

Black Bear Academy

Parent Handbook

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Letter from the Executive Director

Welcome to Black Bear Academy. You have chosen a program that many believe is one of the best preschool programs in the city. Our goal is to facilitate the most optimal circumstances for your child's development. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to work with your children, get to know you as parents, and contribute to what we consider to be the most important and valuable time period in your child's life.

The goals of our program are many but some of the most important include the following:

- To provide your child with a nurturing environment that facilitates learning at your child's highest levels of capability in a multi-sensory, experientially rich environment that provides exposure in a variety of skill areas in a developmentally challenging manner.
- To provide an environment that supports play, both physically and cognitively, in a manner that engages your child to operate freely and spontaneously with both peers and adults in a variety of contexts.
- For each child to feel known and recognized as an individual, with special talents and unique characteristics that are valued by others.
- To both be and feel safe and secure, away from Mommy and Daddy, so that your child can participate fully in all the activities and opportunities presented in a confident manner.
- To model, and to expect, polite and respectful behavior between peers and adults in a manner that recognizes social boundaries, develops empathy for others, enhances a child's understanding of and support for others goals and develops social skills that support successful participation in a variety of contexts.
- To actively protect their childhood, recognized as a time that can never be replaced or redone, where simple joys are valued and exploration is encouraged.

Please feel free to stop in and say hello at anytime. If you have any questions or concerns, please share them. We hope that your family becomes an active member of the Black Bear community through your volunteerism, participation in classroom and school events, reaching out to other families and making friendships that enhance the quality of your child's and your family's life.

As always, I am excited to start another phenomenal school year and look forward to spending time with you and your child.

Sincerely,

Maureen E. Black M.S., CCC-SLP/L

Speech Language Pathologist

Owner and Executive Director

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History and Mission

History:

Maureen Black, after living in Dallas for many years, moved home to Illinois in 1987. She received both her Bachelor's and Master's of Science degrees in Communication Sciences and Disorders from Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville. She then moved to Chicago with her new husband, Kevin Black, in the winter of 1989 where he attended the MBA program at the University of Chicago.

In 1990 they started a company called Clinical Assist with the goal of providing speech therapy services to Chicago area schools, hospitals, pediatric clinics and TBI programs. That first year, being the only employee, Maureen worked 12-14 hour days, seven days a week for a solid year. Kevin accepted a position in the airline industry, the income earner, where he worked for twelve years during the day and by night at Clinical Assist. Slowly, as they were able to accrue the financial resources, they hired additional Speech Pathologist and at one time had a staff of 25 therapists.

In 2002, after both 9-11 and the birth of their son Colin, Kevin joined Clinical Assist full-time. The concept of Black Bear was developed many years prior to its establishment but having an 18 month old themselves, and being unwilling to leave him with others, the concept was quickly put into motion. It began in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood as a pilot program in June of 2003.

Maureen stated "After many years of very rewarding clinical work in Traumatic Brain Injury, treating the damaged brains of people of all ages, I remained fascinated by the complexity and the amazing capabilities our neurological system. I began to wonder how we could then optimally impact the brain of young children, whose systems were influenced everyday both by their interactions with others and the stimuli rich environments to which they were exposed. Based on the developmental theories of many brilliant researchers but primarily Jean Claude Piaget, I began to think about a program that would represent the ideal environment to facilitate the most effective neurological development for our children in their first seven years of life. The first seven years, when 90% of our brains are constructed, developed.

My therapeutic interests and my amazement at the complexity of typically developing systems, in addition to my lovely, one and only son Colin, led me to create Black Bear Academy, which is still, and will always be, a work in progress. Through our original company, Clinical Assist, Ltd., I would often visit the sites of my employees where I would provide clinical mentorship. During these visits at pediatric sites, schools, clinics, hospitals, I often left feeling uncomfortable with what I did not see. The environments were often void of engaging toys, multi-sensory play opportunities, as well as typically understaffed and generally just not "optimal" although safe. My understanding of the importance of environment for effective neurological development and its potential impact on learning and/or the development of delayed neurological systems, made me question the understanding of these important ideas by others."

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History continued:

In 2003, Black Bear Academy started out in 1400 square feet on Irving Park and Hermitage with three employees. Today, Black Bear Academy is a thriving program, employing more than thirty talented Speech Pathologists and Early Childhood Educators in over 24,000 square feet of space in Lakeview. Maureen currently serves as the Executive Program Director and consults with families, schools, therapists and educators regarding service provision at both Black Bear Academy and also to external programs to support the success of the Black Bear students as they transition into other city programs. Kevin, after leaving the airline industry, serves as the CFO and administrator for payroll and benefits, accounting, and all of the Bears' financial records. Recently in the fall of 2009, after more than 20 years in business, Maureen and Kevin Black froze operations at Clinical Assist, Ltd. in order to devote all of their time and resources to Black Bear Academy.

Maureen Black recently told a group of parents "I can only imagine the impact that our children will have on our world, later in their lives. They will be the future doctors, scientists, the architects, and the leaders, bringing our country, our world, through difficult times and beyond."

Black Bear Mission:

We want to share ideas and open up the dialogue regarding what children require and how children benefit from their environment from ages birth to seven years of age. Culturally, we want to increase the understanding of the potential impact of facilitating a multi-sensory approach to learning and development as related to gaining skill sets or improving skill sets that may be delayed early in a child's life.

We believe that the majority of the construction of our neurological framework, which supports all skills for the entirety of a human beings life, begins at birth and by age seven, is 90% complete. Our mission is to build a child's neural network at the highest potential levels through play-based, multi-sensory activities that support all of the neurological skill sets with high priorities given to language development and the development of the motor cortex without regard for age expectations. Additionally, we hope to increase our parents' ability to look forward, to enjoy the development and change, maximize skills, minimize the worry, maximize strength areas and support areas of weakness or challenge, period. We want every child to engage at optimal skill levels in all areas of development, at their own individual rate and to not be influenced by traditional ideas of what is possible and without adult determined levels of sufficiency.

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Philosophy:

To protect the joys of childhood while facilitating opportunities to develop at a self determined pace based on interest and aptitude that respectfully disregards developmental expectations given age matched peers and developmental norms based on expectations that exclude optimum opportunities as presented at the Academy with no barriers to advancement.

Goals and Criteria of Black Bear Academy Foundations and Principles

Goal I:

All Black Bear Academy Staff commit themselves to providing a therapeutic, developmental and educational environment that demonstrates an active belief that no child before the age of seven should be discouraged from exploring their skill sets in a variety of areas, to levels of mastery determined by individual performance, NOT age expected norms.

Goal II:

All Black Bear Academy Staff commit themselves to engaging students in a way that demonstrates a respect for individual learning styles, expectations for change, and opportunities to pursue the innate interests of each individual.

Goal III:

Black Bear Academy Staff commit themselves to engage with children in a respectful manner that supports the recognition of social boundaries thereby supporting each individual to be successful in a variety of contexts while developing a greater understanding and mastery of pragmatic skill sets that will support participation in a variety of contexts.

Goal IV:

Black Bear Academy Staff commit themselves to encouraging our families to build the Black Bear community, in recognition of community as a valuable component for new parents and small children, in a way that enhances the quality of the program and support during the early stages of parenting.

Goal V:

Black Bear Academy Staff commit themselves to professional growth, in an atmosphere of personal choice and respect for parenting styles, with guidance that supports a healthy Parent/School Partnership. Black Bear Academy staff will respect the whole child, with knowledge of the neurological framework, through the provision of tasks that support multiple styles of learning and facilitate efficient development of integrated neural pathways.

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Black Bear Program Terminology

Language Enrichment: (LE) our pre-academic program.

