

# **Golden Path Academy Family Handbook**



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This handbook is provided to give each academy family information regarding the policies and procedures that have been established to create a safe learning environment for our students.

## **ABOUT OUR ACADEMY**

### **Non-Discriminatory Statement**

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY AS TO STUDENTS:

Academy Policies – Prohibits discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation and/or gender identity), disability, or age in the provision of educational opportunities or employment opportunities and benefits. The academy does not discriminate on the basis of sex or disability in the education programs and activities that it operates, pursuant to the requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

### **Honor Code**

The academy embodies a spirit of mutual trust and intellectual honesty that is central to the very nature of learning and represents the highest possible expression of shared values among the members of the academy community.

The core values underlying and reflected in the Honor Code are:

- Academic honesty is demonstrated by students when the ideas and the writing of others are properly cited; students submit their own work for tests and assignments without unauthorized assistance; students do not provide unauthorized assistance to others; and students report their research or accomplishments accurately,
- Respect for others and the learning process to demonstrate academic honesty,
- Trust in others to act with academic honesty as a positive community-building force in the academy,
- Responsibility is recognized by all to demonstrate their best effort to prepare and complete academic tasks,
- Fairness is demonstrated so that every student can experience an academic environment that is free from the injustices caused by any form of intellectual dishonesty, and
- Integrity of all members of the academy community as demonstrated by a commitment to academic honesty and support of our quest for authentic learning.

### **Academy Hours**

Students' Day:

Before Care	7:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.
Arrival	9:15 a.m.
Final Bell/Tardy	9:30 a.m.*
Dismissal	2:30 p.m.
Academy Office Hours	7:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
After Care	2:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

\*Children should be in their seats and ready to learn by the final bell, 9:30 a.m.

## Visitors

Visitors are always welcome at the academy. For the safety of all students, ***VISITORS MUST CALL IN ADVANCE AND SIGN IN AT ALL TIMES.*** School age visitors are welcome to attend lunch if accompanied by an adult.

For the safety of our students and staff, all visitors entering the building must sign in at the front office. All visitors will be required to present a driver's license or other valid photo identification.

When a visitor is unable to provide valid U.S. Government photo identification, their visit, during regular academy hours, will be denied, except under the following circumstances:

1. The Head of the Academy knows the visitor(s) has legitimate need to be on campus during regular academy hours (i.e. academy programs, Parent/Teacher meetings, etc.) and approves the visit.
2. If the Head of the Academy or designee approves the visit:
  - a. The visitor(s) must sign in,
  - b. have their name, address, DOB and student name connected with at the academy, recorded in the visitor log, and
  - c. be escorted by an adult employee the entire time they are allowed on campus.

## Arrival-Dismissal Procedures

For the safety of all students, we encourage children to arrive at the academy no earlier than 9:15 a.m. if not attending the Before Care program. Children must be in the classrooms and seated when the 9:30 a.m. bell rings. Students not in the classroom by the 9:30 a.m. bell are considered tardy.

If parents need to pick up their children during the school day, please call the academy and sign out. For your child's safety, the office staff will request photo identification before the student is released from class. No child will be dismissed from the classroom by the teacher. ***The end of the school day is a very busy time, therefore, the last pick up from the front office is 1:15 p.m. After 1:15 p.m., students will be dismissed at the regular time of 2:30 p.m.***

All students should be off the academy grounds immediately following dismissal unless they are participating in the After Care program or extracurricular activities. Students are expected to return home in the same way they arrive, unless a note is sent requesting a change or phoned in the office prior to **1:15 p.m.** Any changes must be approved in the office prior to dismissal.

## Checking Students Out of the Academy During the Day

When enrolling children in the academy, parents must indicate contact information on the academy enrollment form. This includes the following: name of parent/guardian; emergency contact (name/relationship); cell telephone numbers for all listed; persons authorized to pick up the student; and whether or not they have legal custody of the child. A valid driver's license or state identification card must be shown by the person picking up the student. Students are not to be checked out of the academy between 1:15 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

## **Reports and Conferences**

Parent Conferences take place in October and February, with faculty available for extra meetings throughout the year as needed. Times such as dismissal, arrival, Open House evenings, and field trips are not suitable for individual conferences. Progress Reports for students are distributed after each semester.

