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**Parent Handbook**

**Mission Statement:**

The mission of the Apple Top Child Care and Learning Center is to provide safe, affordable, quality child care for the members of Avon Park and surrounding cities and communities. In doing so, we support families in their efforts to work and/or attend school. The Apple Top Child Care and Learning Center provides a program for children ages one to five years old. We provide a safe, clean environment where children are encouraged to develop at their own pace. The Apple Top staff are committed to the families we serve, providing support and encouragement in all ways possible.

**Philosophy:**

Our goal is for each child to develop a desire for learning by working closely with the teacher and by simply enjoying what they are learning in class. We want to encourage children to be self-confident and independent learners, we believe that this can be achieved through learning time, observations and interaction with teachers and peers. Our main educational goal is to foster a desire for learning within each child and enrich his/her self- esteem. Therefore, our teachers work closely with our children to insure that each child is treated fairly and has the same opportunities as other students to learn and grow. In order to help children acquire these learning skills and promote curiosity we present information through hands on activities which involve the child directly, which promotes their abilities to solve problems, express ideas, make decisions and ask questions to further their understanding and knowledge. It is our goal to promote success and growth in the social, emotional, cognitive and physical aspects of the child’s overall development.

**Curriculum Statement:**

The goals of our curriculum are multi-faceted. Apple Top Child Care and Learning Center is a program that accepts children of all abilities. The program is a combination of educational, hands-on, and real life activities, which incorporate best childhood practices and quality standards from the Florida Department of Children and Families. All children learn differently and at different rates. Through our curriculum, we promote growth in social, emotional and physical development.

Children are active learners, acquiring knowledge and learning through daily experiences at home and in the classroom. Each child is an individual, with unique strengths, interests, personalities and approaches to learning. Early childhood learning emphasizes cooperative learning in an atmosphere of acceptance and respect. The Apple Top environment is sensitive to the child’s individual needs. Opportunities exist within the classroom for the child to engage in one-on-one activities with the teacher, small group and large group activities, solitary and independent learning for opportunities to experiment and explore.

At Apple Top there is an atmosphere of mutual respect among staff and families which is very important for all who interact with children. When staff members recognize and value the beliefs, customs and traditions of each family, the entire community benefits. Staff members work as partners with families in planning and setting goals for their children.

**Apple Top Inclusion Philosophy:**

Apple Top welcomes children and families of all abilities into the program. Children with identified special needs are included in all daily activities as much as they are able. Identified special needs are defined as: a developmental delay, a diagnosed condition, a social, emotional or behavioral concern, a medically defined allergic response, or an extenuating family issue. Apple Top staff members will collaborate with organizations and members of the community with training to ensure that we have the skills to provide quality care to special needs children. As much as possible, children receive services on site that best fit their needs. Apple Top staff members suggest referrals for developmental screening when observations provide evidence that a child could benefit from specific developmental encouragement other than what is provided in an Apple Top classroom.

Children of all abilities learn from each other in a mutually beneficial experience. Apple Top believes that all children deserve an equal opportunity to develop, learn and grow with their peers. Staff members utilize all possible resources in order to encourage children and their families to remain in the program with children of differing abilities. If, after careful consultation with staff, family and collaborating support services, the staff feels that Apple Top is not the best placement for an enrolled child, regardless of ability, the administration reserves the right to dis-enroll the child.

**Curriculum:**

**GOALS:**

1. To provide for each child a warm and supportive climate where he/she is respected and trusted.
2. To foster positive feelings in the child about self, family, school and community.
3. To stimulate the child to explore and discover the world around herself/himself through concrete, manipulative experiences.
4. To encourage the child to actively participate in his/her learning by planning, decision making and solving problems.
5. To assure the child’s feelings of success through mastery of his/her environment.
6. To provide the child with opportunities for interaction with a diverse population of children and families, including children with special needs.
7. To provide a self-selective, integrated learning environment which incorporates early mathematics; early literacy; language development, science; creative expression (art, music, drama, dance); social studies, health and safety, and physical development. Social-emotional development is inextricably linked across all areas of curriculum and development.
8. To provide opportunities for family involvement and participation in the program. Apple Top’s “Learn Everyday” curriculum is not “taught” in isolated block of time. It is integrated throughout the day into various activities. Within the curriculum components listed above (math, science, early literacy, social studies, etc.) several broad areas of study are particularly well suited for integrating all area of the curriculum across time. This “Learn Everyday” framework includes a description of ways some of these can be implemented. Among these are cooking, animals/pets, water and sand play, and construction.

