do not answer. **If late pick up continues to be a problem, there will be a \$1.00 per minute late charge after 11:25 am or 2:55 pm.**

Snacks

Snacks will be provided by the teachers on a daily basis. We strive to provide well-rounded and nutritional choices for your child. We also like to give students opportunities to try new things. Many of our snacks will align to themes in our classroom. There will be a \$10/month fee to cover snacks. You have the option to pay \$80 at the beginning of the year or you may add it to your monthly tuition as an extra \$10. **Please alert us to any food allergies at the beginning of the year.**

Holidays and Celebrations

Our curriculum incorporates the observation and discussion of holidays and special occasions throughout the year. Upcoming events and classroom celebrations will be noted in the monthly calendar and newsletter.

We will request parent volunteers for activities such as the Halloween party, Thanksgiving Feast, Christmas Gingerbread Houses, Valentine's Day celebration, and our End-of-Year event. Parents are warmly invited to participate in all celebrations.

As part of our daily routine, students recite the Pledge of Allegiance and sing patriotic songs to foster respect and appreciation for our country.

Birthday Treats

If you wish to celebrate your child's birthday at school, please contact your child's teacher to arrange a date. During the celebration, we will sing to your child and present them with a birthday crown.

If you choose to send a special treat, it will be served as the class snack for that day. Please provide enough for each child in the class.

Cupcakes are not permitted due to the high sugar content, artificial dyes, and the difficulty of cleanup. We appreciate your understanding in maintaining a tidy and healthy classroom environment.

Suggested birthday treats include: fruit snacks, cookies, brownies, animal crackers, fresh fruit, popcorn, crackers, popsicles, ice cream, stickers, or small trinkets.

Show and Tell

Show and Tell provides students with the opportunity to practice public speaking skills and share something meaningful with their classmates.

In the Pre-K classes, one child is assigned per day, allowing each student to participate approximately once every six weeks. Students may bring one item of personal significance to share. Pets are welcome but must be scheduled with the teacher in advance.

In the 3–4-year-old classes, Show and Tell will take place on assigned days. Additional details and schedules will be provided at the beginning of the month. Please limit show and tell to one item per weekly assignment.

Personal Toys and Items

Personal toys from home are not permitted in the classroom. This policy minimizes distractions and helps prevent conflicts among students. All classroom materials are intentionally selected to support instructional goals and developmental learning outcomes.

The only exception is for scheduled Show and Tell activities. Items designated for Show and Tell must remain in the student's backpack until the assigned time.

Wearable toys, including jewelry or accessories, are not allowed during instructional time. If such items create a distraction, they will be removed and returned to the student at the end of the school day.

Curriculum – Purposeful Play

Research consistently demonstrates that play is a critical component of early childhood development, fostering social, emotional, cognitive, and language growth. Purposeful play allows children to explore, problem-solve, and develop essential skills in a guided, intentional environment.

At Smart Start Academy, every learning opportunity is carefully designed to promote age-appropriate development. Our theme-based curriculum emphasizes:

- **Social and Emotional Skills:** Building cooperation, empathy, and self-regulation.
- **Language and Literacy:** Daily reading-readiness activities and vocabulary development.
- **Mathematics:** Hands-on math skill builders integrated into play.
- **Fine and Gross Motor Skills:** Strengthening coordination through movement and manipulatives.
- **Creative Arts:** Encouraging self-expression through art, music, and dance.
- **STEM Exploration:** Engaging students in science, technology, engineering, and math concepts through inquiry and discovery.

We utilize small group centers, structured play, and whole-group lessons to create a balanced learning environment. Rather than using a pre-packaged curriculum, we design lessons based on the unique interests and developmental needs of each class. This approach ensures that every school year at Smart Start Academy is dynamic, responsive, and tailored to our students.

Progress Monitoring

Student development is assessed continuously throughout the year using a variety of observational and informal assessment methods. One formal progress check will be conducted to evaluate early literacy skills (letters and sounds), foundational math concepts, name writing, and other age-appropriate developmental milestones.

Although preschool does not utilize a grading system, parents will receive feedback to highlight areas of growth and identify skills still in progress. This information is used to tailor instruction

and create an individualized learning experience that supports each child's needs.

Behavior Management: Red and Green Choices

At preschool, we use a simple and positive behavior management system called Red and Green Choices to help children understand the impact of their actions and encourage responsible decision-making.

- Green Choices represent positive behaviors, such as following directions, sharing, using kind words, and participating respectfully. When children make green choices, they receive praise and encouragement, reinforcing good conduct and helping build self-confidence.
- Red Choices indicate behaviors that are not acceptable, such as hitting, yelling, or refusing to follow rules. When a child makes a red choice, they are gently reminded of the expectations and guided to make a better choice. If needed, a brief time-out or redirection may be used to help the child regain self-control.

This approach helps children learn to recognize the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behavior in a supportive environment. Our goal is to foster social and emotional growth while maintaining a positive and safe classroom atmosphere.

Discipline

Behavioral challenges in preschool often stem from boredom or over stimulation and are addressed through redirection and refocusing techniques. If a time-out is deemed necessary, it will be implemented within the classroom setting, and parents will be promptly informed of the situation.

Changes in family dynamics can really affect behavior. Please alert us to changes and concerns your child may be experiencing.