Lil' lil' Guys: 18-24 months

Two's program

Three's program

Play sessions

Academic program

IKI: Introduction to Kindergarten Ideas

JK: Junior Kindergarten

SK: Senior Kindergarten

Tutoring

Therapeutic Program

Therapeutic Play: 18-30 months

Intro: Introduction to Therapeutic Preschool

TPS: Therapeutic Preschool

KP: Kindergarten Prep

TXE: Therapeutic Enrichment

Black Bear Communication:

Black Bear urges staff and parents to follow these steps when addressing concerns:

Speak first to the primary Teacher/Program Lead with whom one is having a concern and include the Executive Director in the process in a written format.

If that communication is not successful, speak to the Executive Director, Maureen Black, directly in addition to the Program Lead through a scheduled meeting.

After the appropriate lines of communication have been followed, please schedule an appointment to discuss any residual issues concerning you directly and confidentially with Maureen Black, owner, Executive Director, by appointment.

"If a parent develops a pattern of approaching faculty, staff, or other community members in a manner contradictory to the values of our program, they will be asked to reconsider future enrollment. Should the pattern continue, after a discussion has taken place with the Executive Director, the family may be asked by the Executive Director to leave the school."

At Black Bear Academy, parents, teachers, administration and staff are expected to:

- Approach each other with mutual respect, maintain honesty and integrity in their communications and start those conversations under the assumption that we all have the best interests of the student and child as a primary goal.

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- Enforce the policies and procedures of the school regardless of their personal preferences. Parents are expected to follow these policies with respect for the school, its programming and its staff.
- Maintain professional boundaries and interact with staff in a manner that supports the staff to also honor their commitment to their employer.
- Do their best to support the school, its programming and its mission in a manner that recognizes excellence at the academy and encourages others to do the same.

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Therapeutic Program

Overview:

Therapeutic classes, small group therapies and individual therapies address communication or feeding delays or disorders related to oral motor/feeding/sensory dysfunction, language deficits, poor social pragmatics skills, misarticulations, decreased motor coordination/planning, sensory regulation, decreased attention, transition difficulties among other areas requiring the services of a Speech-Language Pathologist. We offer individual therapy services, group, therapeutic enrichment, and Black Bear Buddies Program. All of our therapeutic classes are taught by licensed Speech-Language Pathologists and typically offer a 1:2 teacher to student ratio. Family conferences are held every 12-15 weeks and entrance in to this program requires three appointments to conduct a five hour Speech Language Evaluation.

Therapeutic Play - For those children, 18 to 30 months, who need, or are receiving, speech therapy and require more treatment-based focus and support to participate in a preschool, or group, setting. Our goal is to facilitate language skills in play-based activities that actively engage a child in reciprocal communication. We hope to increase the child's readiness to participate in classroom settings along with his or her same-aged peers, increasing opportunities for social pragmatic practice. These classes are taught by licensed Speech Pathologists, and class size is limited to four children. Teacher to student ratio is 1:2 to support a therapeutic approach facilitating language development, group play and class participation skills. While classes also focus on child-specific developmental skills, they are primarily therapeutic in approach and content. In addition to these classes, we highly recommend our individual speech therapy services to support communication gains and promote carry-over of skills from individual to group settings.

Introduction to Preschool - This class is for students not able to tolerate our half-day program (three hours) but require a therapeutic group setting to support social skills, social language, peer engagement and participation in a structured setting as an introduction to future school placement. Our goal for these students is that they will establish greater cognitive endurance, improved language skills, and a solid core knowledge base in order to support a transition into our three hour therapeutic preschool.

Therapeutic Preschoolers - Our therapeutic preschool program is offered in the mornings, five days a week, from 9:00 am to 12:00, in four, ten week sessions during the school year followed by a six to eight week summer camp program. Children must be at least 2.5 years of age to attend and demonstrate a clinical readiness to participate in this therapeutically intensive program. Black Bear offers unique experiences that allow students to learn and grow in their communication, cognitive and social-pragmatic skills while incorporating free play, art, motor planning, and music, sensory and academic activities. Our goal is to increase the child's readiness to transition and participate in a more traditional classroom setting in the least restrictive environment prior to beginning a first grade program. We offer a teacher to student ratio of 1:3 and a limit of six students per class. Students typically have a variety of intervention needs and classes address areas of skill such as speech and language, auditory processing, sensory integration, motor planning, feeding, play skills and social pragmatics. We work closely with other professionals with the goal of creating a cohesive treatment approach and integrating services so as to maximize the benefits of each therapy service provided in both a 1:1 and small classroom environment.

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Kindergarten Preparation/Transitions – The student profile in this group of students is a combination of a mixed sensory dysregulation and decreased social-pragmatic skills. Academic abilities in core knowledge are a strength area with fairly good language skills. Formulation and expression remain influenced by the primary profile as stated above. In the last half of the academic year, 2010, Black Bear Academy followed a model which highlighted academic skills in the classroom as a primary goal for students' ages five to seven years. The goal was to focus on the "strength areas" with the idea that we would minimize residual clinical issues thus create greater success in the classroom structure. Clinical intervention was provided outside of the classroom environment or in consultation with the transition team.

In our Academic program we also introduced the idea of "transition" in the neuro-typical program, at the academic pace of the program with no modification of the presentation but 1:1 support within a classroom of twelve students, far less numbers but the more traditional model.

The results, general conclusion, and recommendations follow:

In the neurotypical class, JK, with external speech support only, three out of four require continued intensive intervention. This period clearly continues to be a time of great change requiring intensive facilitation that best happens outside the classroom environment in order to support skill strength NOT classroom tolerance and with an SLP or enrichment staff member specifically trained for that student.

In the transition class, academic strength was the priority, intervention and consultation occurred outside of the classroom, the majority of these students required ongoing one on one intervention, through SLP or the enrichment team, to increase strength of the skill sets in order to create successful classroom attendance and additionally, this group required a systematic sensory diet with clinical intervention to assure benefit of both classroom activities and the academics presented.

In both cases greater gains in skill set areas in addition to better indicators for future classroom success was required to continue offering those models of intervention.

The summary indicates:

- Stay with skills sets required in an academic area
- Provide more intense clinical intervention both in the classroom and externally
- Identify more accurately academic strengths and challenges for each student through cross reference standardized test measures
- Identify more accurately sensory dysregulation strategies for successful classroom participation
- Practice, in a dyad, the necessary social pragmatic skills and operate for greater periods of time in this intervention structure both within the classroom and in external events and neurotypical peer practice sessions

Therapeutic Enrichment/Skills Clinic – In addition, we offer one hour, ten week therapeutic courses in the following skill areas: Feeding and Multi-sensory Skills, Sensory processing, Motor Planning and Apraxia, Social Language and pragmatic skill development, in addition to academic areas such as hand writing, literacy, mathematics and science.

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Private Caregiver Training – Same as above but individualized to support your child’s specific needs. Your caregiver, child and a Black Bear Speech Pathologist work together in both unstructured play environments and structured task-based activities designed to facilitate a greater understanding of therapeutic approaches and techniques specific to your child. Coursework includes topics such as effective modification strategies in both home and community environments such as mealtimes, self care, retail stores, local parks and sibling interaction and/or play-based social interactions. Successful transitioning techniques are discussed and practiced in addition to training designed to enhance carryover of therapeutic gains in a play-based facilitation of emerging skill sets or mastered skills in more structured settings. Your caregiver will practice therapeutic techniques in play-based activities designed to enhance overall developmental gains and specific skill sets based on therapeutic goals. Opportunities for discussion of specific problems you or your caregiver would like to address will be incorporated in every session.