Although each room may have similar centers, each classroom environment is unique, because each teacher arranged it based on his/her observations of:

* The needs and social level of each child.
* The interest of each child.
* The mode of learning of each child.
* The cues from children.
* The natural rhythm of the class.

Each classroom should have three visible similarities:

* Show evidence at all times of children’s expression.
* Exhibit variety and diversity of materials in each center for the children’s self-selection.
* Be aesthetically pleasing to children and adults.

**Learn Everyday Curriculum:**

**The following is the curriculum for the one and two year old classes:**

Apple Top Child Care and Learning Center will strive to help one and two year olds prepare for going into the three and four year old class to begin learning the Kaplan curriculum. One and two year olds will work on large motor skills, be exposed to verbal and written communications and peer interactions in a fun and loving environment.

**The following is the curriculum for three and four year old classes:**

Apple Top Child Care and Learning Center has chosen a curriculum called *Learn Everyday* from Kaplan which is geared towards getting children ready for Kindergarten. *Learn Everyday* is made up of 36 themed units. Each unit has five different lesson plans to span for a whole week. Each lesson plan is comprised of activities that will help your child grow in areas such as math, reading, writing, social studies, art, music, and vocabulary. Children will have a whole group time where they will be told what they will be learning and doing for that day. They will then have small group time for individualized instruction and also center time where they will be given time to work hands on with what they are learning.

**Hours and Days of Operation:**

The center is open Monday through Friday at 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Daily schedule is provided on a separate document.

We will be closed for all major holidays as shown below. There may be other days, but will provide plenty of notice.

* New Year’s Day
* Independence Day
* Memorial Day
* Labor Day
* Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday
* Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

**Registration**:

All registration materials must be returned by the first day of enrollment. The following is required for each child’s registration.

* Enrollment information form.
* An official copy of the health information form including current immunization records.
* A completed parent agreement form
* Tuition paid up-to-date for currently enrolled children

A **nonrefundable annual** registration fee is due upon enrollment. The initial fee is $75.00. For every year after, there will be a $50.00 annual fee for updating records and supplies for the children.

Some of the supplies that will be bought for each class are:

* + Pencils/Crayons
  + Scissors
  + Glue
  + Clorox wipes
  + Nap mats
  + Paper products

**Waiting List:**

When there is no space in the age grouping, a child can be placed on a waiting list upon return of the registration information. The date this form is returned determines priority on the waiting list.

**Visitation/Observation:**

If you are considering Apple Top it is important to schedule a visit to the daycare. Please make an appointment with the office to insure that someone is available to give a tour/information and to answer questions. Additional visits may be of a drop-in nature.

**Weekly Rates:**

**Age 1 year:**

* + Full Time: $145.00 per week
  + Part Time: $90.00 per week

**Ages 2-4 years:**

* Full Time: $135.00 per week
* Part Time: $80.00 per week

For families that have more than one child in the facility they will receive a $10.00 discount for the 2nd child per week and if they have three or more children in the facility they will receive a $10.00 discount for the second child and then a $5.00 discount for the third child per week.

**Payment Options:**

Apple Top accepts Visa, MasterCard, Discover, Diners Club International, JCB and American Express debit and credit cards. We also accept cash or checks. If a check is returned there will be a $25.00 return check fee.

**Late Pick- Up fee:**

Pick up time is at 6:00 p.m., we will begin charging a dollar per minute beginning at 6:10 p.m. Families will be required to sign a late pick-up form that will have time of pick up and the amount charged. All late fees must be paid by the next business day.