## **Academy Closings**

Should an emergency arise, that could lead to the academy closing or classes being canceled, official updates will be promptly shared via text to parents' phones. Additionally, if power and access permit, global emails will be sent to all parents, updates will be posted on the academy website and the voicemail of the main academy phone. Decisions about closing the academy due to severe weather will be finalized by 6 a.m. whenever feasible.

## **Payment of Tuition and Fees**

The academy is dedicated to delivering top-notch education while keeping costs reasonable. To meet our financial responsibilities, we rely on prompt tuition and registration fee payments. Registering your child involves a significant financial commitment, similar to other substantial investments. We ask that you prioritize academy tuition in your budget. If tuition or fees are not paid by the agreed-upon dates, your child may be withdrawn from the academy. Additionally, transcripts and student records cannot be transferred to another institution if there's an unpaid balance or other unresolved debts on the account.

## **ACADEMIC GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Before Care & After Care Program**

An in-house Before Care & After Care Program is available for extended care. The hours of operation are:

Before Care: 7:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

After Care: 2:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

The program offers academic assistance, and a variety of enrichment and fun activities. Students are expected to model academy virtues during the program

### **Homework**

Homework demands will vary according to grade level. For more specific information, please contact your child's teacher. You should also contact the teacher if your child seems to spend an inordinate amount of time on homework.

### **Tutoring**

Tutoring outside the classroom and obtaining additional help should be seen as a short-term solution to address a particular issue, rather than a permanent replacement for proper course placement or diligent student effort. When tutoring is considered necessary, professional ethics prevent faculty from accepting additional payment to tutor students currently in their classes, and teachers should not be

expected to provide tutoring during academy hours. Academy tutors are prohibited from tutoring their students on campus without prior approval from the Head of the Academy. Any tutors who are approved must fulfill the required pre-employment conditions through the Head of the Academy.

The key to success lies in maintaining open and close communication among parents, students, teachers, and tutors. Students gain the most from extra help when it aligns with the expectations and standards of their regular coursework. Therefore, it is essential that teachers are informed if their students are receiving tutoring outside of class.

## **Grades**

Students are graded on the following scale:

- 90-100 (A)
- 80-89 (B)
- 70-79 (C)
- 60-69 (D)
- 0-59 (F)

Students that turn in homework and assignments late will have the grade lowered by at least one letter grade at the discretion of the classroom teacher.

## **Homework**

Homework offers teachers a chance to solidify or revisit lessons taught throughout the day. It also includes evaluations like tests, quizzes, and projects. Kids should be motivated to tackle their homework at a consistent time in a distraction-free zone. Please help your child as necessary with managing their schedule to finish assignments and gear up for regular tests, quizzes, and projects. Parents are encouraged to go over finished homework with their kids. If homework ever feels overwhelming or especially tough, parents should reach out to their child's teacher to stay in close communication.

## **Progress Reports**

Progress reports will be given out following the closing of each grading period. Please review your child's progress report carefully noting all printed codes, notes, and explanations.

## **Textbooks**

The academy may furnish textbooks. Please stress with your child the importance of respecting the academy materials and property. Students will be charged for lost books that have been issued to them and for damage to books through negligence.

## **Attendance**

Parents/Guardians are required to notify the academy when their child is absent and inform the academy of the reason for the absence within twenty-four (24) hours by telephone call or written note in order to qualify for an excused or validated absence. It is requested that parents call the office at the academy no later than 9:00 a.m. on the day of their absence. You may report an absence on our message line.

Parents will be contacted via telephone after five (5) absences within one semester. A letter will be sent home after a student has 7- and 10-days of absences.

Students are expected to come to the academy on time (9:15 a.m.) and remain in the academy until 2:30 p.m. Tardies and early dismissals are recorded as incomplete days.

### **Dress and Grooming Code**

The following dress and grooming requirements are to be followed by all students. The Head of the Academy shall be the arbiter of student dress and grooming. Safe footwear shall be worn at all times. No rubber flip-flops or bedroom slippers shall be worn. Socks should be worn at all times.