Speech-Language Evaluations and Therapy– We offer pediatric speech therapy services to children requiring a medically-based approach. We provide the clinical services required when a child is suspected to have, or is diagnosed with having, delays in language, learning and cognitive development. We provide individual therapy services to children whose diagnoses may include Autism, Attention Deficit Disorder, Aspergers, Unspecified Developmental Delays, Speech-Language Disorders, Auditory Processing Deficits, Motor Planning Impairments, Sensory Integration Disorders, Feeding and Swallowing Difficulties, Apraxia, Dysarthria and other deficits associated with pediatric syndromes or genetic disorders. We work closely with your physician and other professionals treating your child to promote a collaborative and cohesive treatment approach in a classroom setting. **IEP Consultations** and School Observations are provided upon request.

Language Enrichment (LE) Program

Overview:

Our Language Enrichment program focuses on increasing the complexity and richness of a child's language skills both for expression and understanding. The level of a child's language skills is considered to be the primary factor of a child's ability to learn new information and build a foundation of understanding in a more complex way. Early developing skills such as core knowledge for basic information, conceptual information, play, and association and problem solving are considered to be language based. This program is for typically developing children and occurs in a variety of play-based settings including the classroom with a very small student to teacher ratio. Preschoolers love the circle time, arts and crafts, music, story time and don't forget gym! All classes facilitate developmental learning through play in a variety of multi-sensory opportunities. Activities enhance language skills and optimize learning, increasing the cognitive complexity of play through imaginative and representational play, choosing toys that facilitate more complex developmental skills given age-based expectations, fine and gross motor skill enhancement via our gym equipment and communication styles that support child's communication skills.

Parents will remain informed throughout the school year regarding current classroom activities. We urge parents to regularly visit the website. "This Week in..." (TWI) are posted on the website weekly under your student's program. Half sheets are sent home following every Language Enrichment class.

Following a ten-week session, parents will be e-mailed a 'Developmental Assessment' update regarding their child's progress.

The Lil' Lil' Guys 18-24 months

Answers to FAQ'S

The ratio is 2 teachers to 6 students.

This program runs in four 10 week sessions and you can enroll for the entire year or session by session. The class is one hour and 15 minutes and is offered Monday through Friday, from 8:45 to 10:00. Most parents with these Lil' Lil' guys take one class per week. A session is 10 weeks long and classes missed can be made-up but only if a space is available.

Our teachers all have four year degrees in applicable studies and most have their Early Childhood Education Degree. You may or may not have the same teacher each session. Partly by design and partly due to staffing, teachers may change session to session but in each session, barring unexpected staffing changes, your child's teachers will stay the same.

A general overview of the primary focus for the Lil' Lil' Guys Program

Our primary goal for this group of Lil' Guys can be summarized by the following goals related to skill sets:

- Increase ability to participate in a structured, but play-based, setting.
- Increase ability to confidently separate from Mommy and Daddy and fully participate in fun and engaging activities without worry or concern.

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- Increase language skills by building a greater core vocabulary typically nouns and core phrases such as "I want . . ."
- "More _____ please."
- Begin to establish confidence in early language skills, ideas such as cause and effect, verbal negotiation, and early primary knowledge such as colors, numbers, environmental sound identification, large motor skill related to class songs and music, social peer awareness and parallel play, and expression of self to others.
- Expand "time on task" skills to support greater sustained attention
- Encourage task persistence for novel play and other directed activities
- Through play-based activities, begin to increase body awareness and body confidence through gross motor (large muscle) activities that encourage greater coordination, timed and sequential movement to music, and skill exploration in a park or our gym setting
- Facilitate consistent use of language in a variety of contexts with a variety of staff members
- Develop a healthy participation in play activities.
- Develop a sense of pride at accomplishments through teacher modeling
- Begin to facilitate the child's ability to label their emotions and verbally (versus physically) negotiate the world



The Lil' Guys Two's program

Answers to FAQ'S

The ratio is 2 teachers to 6-8 students depending on the classroom size but never more than 8 students. This program runs in four 10 week sessions and you can enroll for the entire year or session by session. The class is two hours, offered Monday through Friday, from 10:15 to 12:15. Most parents of a two year old take 1-2 classes per week for early two's and 2-3 classes per week for later two's.

A session is 10 weeks long and classes missed can be made-up but only if a space is available.

Our teachers all have four year degrees in applicable studies and most have their Early Childhood Degree. You may or may not have the same teacher each session. Partly by design and partly due to staffing, teachers may change session to session but in each session, barring unexpected staffing changes, your child's teachers will stay the same.

A general overview of the primary focus for the Lil' Guys Two's Program

Our primary focus for this group of Lil' Guys Two's can be summarized by the following goals related to skill sets:

- Increase ability to participate in a structured, but play-based, setting
- Increase ability to confidently separate from Mommy and Daddy and fully participate in fun and engaging activities without worry or concern
- Increase language skills by building a greater vocabulary, increase the grammatical complexity of language structure, include more adjectives, verbs and early conceptual language vocabulary

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- Begin to establish early foundation skills in core knowledge areas such as colors, letter, numbers, phonemic awareness as a precursor to pre-literacy tasks in the THREE's Program, large motor skill sets as a early pre-cursor to pre-writing skills in the Three's Program, social boundaries, peer awareness and parallel play, and expression of self to others.
- Expand "time on task" skills to support greater sustained attention
- Encourage task persistence for novel play and other directed activities
- Through play-based activities, begin to increase body awareness and body confidence through gross motor (large muscle) activities that encourage greater coordination, timed and sequential movement to music, and skill exploration in a park or our gym setting
- Challenge mastery of skill sets in a variety of contexts with a variety of staff members
- Develop a healthy regard for learning and exploration of ideas
- Support the idea of character and friendship through teacher modeling
- Begin to facilitate the child's ability to label their emotions and verbally (versus physically) negotiate the world



The Lil' Guys Three's program

Answers to FAQ'S

The ratio is 2 teachers to 12 students but never more than 12 students.

This program runs in four 10 week sessions and you can enroll for the entire year or session by session. The class is three hours, offered Monday through Friday, from 9:15 to 12:15. Most parents of a three year old take 3 classes per week for early three's and 4-5 classes per week for later three's. This class is for your three year old if you have not yet determined if you will be staying at Black Bear through kindergarten. This option buys you some time if you would like to wait a little longer before enrolling elsewhere. We have increased the student number to more accurately reflect the class sizes that you may find at your next academic stop. For students NOT applying to midyear IKI, this is the class for you. If you ARE applying for mid-year IKI, class size will stay the same but your child's classroom and peers will be those students intending to move into the IKI program. This is very important to specify as we want those students together beginning in August.

A session is 10 weeks long and classes missed can be made-up but only if a space is available. This class has the extended day option but please remember that they operate on two different schedules. Extended day follows the Academic Calendar year and LE 3's program follows the four session schedule. There are NO make ups for extended day classes missed. Elective classes can be made up if:

- There is room for a make-up
- You notified us 24 hours in advance of your absence
- Your file is in order and your account in good standing.

Our teachers all have four year degrees in applicable studies and most have their Early Childhood Degree. Barring unexpected staffing changes, your child's teachers will stay the same with the exception of a

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student entering into our mid-year IKI Program. Once you join our academic program, your child's teacher and classmates will remain the same for the remainder of the year.