**School Absence/Illness:**

If your child is absent for one week without any notification to the office your position will automatically be terminated. Apple Top allows two free weeks of absence while still holding your spot in the center. If you wish to withdraw your child for an extended period of time after using the two free weeks, and wish to reserve his/her place in the school you must pay 50% of the tuition per week. This tuition must be paid in advance unless other arrangements have been made with the Director.

**Attendance Agreement:**

All children should try to be at the facility by 9:00 a.m. to assure that morning activities run smoothly and are uninterrupted.

**Medications:**

Apple Top staff will not administer medications. However, if the child needs immediate medication such as am epi-pen for allergic reactions those will be administered. If your child requires medications throughout the day then a parent or preapproved person can come to the center to administer the medicine.

**Health and Safety of your Child:**

Your child’s health is a matter of major importance to Apple Top staff. Upon enrollment, you must file with us a current medical and immunization record. These records have to be kept in compliance with the state law regulations. There will be no exceptions to this rule.

A sick child is to be cared for at home and away from the center. Staying at home when sick will help your child get well and protect the other children. Any child who becomes ill during the day or arrives to school suspected of having q communicable disease, infectious disease or illness, develops a fever of 100+ or other signs and symptoms which include but are not limited to diarrhea, rash, pink eye, skin infection, ring worm, or head lice will be immediately isolated from the others and you will be contacted to pick up your child.

* If you are called to pick up your child due to illness, the child may not return for a period of 24 hours. All symptoms must be cleared, if your child comes back to the center and still is sick then you will be called to come pick up your child and will be required to get a doctor’s note for the child to return to the facility.

**Sign In and Out:**

Our policy is that every child will be signed in and out daily. There will be a ledger at the front desk when you come in the front door. Each child must be signed in with their name, date, and time; the same goes when each child is signed out. If for any reason you visit the facility during the day you must also sign the ledger with your name, child’s name, date, time and reason for visiting. This is for your child’s safety, there will be no exceptions.

**Emergency Procedures:**

We will be having monthly fire drills so that the staff and children can practice proper procedures for exiting the building in case of an emergency. Once everyone is outside each teacher will have an attendance sheet where they will account for each child. A staff member will also walk through and make sure that everyone has cleared the building. We urge that each family sit down and discuss emergency procedures at their own home. In the case of a natural disaster such as a severe storm or Hurricane watch we will close and reopen according to the public school system. In the case that this happens please listen to your radio or television for those types of announcements. We will also attempt to contact you or leave a message on the school phone to keep you posted.

**Parking:**

To help prevent traffic problems, please park in the designated areas and escort your child inside the facility. Parents can park and bring their child in through the front door. There are parking spots running north and south along Forest Ave. There is also one handicap parking spot in the back parking lot if needed.

**Release of Children:**

A child will only be released to an individual who is preapproved by the parent or legal guardian. If someone other than a person listed is authorized to pick up the child, written and verbal confirmation from the parent is required. That person will also have to present identification that we will copy and keep on file.

**Discharge Policy:**

Apple Top reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of a child for the following reasons:

* Non-payment or excessive late payment of fees.
* Not observing the rules of the center as outlined in the parent agreement.
* Child has special needs that we cannot adequately meet with our current staffing patterns.
* Physical and or verbal abuse of staff or children by parent or child.

**Things from home:**

Please do not let your child bring personal items from home to school unless notified that it is alright. We want to eliminate problems such as broken, misplaced or stolen personal items. There will be specific times that children will be allowed to bring in items to the center. Also please do not send children to school with any kind of jewelry or money.

**Meals:**

At our center children will be provided with breakfast, lunch and two snacks during the day. There will be a two week menu posted for parents to take home so they know what will be served. If your child does not like the food that is being served that day please send a packed nutritious lunch for them. Also please let us know of any allergies that your child has.