1. Halter-tops, tube tops, short shorts, muscle shirts, spaghetti straps, midriff or backless shirts and blouses shall not be worn. Shoulder coverings must be at least two inches in width. Tops must be below the waistband or remain tucked in so that the midriff area is not exposed. No bare skin should be exposed at the waist or abdomen area. Clothing must cover the chest area.
2. Hair shall be clean and neatly groomed and shall not interfere with the educational process in the reasonable discretion of the Head of the Academy.
3. Hats, hoods, or other head coverings shall not be worn in the academy building except for approved areas identified by the Head of the Academy or designated events approved by the Head of the Academy. Exceptions may be made by the Head of the Academy for head coverings worn for religious or medical purposes.
4. Intentionally altered clothing or unbuttoned and ill-fitted garments are not acceptable. Ill-fitted garments include but are not limited to garments that are too small so as to reflect immodesty or too large so as to appear to be falling off the body. Clothing that exposes underwear or body parts in an indecent or vulgar manner or that disrupts the orderly learning environment is prohibited. Mesh or see-through clothing may not be worn.
5. Clothing or personal belongings shall be free of inflammatory, suggestive, or other inappropriate writing, advertisement, or artwork, including but not limited to references of drugs, alcohol, nicotine, or weapons.
6. The wearing or display of flags at academies has historically caused dissension along with a potentially unsafe and hostile learning environment for students. In an effort to provide a safe academy and prevent potential disruption, the following flags are the only ones that may be displayed and/or worn on the academy campus and at off campus academy-related activities: (1) the United States and POW/MIA flags; (2) the State of Florida flag; and (3) official academy flags.
7. In addition, any related symbols may not be displayed or worn on campus or at off campus academy-related activities. Exceptions to this rule may be made for national flags on special occasions or in designated areas consistent with the learning objectives of the academy and at the discretion of the Head of the Academy.
8. Body adornment (e.g., adornments which pierce flesh) in any visible body part other than the ears shall not be displayed if such display presents a health or safety issue or if such adornment interferes with the educational process in the reasonable discretion of the Head of the Academy.
9. Items that may be used to do harm are prohibited (e.g., large belt buckles, sharp hair

- accessories, or finger rings that cover two or more fingers.)
10. The length of skirts/dresses and shorts shall reflect modesty, must be below the student's fingertips when the arms are held straight at the sides or mid-thigh, and shall be monitored by regulations enforced at the academy.
  11. Costumes, sleepwear, pajamas, or other clothing/adornment that creates a distraction is not permitted except for designated events approved by the Head of the Academy.
  12. Gang clothing, symbols, or other items associated with gangs may not be worn, displayed or carried.
  13. The Head of the Academy has the discretion to relax the uniform dress code due to inclement weather or designated events approved by the Head of the Academy.

### **Student Records Release**

All requests for student records and transcripts should be submitted in writing to the academy front office. The academy may withhold transcripts and records if tuition or fees remain unpaid.

The academy strives to provide both natural parents (or legal guardians) with essentially the same information, such as transcripts, records, and appointment details. The academy depends on the accuracy and completeness of parental information provided at the time of student enrollment. In cases of divorced or separated parents, if one parent believes the other should not have access to specific information, the parent seeking to limit access must submit a current court order to the academy explicitly prohibiting the other parent from receiving that information.

### **Lost and Found**

Please be sure your child's name is in his/her wallet, purse, coat, sweater, lunchbox, raincoat, etc. Many such articles are lost and unclaimed. There will be a designated area for lost and found items. **At the end of each grading period, all unclaimed items will be donated to a charitable organization.**

### **Parties**

**Birthdays:** Birthday celebrations are special for all students, and the academy acknowledges students on their special day. *If you wish to send in an item for your child's birthday, you may send in a non-food item that will be passed out at the end of the academy day.* **Suggested items include:** a colorful pencil, eraser top, stickers, bookmarks, or a small novelty item. Food items sent or brought in by parents/guardians will not be allowed and will be returned with your child. Distributing party invitations at the academy will only be permitted if there is an invitation for all students in the classroom, or all girls, or all boys.

**Classroom Celebrations:** The academy allows the following celebrations: Thanksgiving Holiday, Christmas Holiday, Valentine's Day, and End of the Year Celebration. Parents wishing to provide holiday party food/drink are asked to coordinate with the academy prior to the event. Classrooms that contain students with documented allergies may have additional restrictions regarding the types of food permitted. The health and safety of all students is our top priority.