A general overview of the primary focus for the Lil' Guys Three's Program

- Our primary focus for this group of Lil' Guys Three's can be summarized by the following goals related to skill sets:
- Increase ability to participate in a structured, project-based, setting
- Increase ability to confidently and fully participate in fun and engaging activities without worry or concern, in a more independent manner.
- Increase language skills by building a greater vocabulary, increase the grammatical complexity of language structure, include more adjectives, verbs and early conceptual language vocabulary, increase storytelling and re-telling skills.
- Begin to implement early foundation skills in core knowledge areas such as colors, letter, numbers, phonemic awareness and layer experiential knowledge in a more structured way. Continue to develop large motor skill sets as fine motor skills for both pre-writing and writing skills become a greater academic focus. Development of a greater awareness and differentiation related to social boundaries, peer awareness and cooperative play, and expression of self to others.
- Expand "time on task" skills to support greater sustained attention. Begin "project" based learning to support delayed gratification, task persistence, temporal awareness, and early executive function skills.
- Encourage task persistence for novel play and other directed activities
- Through play-based activities, begin to increase body awareness and body confidence through gross
- motor (large muscle) activities that encourage greater coordination, timed and sequential movement
- to music, and skill exploration in a park or our gym setting.
- Begin to develop student's ability to participate in structured games, with rules, and winners and losers.
- Challenge mastery of skill sets in a variety of contexts with a variety of staff members
- Develop a healthy regard for learning and exploration of ideas, facilitate self-initiated learning through activities where intrinsic motivation is noted.
- Support the idea of character, responsible participation, honesty and friendship through teacher modeling.
- Begin to facilitate the child's ability to discuss their experiences with others, including ideas, opinions, and questions related to what "may occur", what's possible.

Academic Program Overview:

Our Academic program begins to introduce the strong communicative-cognitive skills developed in our LE program with a project based academic structure. This program is intended to facilitate learning in core knowledge areas such as Language Arts, Science, Mathematics, etc. Additionally, the academic component of our program allows us to transition those students from our therapeutic program into a neuro-typical classroom as soon as they demonstrate the readiness. These classes have a maximum of twelve students to two teachers and last 2 hours and 45 minutes from 9:00 – 11:45. Beginning in the Academic Program, students have the option to stay for Extended Day classes from 12:00 – 3:00. Parent/Teacher conferences happen three times a year in November, February, and June. Reports are sent home after the initial Academic Testing in the beginning of the year. The November conference reports on the goals and strengths of your student. The February conference gives a full report card with a skills checklist, curriculum overview, and student narrative. The conference in June will give us a chance to report on the pre and post Academic Tests and the students' Academic progress throughout the year.

Beginning in IK1, students will be introduced to reciting the Pledge of Allegiance on a daily basis.

Curriculums include:

Breakthrough to Literacy teaches children to early literacy skills, as well as, how to share their ideas by talking and writing. BTL encourages parents to continue the teachings at home with basic tools and questions to ask your child. There is a computer program designed to meet the needs and level of your child so he/she can learn to read easily and with enjoyment. Some basic concepts for our preschool group will be learning the alphabet, learning new vocabulary, and hearing sounds that are in words. Some basic concepts for our kindergarten group are learning new vocabulary, reading, listening to and talking about books, writing, labeling, drawing, drafting a list, and writing stories and letters.

Handwriting Without Tears uses fun, entertaining and educationally sound instructional methods to teach handwriting to all students from pre-K to cursive. Handwriting without Tears helps children develop their writing skills through multi-sensory play. Activities with the Wood Pieces Set, Capital Letter Cards, Mat, Roll-A-Dough Letters™, Stamp and See Screen™, CDs, Slate Chalkboard, and Blackboard use all of the senses to teach directionality, vocabulary and imitation, positioning, and sequencing skills. Children move, touch, feel, and manipulate real objects as they learn the habits and skills essential for writing. Other multi-sensory lessons in the teachers' guides use voices, letter stories, door tracing, imaginary writing, and mystery letters to teach letter formation and placement on lines. HWT teaches the easiest skills first and then builds on prior lessons. Letters are taught in a sequence that makes sense developmentally in groups of formation. After children master the easier letters they are really ready to move on to more difficult letters in both print and cursive.

Everyday Math The main categories encompassed in Everyday Math are counting, number concepts, operations, graphing, measurement, shapes, position and spatial relationships, patterns, and sorting. This program encourages group play and engagement as the primary tools for relaying complex information such as the value and magnitude of numerals.

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Growing with Mathematics provides students with the foundation for understanding more complex math concepts and provides hands-on, language-based math activities where students can explore geometry, measurement, and number sense in language based models such as word problems. Mathematics, taught within centers and in large groups, supports a child specific teaching approach, supporting the teaching modifications required to address each student's individual differences and needs. Rote counting, making sets, number identification, one-to-one correspondence, and comparisons are taught by using various manipulatives, such as Unifix cubes, blocks, and number cards. This hands-on approach leads to a better understanding of number concepts. To increase spatial reasoning, building blocks and puzzles are also used during free time and at centers. Drawing and cutting two dimensional shapes encourages the students to name the shapes and identify their attributes. When practicing ordinal position the children use manipulative blocks, shapes, and their bodies when determining the place of the object/person (first to fifth). Students also practice the terminology of ordinal position daily when reviewing the date, being sure to add the proper suffix to the number. The students create patterns in the AB format using a variety of manipulatives and their attributes, such as shape, color, and size. The students develop a sense of time during calendar time, by counting down the time left for an activity, and watching a sand counter for certain time frames, such as 1 minute and up to 10 minutes. Time on a clock is also practiced when making transitions from one activity to another.

Wright Skills Literacy Program to introduce language concepts. Having maximum exposure to reading and phonics helps to prepare students to become fluent in Language Arts. To support the development of Language Arts, which incorporates reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, the class is immersed in a language rich environment.

The weekly featured stories and poems introduce Language Arts concepts, such as phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, writing, and listening. Before reading each book the class reviews the external text which is the front cover, back cover, title page, author and illustrator. Throughout the story, the students are asked to make predictions about what might happen next. Students are taught to use contextual clues, such as interpreting illustrations and learning new vocabulary words, to talk about what events occurred in the story. These skills help the students stay actively involved in the story and aid in the development of retention. The students are assessed in a variety of ways such as, teacher observation, student participation, and by applying their knowledge to a variety of activities. Activities to assess the students have included retelling the story using manipulative pictures, verbally asking and answering questions during group lessons, and the Wright Skills Computer Program. These activities allow the students to visualize the beginning, middle, and end of the story, and then retell the story in a sequential order of events. Along with the featured story, there is a featured poem, and rhyme. These tools introduce and teach concepts such as, rhyming, onset which is the initial consonant sound that precedes the rhyme, multisyllabic words including compound words, alliteration which is the repeated occurrence of the same consonant sound at the beginning of several words in the same phrase, print awareness refers to a child's understanding of the nature and uses of print, and word awareness which means understanding letters make up words. The students are assessed through daily participation and teacher observation. To facilitate creative writing, students are encouraged to create their own stories based on the topic of our featured story. While expressing these ideas in complete sentences and taking turns during conversations, the students demonstrate age

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appropriate speaking skills are the goals during these activities too. Each day, students practice listening and speaking. The students' listening skills have an impact on their cognitive endurance and comprehension. To practice listening comprehension, students are asked to follow two to three step directions. Students are given the opportunity to speak in front of the class daily when answering questions during the morning meeting and during all group discussion activities. This encourages an increase in utterance length, as well as self-confidence. Speaking vocabulary is measured by their use of new vocabulary, pronunciation of words, and appropriate volume while speaking in front of the class.

