



## Early Childhood Education Program FAQ's

### **What are the Early Childhood Education Program hours?**

Our regular Full-Day hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. We offer Extended-Day hours from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. for a limited number of families at an extra cost. If we have more families interested than we have slots available for Extended-Day hours, there will be a lottery to determine who can attend during this timeframe.

### **What program options are available?**

#### SIX-HOUR

The Six-Hour program begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m.

#### FULL-DAY

Our Full-Day option allows for arrivals and departures at any time between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

#### EXTENDED-DAY

Our Extended-Day option allows for arrivals between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. and is available for a limited number of families at an extra cost.

#### MIXED-AGE AND TODDLER CLASSROOMS

Our toddler rooms serve children between the ages of 16 months and 3 years. Our preschool and pre-k rooms are mixed-age rooms for children 3-5 years old. If your child turns 3 on or before October 1, they are eligible to be in our mixed-aged rooms for the summer and/or school year sessions.

#### SCHEDULED DAYS

We offer two-, three-, and five-day-per-week schedules. The two-day per week schedules are offered on a limited basis and only if we can match it with another child's schedule.

### **What are the benefits of mixed-age classrooms?**

As an inclusive childcare setting, we understand that all children develop at different rates, regardless of physical, emotional, cognitive, or social differences. Our goal is to meet each child's developmental strengths and needs by optimizing their relationships with teachers and their peers. To optimize the potential to learn from their peers, each classroom will have children who range in age: Toddlers will be 16 months to 3 years old; preschoolers will be 3-5 years old.

### **What is looping?**

Looping is the process of keeping children with the same teachers over multiple years. Toddlers will have one teaching team until they move to preschool. After transitioning to preschool, children have the same teaching team for two years and on their third year will transition to a new classroom. This allows children to practice a transition in a safe environment before moving onto Kindergarten. Looping allows our teachers to build deeper relationships with children and families and intentionally tailor the classroom environment to the needs of each child. Looping also provides a great benefit to children's peer relationships as they build community, learn from one another, and maintain friendships as they age. If individual or program needs warrant a transition in teaching teams, ECE Program specialists, supervisors, and teachers work closely with families to plan transitions and build relationships with new peers and staff.

### **Will my child be provided with snacks and lunch?**

St. David's Center will provide your child with nutritious mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks. Parents will need to provide a healthy lunch for their child. St. David's Center will provide milk with lunch and snacks.

### **My child currently attends ECE. When should I apply?**

Current families must complete a Current Child Application, and a New Child Application for any siblings, by **January 13, 2025** to have priority placement over incoming families.

### **I am a new family. When should I apply?**

New families can access the application beginning January 3, 2025. Our enrollment team may contact you to learn more about your child.

### **Do you require any hold fees to secure enrollment?**

For all new families, to guarantee your child's enrollment, we require a deposit of 50% of one month's tuition for each child attending. The enrollment deposit is non-refundable and due March 14. Once attending ECE, your enrollment deposit will go toward your first month of tuition in ECE.

### **What are your enrollment decisions based on?**

Our enrollment decisions are based on many factors including time of application, space in the classroom, age, our commitment to lower ratios, and the level of need and dynamics in each classroom.

We are committed to creating balanced classrooms that allow every child to be successful. We currently target 20-30% of each classroom's enrollment capacity to be for children who need some type of additional support.

### **What happens if I am placed on the waitlist?**

We keep a waitlist throughout the year, and we will notify you if a spot opens for your child. Because we strive to create a balanced classroom, waitlist placement is only one factor we consider when deciding how to fill an opening. We also consider age, gender, and the level of need and dynamics in the classroom. Because of these variables, we are unable to give an exact idea of your child's waitlist placement.

### **What is Inclusion?**

Inclusion is one of St. David's Center's core values. Inclusion means children of all abilities learn alongside each other in our classrooms. As leaders in inclusion, we know children make greater developmental gains when they learn together in the same environment. Children with special needs make greater progress when included with their typically developing peers, and typically developing children make greater progress, as they have increased opportunities for leadership, empathy, and compassion. An inclusive classroom helps children gain an appreciation of diversity and encourages them to become more confident and comfortable with peers of all abilities. At St. David's Center, we believe children are set up for success when they are learning and playing alongside children of diverse abilities, races, ethnicities, and backgrounds.

Our classrooms focus heavily on social-emotional development, which is the cornerstone for all development and the greatest indicator of later success. We believe all children have something unique to offer, and we believe in celebrating differences. In learning about others, children gain a better understanding of themselves and their own strengths and needs.

### **How does inclusion work at St. David's Center?**

Our classrooms maintain a careful balance between the specific gifts and the unique needs of each child to provide the specialized care and attention that makes our program unique, with each room staffed by three teachers who support all children's needs. Children who have diagnoses, receive pediatric therapies, and/or who have an IFSP or IEP through the school district have a care plan that includes collaboration between the teaching staff and other relevant providers.

While our program is inclusive, with our current child/teacher ratios and program structure, we are unable to support children when there are continued safety concerns for the children and teachers in the classroom. Examples of this would include children who are unable to stay with the group and children who display physical aggression that is not responsive to classroom strategies. The larger St David's Center Organization has additional programs to support children who would benefit from a different learning environment or require more one on one support. Our care coordinator can help facilitate those connections.

### **What does Inclusion look like in your classrooms?**

The inclusive nature of our classrooms means our teachers affectively differentiate their instruction for all abilities and learning styles through our curriculum, the set-up of the classroom environment, the materials offered, and the daily routines. Our classrooms are filled with resources and tools that all children have access to and that support our children's individual needs throughout the day. In addition, daily routines are consistent and created with developmentally appropriate practices in mind. For example, transitions and wait times are limited, and children are given options for how they want to participate during group times to increase learning and engagement.

Common resources found in our classrooms include:

- Alone zones (calming spaces).
- Noise-cancelling headphones.
- Stretchy bands.
- Chew tubes.
- Wiggle seats.
- Cube chairs.
- Rifton chairs.
- Weighted lap blankets.
- Various small fidget items.
- Bubbles (for hand-eye coordination and calming).
- Social stories.
- Visual schedules.
- Visual timers.

### **What is your teacher-to-child ratio?**

Our program is committed to maintaining lower child-to-staff ratios to foster each child's social and emotional development, cognitive development, communication and language skills, and higher social competence. These lower ratios help build strong, healthy, and quality interactions between teachers and children.

- **Toddlers:** Our toddler-to-teacher ratios are approximately 1:5, and our toddler classrooms will not exceed 14 children with three teachers.
- **Mixed-Age:** Preschool/pre-k ratios are approximately 1:8. Our mixed-aged rooms have no more than 17 children with two teachers and a third teacher during certain portions of the day.

**What curriculum do you use?**

We use the High Scope Curriculum in our program, and our classroom environments are inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy. We also leverage the expertise of our leadership team and staff by incorporating their knowledge of how to support children with varying needs into our curriculum. Our teaching staff use the High Scope Curriculum to create weekly lesson plans based on all the children's interests, strengths, and areas of need. They use pictures and documentation to ensure children are making progress across all areas of development and working toward identified goals. Our low student-to-teacher ratio allows all children to receive more individualized attention.