## **BEHAVIORAL GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS**

## **Student Behavior**

An academy-wide behavior support program exists for all students to blossom and grow. Rules and expectations are taught, modeled, and coached by the entire faculty. These rules are consistently and ethically enforced. Families should refer to the Academy Code of Student Conduct for a more complete understanding of students' responsibilities and rights.

## **Discipline**

At the academy, discipline encompasses both academic rigor and behavioral expectations. Students are encouraged to engage with each other in a positive and constructive way, ensuring that learning—whether during playground games, classes, or art and music activities—remains uninterrupted. Emphasis is placed on self-control, respectful language, and consideration for both peers and adults. We encourage parents to support and reinforce these values at home.

Academic discipline involves students recognizing that classwork and homework must be completed promptly and neatly. When assignments are left unfinished or preparation is inadequate, students may feel significant stress. Parents are urged to promote academic discipline while avoiding setting unrealistic demands for their children.

Our faculty consists of dedicated, compassionate professionals who are attuned to the diverse needs of each student. Discipline issues are primarily managed by teachers, with the backing of the Head of the Academy, fostering a supportive environment. Thanks to the strong commitment of our teachers and the active involvement of parents, disciplinary challenges are rare.

## **Bullying and Harassment**

Expectations for Mutual Respect and Proper Behavior: At the academy, students and teachers must not tease, annoy, or humiliate anyone based on differences in appearance, race, beliefs, size, abilities, gender, or nationality. Such actions can hinder a student's ability to learn and cause significant distress, making them fearful of attending the academy or participating in academy events.

Certain types of teasing, involving inappropriate language or physical contact, may be particularly distressing to members of the opposite gender. For instance, boys teasing girls or girls teasing boys in such ways is unacceptable. This behavior is known as sexual harassment and is strictly prohibited. Adults are also forbidden from engaging in such conduct. Anyone observed behaving inappropriately in these ways should be reported to a parent, teacher, or an academy staff member. The academy is committed to addressing any actions that make students feel uneasy or upset.

Whether we are students or the academy's staff, there are clear standards of conduct intended to ensure that everyone in our community is treated with the respect highlighted in our Values Statement. This fosters an environment where every student has an equal chance to succeed, free from bullying, insults, threats, or harassment. These standards apply to all interactions—whether physical, verbal, written, or digital—and align with the core values of the academy.

## **Items to Leave at Home**

Toys, games, radios, skateboards, rollerblades, balls, bats, cards and sharp objects are not allowed at

the academy. Items of value such as jewelry, heirlooms and money should also remain at home. No pets are allowed on campus. Loss or theft of personal items at the academy is not the responsibility of the academy. The Head of the Academy will notify families of approved toys and/or games for designated events.

### **Inspection Policy**

To maintain a secure campus for everyone, the academy reserves the right to inspect and seize any objects that could endanger others. Should a personal search be required, it will be conducted with respect for decency norms and the student's emotional well-being, with parents informed as soon as feasible. The Head of the Academy and designated staff are permitted to examine a student's personal belongings such as pockets, purses, backpacks, gym bags, lockers, desks, academy property, or vehicles. Possession of illegal substances, items, or contraband that jeopardize anyone's health, safety, or welfare on academy grounds is prohibited. Contraband encompasses anything banned by academy rules, state, or federal law, including drugs, alcohol, tobacco, firearms, knives, weapons, or explosive devices. Staff may confiscate items considered illegal, disruptive, or detrimental to the learning environment. Decisions regarding the storage, return, or disposal of such items will be made by the Head of the Academy or their appointed representative. Collaboration from students, parents, staff, and visitors is essential to keeping our children safe.