Foss Science helps students learn from direct experiences in which they observe, describe, sort and organize objects, organisms, materials, and simple systems. Using their senses to acquire data, and their emerging language and mathematics skills to process and communicate their observations, is an appropriate and authentic, real world engagement with science for early learners. The key foundation concepts, about the natural world and the basic inquiry skills that are established in the early years, will construct more advanced understanding in the years to come. Students will be taught through the process of inquiry, hands-on active learning, multi-sensory methods, student-to-student Interaction, discourse and reflective thinking, and reading and research. Black Bear Academy's Science program will provide all students with science experiences that are appropriate to their stages of cognitive development. It will serve as a foundation for more advanced ideas that prepare students for life in an increasingly complex scientific and technological world

Introduction to Kindergarten Ideas (IKI) starts at 3.6:

IKI entrance is based on academic testing and social maturity for a more structured project based classroom. Consideration will be given to students no more than four weeks younger than 3:6 and only if these candidates have been enrolled at Black Bear Academy no less than one year prior to applying to our academic program.

Junior Kindergarten (JK) begins at 4 years by September 1:

JK program requires Academic Testing to insure readiness for formal academic curriculums. Curriculums include Pre-literacy, pre-writing, science and math. Daily computer tasks are required as part of this program. This program is for you if you want to enroll your child in a half-day kindergarten prep program, 5 days per week, for a traditional academic year that follows our academic calendar. They must be between the ages of 3.5 to 5.0 years of age and demonstrate academic readiness determined by standardized testing. In addition to supporting developmental milestones, the primary focus of this program is establishing a solid foundation of knowledge in key academic areas expected in kindergarten programs. Black Bear advances language, learning and neurological maturation by exposing children to not only core academics but multi-sensory projects that peak a child's natural curiosity about cause and effect, processes, and inductive and deductive reasoning tasks. The goal of the Black Bear Program is to support the neurological maturation that takes place for all children from birth to six years of age. This maturation is highly dependent upon the activities that a child is exposed to in that time period. In order to have strong, effective neuro-pathways, efficient encoding and decoding systems and processing

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centers that effectively interpret a variety of information; a child **MUST** be exposed to a multi-sensory, multi-modal, play-based approach to learning. Exposure must include activities supporting information in all areas of processing such as auditory information, visual information, sensory information, language (both expressive and receptive), tactile, vestibular, proprioceptive, motor planning, and cognitive among others, in a play-based arena. Class size must be small and engagement with both peers and adults must be active and supportive to support the exposure for optimal learning and neurological maturation. Pre-literacy and mathematics will be an area of focus in order to facilitate learning that not only requires strong conceptual language skills but supports learning novel, non-arbitrary, information as well.

Senior Kindergarten (SK) begins at 5 years by September 1:

SK program also requires pre/post-testing to insure all of our students are taught specifically to the level of their strengths and beyond in addition to the areas of greater challenge. The curriculum approach is more traditional and an increased time on task becomes an academic focus. Continued focus in the core knowledge areas in addition to an increased facilitation of social skills and pragmatic approaches to problem solving for these kindergartners. Literacy, writing, science and math are the primary areas of academic challenges presented and an increased exposure to computer based tasks are required as part of this program. Extended Day classes are strongly encouraged but not required. Priority enrollment is for current JK students. A two hour and 45 minute Kindergarten program, offered mornings only with the option of Extended Day, is currently available for enrollment. This program follows a school calendar schedule which can be viewed here. Spaces are limited to 12 students. All students must demonstrate kindergarten/first grade readiness skills as determined by standardized exams. Both the IOWA Tests of Basic Skills and the Illinois Snapshot of Early Literacy (ISEL) are used to assess the students. Fees will be charged no later than August 1st and testing must be completed prior to the school year.

Academy Arts Program

In a time when other schools are "trimming" the fine arts, Black Bear Academy is expanding. We believe that the Fine Arts are as important to the developing brain as academic studies—in fact, they complement and support one another. Studies indicate a causal relationship between the arts and spatial reasoning in young children. Participation in such culturally-rich activities like dance, music, and theatre stimulates children's curiosity and their capabilities for self-expression. At Black Bear, we have an environment that is artistically alive and exciting. Our classes in dance, music, and theatre expose Preschool- through Kindergarten-age children to all the different cultural, kinesthetic, and expressive aspects of the arts in an interactive classroom setting. In the end, the children will gain a basic knowledge of artistic principles and a unique language for communicating through them. This fundamental appreciation will serve as a doorway to further exploration of dance, music, and theatre as they grow up.

Summer Camp

Summer camp provides students with an opportunity to have Black Bear fun with a less academic focus. Campers go on a number of field trips, play in parks, as well as the school hosting 'Big Events' (like magicians, or an exotic animal show). Please confirm all your contact information, as well as any allergies and dietary restrictions

All children are welcome to attend Big Events at Black Bear. Parents or chaperones are required to stay

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and there will be a \$10 per person charge for attending. Students who do not attend camp on the day of a field trip are welcome to attend subject to availability. The student will be charged for a single day of camp. Please make sure your consent for travel is turned in and up to date.

Chaperones will be needed for all field trips. These will be taken on a first come, first serve basis. If you would like to chaperone for a specific field trip please email our Parent Volunteer Coordinator.

All students are REQUIRED to wear their camp t-shirt on fieldtrips and park drop offs. Tennis shoes are mandatory for camp, no sandals or flip flops. Please send your student with sunscreen already applied to camp. Teachers will not be responsible for this. Black Bear provides snack daily. Please limit snacks brought from home with exceptions such as teacher requests and food based allergies. We are a NO NUT program.

Clearly mark all possessions with your child's name in black, permanent marker. Please write their name on the bottom of their tennis shoes. Please make sure student cubbies have summer appropriate items. Please be sure your cubbies include two extra pair of clothes, swim wear, a towel, and sunscreen. Also please apply sunscreen at home prior to coming to camp. Additionally, please make sure your child has gone potty prior to camp just in case we are ready to go to our activity immediately.

Please do not send your child with a "lovie" or toy. It may get lost. Black Bear does not guarantee make-ups. Make-ups will be given only if there is availability and you provided us 24 hours notice for the session that you missed. Students attending summer camp will have mandatory back door drop-off and pick-up. This does not include little guys, 18-30 months. Your Paw from the previous school year will be used. If you did not have a paw during the school year, you may pick up your paw at the front desk during the last week of class. Please make sure you have all forms filled out by the first day of camp.

Black Bear reserves the right to cancel a class due to insufficient enrollment. Minimum enrollment in all elective classes will be six students. Our summer program is available to non-Black Bear students. Due to unforeseen weather, Black Bear reserves the right to cancel any events or field trips due to weather and replace it with a different activity. (We don't mean a tiny bit of rain, or wind.)

The Executive Director, Maureen Black, reserves the right to require the withdrawal of any student whose conduct is unsatisfactory or appears unlikely to benefit from the camp. If the Executive Director makes this decision, a refund will be given for the remaining portion of the camp.

All Students are welcome to stay for lunch (for an additional fee of \$10.00) regardless of whether they are staying for an afternoon elective. Lunch occurs from 12:00 to 1:00. You provide lunch ingredients for your child and we will help them make it. Please remember NO NUTS.

Enrichment Camp

Jr. Enrichment (JRE) Camp is offered for students 5-6.5 years of age and our new Sr. Enrichment (SRE) Camp is offered for students 6- 10 years of age. This new program is intended for our past students and new students also, who would benefit from our multi-modal, global neurological approach. Our Sr. Enrichment is a new clinical program and designed to provide a "whole brain" neurological approach for older students attending other academic institution during the school year but requiring opportunities to enhance mastered and emerging skills practice in a small group environment facilitated by our Enrichment Team. The Black Bear approach to the continuation of global neurological enrichment in such an environment is intended to keep mastered skills at optimal levels while schedule changes occur throughout the school year by offering both late afternoon and summer social skills classes, executive

function projects, team building activities and peer to peer engagement in dyads and triads designed to enhance and enrich skill sets.