If your child is experiencing difficulties at home, we would like to provide additional support at school. I understand that you are not always able to share details and that's okay. If your child is coming to school after a difficult night, morning, or weekend, please text, "Handle with Care". Nothing else will be said or asked. This will let us know that your child may need extra time, patience, or help during the day.

Health and Illness Policy

To protect the health and safety of all students, please do not send your child to preschool if they exhibit any symptoms of illness. Children with a fever of 100°F or higher, red or pink eyes

(conjunctivitis), sore throat, unexplained rash, yellow or green nasal discharge, vomiting, or diarrhea within the past 24 hours must remain at home.

If a child develops any of these symptoms during the school day, parents will be contacted immediately and asked to arrange prompt pickup. The child will be isolated from the classroom and provided with appropriate care until they can be collected.

We also ask parents to reinforce good hygiene habits with their children, including coughing into the elbow, frequent hand washing, use of hand sanitizer, and avoiding putting toys or objects into their mouths, as these practices significantly reduce the spread of germs in the preschool environment.

Potty Training Policy

All children must be fully potty trained to attend preschool. Students are expected to independently manage all restroom needs, including undressing and redressing themselves.

Classroom bathrooms are equipped with step stools to facilitate handwashing and toilet use as needed. While staff will closely observe and verbally guide children through restroom routines, direct assistance will only be provided in emergency situations. Parents will be promptly informed of any significant difficulties or incidents requiring support.

Accidents are a normal part of early childhood development and will be handled with sensitivity and discretion. Children will never be reprimanded or embarrassed for such occurrences. It is recommended that parents provide a complete change of clothes stored in the bottom of their child's backpack to accommodate any unforeseen needs.

Field Trips and Family Participation

Field trips are an enriching component of Smart Start Academy's curriculum, providing valuable opportunities for hands-on learning and community exploration. Details regarding upcoming field trips will be communicated through the monthly calendar and newsletter to keep families well-informed.

Parents are responsible for arranging transportation to and from all field trip locations, as Smart Start Academy does not provide transportation due to insurance restrictions. We encourage families to collaborate and coordinate carpooling with trusted classmates' parents when needed to support participation.

Attendance on field trips is entirely optional, and siblings are warmly welcomed to join, fostering a sense of family involvement and community engagement.

WE LOVE TO EXPLORE OUR COMMUNITY!

Clothing Guidelines

We recommend that children wear comfortable, washable clothing suitable for active play and creative exploration. As much of our time is spent on the floor engaging with various materials, clothing may be exposed to paint, markers, and other art supplies. Please note that all paints and markers used in the classroom are washable. For effective stain removal, Simple Green is recommended.

Soft-soled shoes are preferred to ensure comfort and safety while sitting and moving on the floor.

Please be aware that preschool activities are hands-on and can be messy by nature.

Process-Focused Art

Art in preschool takes many forms and serves a variety of developmental purposes. While traditional projects such as Thanksgiving turkeys or cotton ball Santas have their place, much of the art your child engages in emphasizes the creative process over the final product.

Children often explore different textures, experiment with unconventional tools—such as using the end of a paper towel roll to create circles—or investigate cause-and-effect relationships, like rolling marbles through paint. These activities foster creativity, fine motor skills, and critical thinking.

Please note that many process-oriented art projects may not result in a conventional “finished” piece, and some group projects may not be sent home. For further insight, we encourage you to research the educational philosophy of “Process versus Product” in early childhood art.

Technology Use

Smart Start Academy recognizes the benefits technology can offer; however, we encourage families to monitor and limit their children’s screen time on devices such as phones, tablets, and video games. Current research indicates that excessive screen use can negatively impact the development of fine motor skills and social abilities in young children.

Consistent with this understanding, Smart Start Academy does not incorporate screen technology into daily classroom activities, with the exception of brief, age-appropriate educational videos used to supplement lessons.

We strongly recommend minimizing device usage at home to support healthy developmental outcomes, including social engagement and fine motor skill development.

Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Policies

Smart Start Academy is committed to the safety and well-being of all children and adheres strictly

to legal requirements as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. Staff members receive thorough training on recognizing and reporting concerns upon hire and participate in annual refresher training to ensure compliance with all legal obligations.

To proactively prevent abuse and neglect, our program implements the following measures:

- Staff are trained to avoid one-on-one situations with children whenever possible. If such a situation is unavoidable due to scheduling, parents are notified at pick-up or drop-off.
- Classroom environments are designed to eliminate hidden or secluded areas, ensuring visibility at all times.
- All interactions between staff and children occur within clear view of others to allow for supervision and interruption if necessary.
- Comprehensive background checks are conducted for all employees prior to hiring.

At Smart Start Academy, we are dedicated to providing a safe, secure, and nurturing environment where every child can learn and thrive.

ClassDojo Communication App

Smart Start Academy utilizes the ClassDojo app to facilitate efficient and effective communication with parents in a group setting. Throughout the school day, we document your child's learning experiences through photographs, which are shared regularly via the app.

Our goal is to enable you to engage with your child by discussing their activities—such as science projects or outdoor play—thereby reinforcing their learning and fostering meaningful conversations at home. Because young children may find it challenging to recall daily events, ClassDojo serves as a valuable tool to keep families informed and connected to the classroom experience.

Parents will soon receive an invitation to join our classroom community on ClassDojo. We encourage you to accept this invitation to receive timely updates, reminders, and photos of your child's progress.

Please note that only one parent or guardian will be invited initially. Should you wish to add additional contacts, kindly inform us so we can accommodate those requests.

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