### **Electronic Devices, Computer and Systems Usage Policy**

Student possession of electronic devices on academy grounds is a privilege for communication with parents and/or law enforcement and/or for the purpose of teacher-directed and approved research and instructional practice. Electronic devices include but are not limited to the following: cell phones; computers; smart watches; portable game units; digital media players, other mechanisms that enable users to communicate electronically person-to-person or through internet social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, SnapChat, Instagram, TikTok, and X). In order to preserve the proper educational environment and prevent disturbances, the following conditions must be observed:

1. Electronic devices are to be powered off and NOT to be used during instructional time for personal use. Use during any other part of the academy day is at the discretion of the Head of the Academy.
2. The Head of the Academy may grant permission to use a cellular phone in the presence of an administrator for an emergency when other means of communication are not available (e.g., academy phone).
3. The use of electronic devices while at the academy to record sound or visual images without the consent of the person being recorded or photographed is strictly prohibited.
4. The student may be disciplined for inappropriate content stored on electronic devices brought to academy functions.
5. The following will result in student discipline at the academy: refusal to turn off an electronic device when told to by a teacher, administrator, coach, counselor, or other academy official; damaging an electronic device owned by the academy; causing a disruption; using an electronic device to cheat, including getting and giving answers to tests and copying from the internet; using the electronic device to bully, threaten, harass, attack another student or academy personnel whether or not communicated directly to that person; sending (or asking to receive) pictures or videos of people, who are partially or completely undressed, or are pretending to or

actually performing a sexual act.

6. The academy may impose consequences to students who misuse electronic devices away from the academy on their own time if both of the following are true: The student's use of the electronic device causes significant disruption at the academy or serious emotional, physical, or psychological harm to the academy, other students, or academy personnel and the student knew, or should have known, that the harm would happen.
7. All academy issued devices are for educational and instructional purposes only. Students are responsible for their devices and the contents searched and stored on their devices. Inappropriate use is strictly prohibited.
8. All Technology/Internet Use policies will be strictly enforced concerning student electronic devices. Loss/Theft of personal items at the academy is not the responsibility of the academy.

## **Student Services, Activities and Resources**

### **Child Abuse Reporting**

Under Florida's child abuse reporting laws, teachers and staff are required to report suspected cases of abuse. We take this responsibility seriously and will notify child abuse authorities if we have reasonable grounds to believe a child is experiencing abuse, neglect, or abandonment. Depending on the situation, we may not be able to discuss the report with parents until permitted by the authorities. We appreciate your support as we work to ensure the safety of the children in our care.

### **Health Information**

Parents are requested to notify the academy of any child's absence by calling the academy on the day of the absence before 9:00 a.m. Facilities for emergency care in the academy are very limited. Arrangements for taking your child home should be made promptly. Regarding communicable diseases, only a physician or a nurse from the County Health Department can certify that a child is free of a communicable disease. We can only call the parents and request that the child be kept home until an official clearance in writing has been obtained. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

If a serious illness or injury occurs, the parent will be notified immediately, and the Head of the Academy may call Emergency Medical Services or take the student to an emergency care facility. Medical treatment will require parental permission. In a case where the legal guardian cannot be reached, the Head of the Academy may make any emergency medical decisions if the injury is life threatening.

**When to stay home:** Children who have a temperature of 100 degrees or higher should be monitored at home for other signs or symptoms of illness. If your child has repeated episodes of diarrhea or vomiting, a rash or general weakness, please consult with your healthcare provider and keep your child at home until the illness passes or your doctor recommends the child return to the academy.

**Medications:** Whenever possible, medications should be given at home. However, if it is necessary for your child to receive medication at the academy, the parent must bring the medication to the academy in the original container and complete and sign a Medication Authorization Form. If a prescription medication is required at the academy, the prescribing doctor must also complete and sign the Authorization. Additionally, all medication must be in the original pharmacy/prescription container.

**Emergency Information:** Parents must complete and sign a Student Emergency Information Form every school year. Please be sure you provide the academy with accurate and current telephone numbers and contacts in case of emergency.

### **Teacher Conferences**

We encourage communication between home and academy. If you have any questions, concerns or wish to discuss your child's progress, please call the voicemail of your child's teacher. For your convenience, be sure to schedule meetings in advance to ensure the availability of your child's teacher. Teacher work hours are from 7:35 a.m. to 3:05 p.m.

### **Extended Day Care**

The academy's Before and After Care Program is designed to support working parents of enrolled students. It remains closed on all days when the academy is not in session. During Extended Day, students can begin their homework ahead of time.

### **Field Trips**

Virtual Reality field trips aim to enrich our students' educational experience beyond the standard curriculum. Permission forms will be distributed in folders for parents to sign and return to the academy.