Extended Day

Should you choose to, additional course work is available in the afternoon ED Program. This allows for parents to choose a half-day or full day program. ED course work includes , Academic Rotation (7-8 weeks focusing on Math, Science, Handwriting and Reading), Physical Education, and Fine Arts. Students stay for lunch at 12:00 and have two classes following at 1:00 and 2:00. This program begins in September and ends in May following a separate Extended Day academic calendar.

Afternoon Elective Classes

AE classes are offered outside of the Extended Program for students that are not ready for a full day of school but would like to participate in afternoon classes. Students that are in class in the morning have the option of staying for 12:00 lunch. Sign up for AE happens the 5th week of the current session. Enrollment of our Elective Program is extended to the non-attending students.

Academic Tutoring:

By appointment only and for students requiring additional support for academic success in a variety of areas. Our tutoring program provides tutoring for students through eighth grade. Students receiving speech therapy may also receive tutoring services through Black Bear if determined to have therapeutic value and recommended by treating SLP only

Black Bear Supply List

Three's program, IKI, JK, SK, KP Transitions, TPS

Classroom Supplies:



- Plastic Bin (Shoe Box Size)
- Pencils (Pack of 10)
- Non-toxic Washable Markers (one pack)
- Crayons (pack of 16)
- Pack of 12 Glue Sticks
- Water Color Paints (1 set)
- Child Scissors
- Colored Pencils
- Small Pencil Sharpener
- Highlighters
- Personal Take Home Folder for homework, projects and parent communication.
- Backpack, initials on straps

All Programs

Cubby/Locker supplies: Please write the your child's initials on all personal materials

- 1 seasonally appropriate change of clothing
- 2 Pair of socks- **White** with initials

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2 Extra Underpants and/ or Diapers

1 Pair of Slippers for winter, initials on bottom of the sole

Any medications with a Doctor's note and clear instructions on when and how to use them.

School Supplies:

6 boxes of tissue-Families last names letters A through J

1 box of hand wipes-All families

1 pack of paper towels- Families last name letters K through Z

Snacks:

Beginning in our Academic program which includes IKI, JK, and SK we suggest that students bring their own snack. Snack time in this class is a time to practice manners, waiting out turn and an opportunity for peer engagement. Each student having their own snack helps to foster some autonomy while still in the group setting. Black Bear will have snacks available for those students who choose not to bring their own.

*Please remember that Black Bear Academy is nut free (this includes all nuts and peanut butter) facility to keep all of our students with allergies safe. If you send your child to school with any form of a nut product, it will be sent home.

Special Events:

Often during special events, such as our Valentine's Day Party, Halloween, Winter Holiday classes, different foods will be brought into the classroom. Our special events are facilitated by parent volunteers and a variety of foods/ decorations are brought into the classroom by special event parent volunteers. If your student has any dietary restrictions or food allergies, we will notify you who the event planner is as well as your room parent contact so that a substitution can be made for your student. It is our intention that every student join in the celebration!

Annual All School Events

Parent Orientation: occurs prior to the beginning of school and encourages parents to meet parents in their program as well as gain the necessary information regarding overall school expectations of Black Bear families.

Didier Farms: All school fieldtrip held in the fall and travel by school bus to this exciting pumpkin orchard where apple picking, pumpkin picking, rides, games and much more. It is one of our favorite school/family fieldtrips.

Halloween: an all school event that allows students and families to celebrate the spooktacular holiday. We have trick or treat inside the school along with a haunted house, program door decoration contests with family support, piñata and a halloweenie roast. FUN!!

Thanksgiving: In the spirit of thankfulness for all of our good fortune we use this as an opportunity to discuss community service, choice of Giving Tree charities, and to foster each student's ability to understand and to actively demonstrate compassion, empathy, and effort on behalf of others.

The Giving Tree Project: This begins December first and end January first. It is a month long effort on the parts of students, families and staff to support our charities of choice and have our students recognize

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how important their individual contribution is to help others in need. This project is a great way to open up discussions about diversity, cultural differences, and the power of one.

Dance Recitals: classes are offered quarterly with advancement towards higher levels of skill each successive session. Level four dancers celebrate at the end of the year where talents are displayed in the Spring Dance recital.

Winter Holidays: During the winter season we have holiday parties in the classroom, planned and carried out by our Room Parents and parent volunteers. Each year the younger students, our Three's program and below, hold mini concerts within their classrooms. Our academic program, which includes, IKI, JK, SK, and KP students, participate in our annual holiday concert, which is held in the evening, the week before the winter break.

Black Bear Fundraiser: Our annual fundraiser is held to raise money to help support our ongoing commitment to quality programming at the Academy. Black Bear Academy, while a for profit company, has significant fixed costs and an unwavering commitment to our small class size. We rely on the financial generosity of our parent community to maintain our small student to teacher ratios, support staff retention, provide quality continuing education for staff and develop our Academy Arts program. Without this support, tuition or class sizes will increase.

Valentine's Day: A favorite of our cubs, with the support of our parent volunteer community, parties are held in the classroom. The more traditional, the better, so save your shoe boxes for your Valentine's.

End of the Year School Picnic: This final all-school celebration for the year is held directly following the Senior Kindergarten graduation ceremony and on the last day of school. It is held at the La Bagh woods forest preserve and is fun for all.

Muffins for Mom: Celebrate Mother's day with a light brunch planned and carried out by your child's academic classroom. Students and their teachers in KP, IKI, JK, and SK prepare a special brunch for Mom. Plan to be treated and enjoy!

Academy Arts Theatre Productions. Performances are scheduled four times per year and are noted on your school calendar, at 6pm. Guests and family members are welcome to attend and productions will take place in our new Academy Arts space.

Scholastic Book Fair: A weeklong event that encourages reading and brings the community together to support the school. The event includes a special evening called Bedtime at Black Bear where both teachers and parents are guest readers and bedtime snacks abound. Two lucky teachers, voted in by students, become the final story readers of the evening when all age groups come together for their snacks and final reading. Everyone, yes parents too, where their pajama's to this event.

Saturday Dads: A bi-yearly Saturday morning event bringing children and their dads to the school for a morning of fun. This event is planned by the dads which includes coffee and bagels, games and sports and an opportunity for students to show Dad their classrooms, artwork, and school.

Information, Policy and Procedures

Accreditation:

Black Bear Academy does not seek the accreditation of external agencies or associations.

Memberships:

ASHA, ISHA, NAEYC, IAEYC, PIRI, CASNA, DIR Floortime Institute, Autism Speaks

Use of Technology:

Black Bear utilizes current technology to support our overall goals related to improving attention and engagement as a way to support learning at greater complexity levels. We currently have classroom computers in IKI, KP, JK and SK, two Smart Boards, three I-Pads, and the Wii Sports system. While used sparingly, we believe there is absolute value to utilizing technology as a tool that facilitates a child's desire to participate in the tasks at hand. With the various applications, academics and otherwise, the current technology has become another tool in our tool belt!

Parking:

Please follow all of the instructions of the staff member directing you.

Do not park in the alley under any circumstances prior to being waved in by staff member and when waved in pull as close to the building as you can and stop at the alley NOT the door.

Display your parking paw on your windshield anytime you are nearing the school. It must be seen from a distance. Remember "No Paw, No Pickup, Period!" Do Not ask for an exception.

All car seats should be on the right side. Do not leave your car to assist. Stay in your car. Cars with multiple children please have your drop off child in the right, behind the passenger seat, and your other child in the seat behind the driver. If they are both participating in drop off, we will manage.