**Birthday Parties:**

If you would like to celebrate your child’s birthday please schedule it ahead of time with your child’s teacher so they can plan accordingly. Also if you plan to bring food please make sure there is enough for each child in the class.

**Dress Code:**

Please send your child to the center in comfortable clothing. Also it is required that all children have shoes that have backs or straps so that they stay on their feet. It is also required that you send one extra set of clothing to school for each child that will go in their cubbies. Please label your child’s clothing with their name. We will not be responsible for any clothing that is not labeled.

**Rest Period/Nap:**

We will have a rest/nap period for one hour each day. Your child does not have to go to sleep but they will have to lay down and be quiet. They may look at a book or play with a puzzle. However, if they are unable to be quiet they will have to lay silently so that others who are napping will not be disturbed.

**Lost and Found:**

Lost items will be kept in a bin in the office. If the items are not claimed within 30 days then the items will be donated to families in need. Again please remember we are not responsible for any items that are lost and are not labeled with your child’s name.

**Forwarding School Records:**

If your child moves to a different center or starts public school we will forward their records upon request of the parent or the school. We will not forward the records if there is an unpaid balance on your account.

**Parent-teacher conferences:**

Conferences are available with the director and with your child’s teacher by appointment. Our goal is to help you with the development and the education of your child. It is always our desire to address your concerns and to reach an agreement if at all possible that will benefit your child(s). However, please do not expect this time to be during class hours; the first responsibility is to the children in the class. Please stop by or call to set up a time that is convenient for everyone.

**Home Situation:**

From time to time there will be personal matters that go on at home that can affect how your child behaves at school. In no way do we want to invade the privacy of your lives but if possible a call or note addressing the issue will help us accommodate or help your child while he/she is at the center.

**Change in address or Phone Numbers:**

It is the parents or guardians responsibility to make sure the office has the correct information regarding you and your child. Please notify the school office of any change in address or telephone numbers, home or work. Up to date information will help us cope quickly with emergencies.

**Child Neglect and Abuse:**

Under Florida law, if there is any reason to suspect child abuse, a childcare worker is a mandated reporter and will report suspicion to the proper authorities. Should there be any cases of suspected child abuse or neglect in this center, we will notify the proper authorities immediately. Also under the Ryla Wilson Act, if a child has not been to school for a specific amount of time and we are unable to contact the parents or guardians, we will also report this to the proper authorities to ensure your child’s safety.

**Discipline Guidelines:**

We believe children want to do what is expected of them, however, young children are not always yet skilled in ways of responding appropriately to other children. Children need to be taught appropriate behavior. Negative consequences may be necessary, but we feel that positive reinforcement produces desired behavior. Our goal is to do what is in the best interest of the child and the school, and to work very closely with each child and their parents. We want to help children develop, physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually in a warm and friendly, family-like environment.

A positive approach with emphasis on self-control and responsibility for choices will be used to discipline children. Techniques of discipline will include: redirecting the child, talking to the child to make sure he/she understands what is expected of him or her; seating the child next to the teacher, offering alternatives and sitting the child out of the activity in a designated safe place for time to reflect; (only when redirecting and positive reinforcement fails) We use Positive approaches such as, praise and rewards, showing affection (hugs, pats on the back); smiling and keeping communications open between, parent, child and staff.

Children shall not be subjected to discipline, which severe, humiliating, or frightening. Discipline shall not be associated with food, rest, or toileting, spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited.

Discipline must always be done with dignity, keeping in mind the feelings, emotions, needs and values of the child and the school.

Negative consequences for misconduct are necessary to help children understand that they must obey and stay within the limits set for the children.

Positive reinforcements are also needed for children, this helps children focus on good conduct. We believe that children should learn at an early age that they are responsible for their choices.

Parents will be notified immediately in case of major or reoccurring behavioral challenges. Teachers will provide a detailed account of any incidents and parents will be required to sign the documents, indicating that they have read and understood what has happened. The director and owners will be aware of any ongoing issues.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES FOR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR AND I AGREE TO SUPPORT THESE POLICIES.

Parents Signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_