Please do not engage staff in conversations at this time. Do feel free to call or email them.

Billing:

In order to reserve a space you must purchase that space.

No spaces will be held without payment under any circumstances

Payment for academic classes includes an initial payment of 25% of the annual tuition, including all applicable fees, once an offer of placement has been accepted. The remaining fees are due August 1st, November 1st and February 1st. Please note that you will be responsible for all fees regardless of your child's attendance once a space has been accepted.

We must have your current information in our Procure System and a credit/debit agreement in Tuition Express.

Please remember that any credit card on file requires the signature of the credit card holder authorizing payment.

We accept checks, cash, Visa and Master card.

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Payment documentation for insurance purposes will be provide by Black Bear Acaemy one time, either after every session/class or the END of every session in a 10 week format, (recommended). Both are by request but if we duplicate your receipts you will be charged 15 cents per duplication.

Current Families in our Language Enrichment and our Therapeutic programs re-enroll the fifth week of session one and session two with midyear enrollment for the remainder of the year occurring in January.

Birthday Celebrations

Celebrate your child's birthday at Black Bear! The package includes two hours in the gym. What a great opportunity for a social gathering to show off your child's school. We provide the space (the sensory gym!) and two staff for set-up and clean up, facilitate play throughout the party. You bring the cake and goodies and relax. Rules as follows:

Maximum of 15 students

The celebration will be staffed by two Black Bear staff members

Parents provide snacks, a cake, goodie bags, drinks, etc.

No alcoholic beverages allowed on site

Available to current students, siblings, and Black Bear Academy alumni.

Please call the reception desk for pricing information.

School Lunch Program

Black Bear offers lunch 5 days a week. We have a Montessori style lunch. We ask parents to pack a lunch and staff will help your students put the lunch together. Students are welcome to stay for lunch if they have a 1:00pm class or therapy.

Admission of New Families

The first step in the admission process is setting up a tour. Parent interested in the school can call the front desk to make an appointment. Group tours are given twice a month and by appointment only. We ask that children do not attend. Parents interested in our therapeutic program are given tours individually for privacy reasons. Upon completion of a tour, interested families fill out a Statement of Interest as well as an application and a medical history. Once these are completed, Black Bear will contact interested families to set up a Developmental Assessment (DA). The Developmental assessment is conducted by one of our staff Speech Pathologists. This assessment is given to ensure all students are placed in an appropriate class given his or her skill levels. If there are any clinical or developmental concerns noted by the Speech Pathologist, parents will be informed and requested to pursue a speech Language Evaluation. New families can enroll on a space availability basis or after current family enrollment the sixth week of every ten week session. If there is disagreement in the program or class recommended by the speech pathologist and the class or program desired by the family, preference will be given to clinical recommendations.

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New Family Orientation

Families who enroll in the program mid-year, or any families that wish to re-orient themselves to the program, are invited to the New Family Orientation. The program director, Maureen Black, will discuss the program, go over the handbook, and take questions. New Family Orientation takes place on Thursdays from 5:30-6:30. The first New Family Orientation occurs the first week after the start of the Academic calendar. All NFOs to follow will occur on the second week of every new session.

Re-enrollment for current students

Enrollment for current students takes place the fifth week of every session. During this time, parents are able to add days or switch days if there is availability. Enrollment for the first session of the school year takes place during week five of session four of the previous school year. Enrollment for current students seeking an academic position for the following year requires parent to fill out an application by the second week of November. Once all the applications have been processed parents will receive a letter regarding admittance for the next year in January.

Contacting Staff:

If you have any questions regarding the above information, please contact your child's teacher. All Black Bear Academy teachers can be emailed by email:

First initial, lastname@blackbearacademy.com, i.e.,
mblack@blackbearacademy.com

Front Desk

Change of Contact Info

If your family has a change of address, phone numbers, email addresses, caregivers, or credit cards, please alert the front desk staff and they will send you a change of information form.

Required Forms

- Medical History
- Application
- Liability Waivers
- Initialed Backdoor Policy
- Travel Consent
- Credit consents
- Media release forms

Safety photos

Safety photos are requested from all Black Bear families and must include both parents, the student, anyone permitted to pick up or drop off your child. You may email photos to

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safetyphotos@blackbearacademy.com or turn them into the reception desk. Your child will NOT be permitted to leave with any persons, regardless of relationship, without photos on file.

Parent Volunteers

Parent volunteers help create to the success of a school. Here at Black Bear, parents are welcome into the school! Our students truly enjoy having a parent volunteer in their class. We have numerous volunteer opportunities throughout the year to fit whatever interest you may have. If you do not see a volunteer opportunity that peaks your interest please let a staff member know and we would be happy to find something for your interests!

The Black Bear parent volunteer community meets the first Wednesday of every month at 9:15a.m. These meetings are a great time to volunteer to help with one of the school events for the year as well as meet other parents interested in volunteering. Beyond the monthly meetings, committees for specific events meet in order to organize. These committee heads are often decided at the regular monthly meetings.

Parent Mentor Program

Black Bear's Parent Mentor program is a volunteer program. Members of the Parent Mentor program are trained regarding the school and the tour procedures. Mentors take prospective families on tours of the school on a monthly basis. This is a great opportunity for prospective families to get an inside view of the program. Parent Mentors are able to choose the amount of tours they give throughout the year.

Room Moms

Room moms take the lead for classroom volunteers. They are the head parent and contact the other parents when things need to be accomplished. They will often email regarding upcoming events and areas Black Bear needs volunteer support. Room moms work closely with the volunteer coordinator throughout the school year regarding school events.

Play Sessions

Black Bear Academy offers play sessions for all students seeking one-on-one play support with a staff member. Play sessions are 45 minutes to an hour long. Families can choose to have play sessions be one-on-one or with one additional child.

In General

- Please be prompt when bringing your child to and picking him/her up from class. Our staff is very busy throughout the day and unable to sit with your child if you drop him/her off too early or pick him/her up too late. For each minute, after 10 minutes provided we have received notice, you will be charged \$1.00 per minute thereafter. We would prefer that you be on time but if not, you will be charged accordingly.
- Black Bear does not have a potty-training age requirement. Our philosophy is: your child won't be going to college in diapers – it will happen when it happens. Let us know how we can help.

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- Our teachers all have four year degrees in applicable studies and most have their Early Childhood Education Degree. You may or may not have the same teacher each session. Partly by design and partly due to staffing, teachers may change session to session but in each session, barring unexpected staffing changes, your child's teachers will stay the same.
- Please be on time for the end of class good-bye song. Our Lil' lil' Guys love running out of class to show mom, dad, and caregivers their projects and talk about class. If you are not there, the "15 minutes of fame" has been lost.
- Please call 24 hours in advance to let us know if your child will not be attending class or therapy. Advanced notice is recommended so we can offer another child your spot for a make-up class. ***24 hour notice is required*** in order for your child to make-up that missed class.
- While we love having our families using our facilities when their children are in class, we ask that siblings do not play in the classrooms or private therapy rooms, even if the students, teachers and therapists are out of the room or if class is over. Please use the toys and the designated play areas in the lobby. Please remember if your child mouths toys to put them in the designated "dirty toy bag" to be washed. You can find these black net bags attached to the wall in the lobby area.
- We have purposely set up our lobby like a home and love seeing all of you use it as we intended- by getting comfortable. Mornings are a busy time at Black Bear and there is usually little staff available to monitor the lobby area. So, if you have a spill or a mess that you need assistance with, please let staff know so we can take care of it. Please remember to pick up crackers, cookies, sippy cups, etc. so that other children in the lobby do not have access to your child's snacks. Many of our children have severe allergies that are triggered by touching or ingesting these foods. We are a NO Nuts school so please do not bring these types of snacks to Black Bear.
- If you have a question or concern related to a program policy, please let our Executive Director know. While the therapists, teachers, and assistants are actively engaged with your child, those questions can only be answered by our Director.
- Parking for Black Bear is located off the alley behind our building in the gravel parking lot. Please use the designated spots which are marked "Black Bear Parking." Let this serve as notice that if you park in a space not designated for Black Bear, you run the risk of your car being towed.
- If your child is sick, please do not bring them to school. We want to keep everyone as healthy as possible! If they have ANY fever above 98.7, they will be sent home. Remember GREEN does not mean go at black Bear.
- Black Bear does not supply extra clothing or diaper-changing supplies (diapers/pull-ups, wipes, ointments) for students. Parents must provide diapers/wipes, insect repellent (no DEET), sunscreen (please apply at home/before school), and a seasonally-appropriate change of clothing. Please include two of each clothing item (two pairs of pants, two shirts, etc.) Please make sure to label all personal belongs with your child's name. Please be sure to include extra white socks as they will NOT be allowed to play in the gym without them.

Payments: 25% of the total tuition plus fees is due to hold your child's space in an upcoming session for all of our programs. Payment in full is due on week prior to beginning of each session in order to hold your child's space. Your space **is not** reserved until your payment is made. **No refunds will be given after a space has been reserved for your child.** Time lost through absence or illness can be made up in another class if space is available and occurs within the same session.

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Refunds and Cancellations: Refunds or credits will not be issued for absences due to illness or taking a child out of class for **any** reason once that space has been purchased. Time lost through absence or illness can be made up in another LE class only, if space is available, and if make-up occurs within the same session. Our front desk must be notified prior to child's absence. Make-up classes are offered as a courtesy to families but are not guaranteed as part of the program. Individual Speech Therapy appointments, tutoring, enrichment sessions and play sessions must be cancelled 24 hours in advance or a late cancellation fee of \$25 will be charged or the cost of the session if that cost is less than \$25.00. All payments are due at the time service is provided. We do not bill insurance companies but will be happy to provide you with a statement of services.

The Basics

Holidays

Closing: Black Bear is closed for major holidays should they occur on a school day. These holidays are: MLK Day, Labor Day, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving and the following Friday, Christmas Day, New Years Day, and July 4th.

We are a non-denominational private school.

Video Camera's

Video cameras are connected to all classrooms located on the first floor. You are invited to observe your student in their class.

Lost and Found

The Lost and Found is located in the coat area across from the front desk. If you do not find something you have lost, please ask the front desk and we will try to locate this item for you.

Arrival and Dismissal

School Hours: Class times vary according to the age and program. You are invited to arrive fifteen minutes prior to the start of class but no sooner as we do not have the staff availability to ensure your child's safety..

Back door: Students in the 3's program, KP, IKI, JK and SK programs are welcome to take advantage of our Backdoor and Morning Arrival Procedures (details and diagram)/Back Door. Remember: No Paw, No pick-up, Period!

Reporting an Absence

Please report all absences to the front desk as soon as possible. You can call 773-244-0700 in order to report an absence. We check messages every morning so families can report a sick child at any time.

Family Vacations

If you are planning a family vacation, please let the front desk know the dates you will be missing. This will allow us to let teachers know of an absent student. Please call the front desk 773-244-0700.

Emergency School Closing

Black Bear has historically not closed in the past due to weather. In the rare event that Black Bear should need to close, you will receive an email, a phone call from a staff member, it will be posted on our website and our business line will have this information on our answering machine.

Field Trips

Academic students will go on a few field trips throughout the school year. Travel waivers are required to students to participate. Students will ride yellow school buses to these events and be assigned to a chaperone. Black Bear T-shirts are required.

First Aid

In every case, first aid will be administered prior to contacting families. First Aid will include basic wound care and/or emergency medical care if necessary.

Emergency Contact Information

Please make sure that the front desk has accurate phone numbers and contact information for both family members, physicians, and hospital of choice in the case of an emergency.

Health Emergencies

Your child's teacher or another staff member will contact you immediately if a medical emergency were to occur after 911 has been called and emergency medical care has been initiated.

Allergy Policy

Parent Responsibilities: Parents are responsible to report any and all known allergies. If your child requires an epi-pen please provide one for use at school and any specific instructions for staff. It is your responsibility to ensure the provided epi-pen is within the given expiration date and that staff has been made aware of all potential threats.

Chronic Medical Conditions

Please be sure to accurately complete our medical history form and include any chronic medical conditions that may impact your child's participation at Black Bear. Additionally, inform the front desk and your child's teacher of any chronic medical conditions they should be aware of if newly diagnosed.

Contagious Diseases-When to Stay Home

Please notify Black Bear Academy immediately if your child is diagnosed with an infectious disease or illness. Do not send them to school without physician documentation that they are able to return to school and are no longer contagious to others. Please refer to the Center for Disease Control's website for information about common childhood illnesses and when to keep your child home.

DRAFT

Please feel free to contact **Maureen Black, Executive Program Director** regarding any concerns or questions at mblack@blackbearacademy.com

Business Office hours: Monday-Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

Phone/Fax: 773-244-0700(p) and 773-244-0200(f)

School Website: www.blackbearacademy.com

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Hand, Foot, and Mouth

Symptoms: A large number of small spots and blisters particularly in the mouth, feet, and hands. The Disease can cause a slight fever for a few days

Treatment: As with most disease causing a fever, it's important to make sure that the child gets plenty of fluids. If the ulcers in their mouth are severe, it may help to mash up the child's food.

Incubation period: Two to three days between being exposed to the infection and showing symptoms.

Infectious period: The disease is contagious as long as blisters or spots are still present. The child should be able to return to school once they the symptoms have disappeared.

How is it spread? The disease is spread through direct contact with the discharge from the infected person's nose or throat, or with feces.

Pinworms

What are pinworms? Pinworms are small, white worms that live in the intestines. Pinworm infections are common in young children and are easily treated.

Symptoms: Your child may frequently scratch his or her bottom. You child may also move around a lot in bed at night, or may not be able to sleep. The itching is caused by the female pinworm that comes out of the rectum to lay eggs around the anus. The eggs stay in the upper part of the intestine until they hatch. After the eggs hatch, the worms move down the length of the intestine and then out of the anus where they lay more eggs.

Incubation period: pinworms are contagious and easily spread from child to child. Pinworms can be picked up on your child's hands and spread. Pinworms can survive up to three weeks on clothes, bedding, and toys.

Treatment: Infections are mild and easily treated. Your doctor may prescribe a single chewable tablet of medicine called Mebendazole. A second tablet is taken about three weeks later if the infection has not been cured. It is recommended that all family members be treated, regardless of whether only one child is infected.

Be sure to wash all soft household items, countertops, and carefully clean everyone's fingernails.

Fifth's Disease

Symptoms: A child has red specks on his/her cheeks, nose, arms, thighs, and bottom

Can last up to 14 days and rarely causes a fever. It is mostly seen in children between the ages of four and twelve.

Treatment: Cannot be treated but disappears by itself. Typically a mild illness.

Incubation period: Two weeks between being exposed to the infection and showing symptoms.

Infectious period: Once the rash appears, the disease is no longer infectious.

How is it spread? Fifth's disease spreads easily from person to person through fluids from the nose, mouth, and throat of someone with the infection

Please do not send your child to school if they are exhibiting signs of any illness. Please call your doctor or refer to the Center for Disease Control (cdc.gov).

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