



## Welcome

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Welcome to South Shore Children's Center. We take pride and pleasure that you have decided to join our community of learners. Early Childhood Education is a fundamental part of growth and development. As your child grows and changes, we grow and change to match the developmental readiness of your child's needs. Our goal is to create an environment of learning that provides your family with a strong foundation for the school age years. Whether you are joining our community in the infant stage or coming for the first time as a preschooler, you will experience a level of expertise and satisfaction knowing your child will be appropriately engaged throughout the day in meaningful, center-based learning as well as cared for in a safe and healthy environment.

## Reading This Handbook

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This handbook is a tool for you to understand the policy and procedures of our school. It is meant as a guide for all of us to follow, and answer questions that are most asked. Please take the time to read through the information, and if you have any other questions please don't hesitate to ask.

## Contact Information

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## Learning Levels and Program Offerings

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### General Information and Program History

South Shore Children’s Center is an Early Childhood Education and Care facility licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Service. Our program complies with all state regulations which can be found on the New York State OCFS website. Established in 2002, the program has grown to include all aspects of Early Childhood Education. We service children from birth to age 5/6. Our focus is on developmentally appropriate practice which is delivered by a research-based curriculum for early learners. Each level of learning is unique. Our main calendar aligns with school age districts from September-June. Our summer calendar is camp based, and flexible around the individual needs of families and runs mid-June through August.

### FULL DAY Education and Care and Admission

Sessions are 8:30am-4pm with early drop (6am-8am) and late pick up (4pm-6pm) options available

**Infant**                      5 day sessions only

**Two Year Old**            2/3/5 day sessions

    \*Tiny Twos (18month- 22months)

    \*Little Twos (20month-23month)

    \*Big Twos (Must turn 24 months by December 1 of each school calendar year)

**Three Year Old**        3/5 day sessions

\*Pre-School (Must be 3 years old by December 1 of each school calendar year)

**Four Year Old** 3/5 day sessions

\*Pre-Kindergarten (must be 4 years old by December 1 of each Calendar year)

## **HALF DAY Education and Admission**

**Two Year Old** 2 or 3 day

AM class 8:30am-11am

\*Big Two (must be 24 months by December 1 of each calendar year)

**Three Year Old** 2/3/5 day

2 or 3 day AM class 8:30am-11:30am or

5 day AM class 9:00-11:30 or

5 day PM 12:30-3:00

\*Pre-School (must turn 3 by December 1 of each calendar year)

## **Continuity of Care and Instruction**

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The program is designed to assign students to a class and set of teachers that will be consistent for the duration of our school year calendar. The school calendar aligns with the public-school calendar of the East Islip School District. This 10-month period extends from, September through June. The exception to this model can sometimes occur in the infant room with children who age out of that level midyear. An infant who reaches the 18month mark will transition to our Tiny Two's room. If your child is identified as a mid-year transition child, we will work with parents and students to acclimate them to the new environment through scheduled immersion periods in the new room 2 weeks prior to the move date.

## Schedules, Holiday, and Closings

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The center is closed on the following holidays for all staff and students: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day +1, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day + 1, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

The Center is closed for regular programming during the school breaks according to the East Islip School District Calendar which typically consist of 3 weeks: Holiday Break, Winter Break and Spring Break. However, we will operate Mini Camp sessions during these weeks for families who need continuous care. These weeks are not part of your regular monthly tuition, and you must sign up and pay for them separately. Mini Camp enrollment will be sent home one month prior to the camp.

**10-month Registration:** Tuition only includes School Year services September-June. Tuition is billed in ten monthly payments. June is payment #1. September-May is payment 2-10. Mini camps and Summer camp weeks can be added. This is the most flexible option for families who do not need care year-round.

**12-month Registration:** Available for FULL Day students ONLY. Tuition Includes School Year services, Mini-camp services and all ten weeks of Summer camp services. Tuition billed in 12 equal installments and is a flat rate billed the first of each month from June through May. This is the most cost-effective option for families who must have service year-round.

Additionally, the school will close for a short period of time between the end of our Summer camp session and the beginning of the new School Year session for facility maintenance.

### Incllement weather

The school will close during snow events that close the East Islip School District. If the district calls for a snow day, we must close to allow the grounds crew to clear snow and ensure safety for all. We will notify you by email, our website, as well as our social media pages on Facebook and Instagram.

## Daily Operations and Policies

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Please note all registration paperwork must be returned in a timely manner to be compliant with our registration process. Immunization, medical and release information is of high priority and students will be disenrolled for missing documents.

**On or around August 15<sup>th</sup>** you will receive a new school year packet via mail that will include all the information you will need to start off a successful school year. This information will include drop off procedures, pick up procedures, room/teacher assignments, teacher welcome letter, supply list, and a tip sheet for help with transitioning issues and separation anxiety. You will also receive a school calendar with our visiting day schedule. Visiting day will occur right before the start of the school year and is your opportunity to come and meet the teacher with your child, see the classroom, and drop off supplies. This meet and greet will be a short but valuable visit to start the year with positive expectations.

**Drop Off and Pick Up.** Children arrive at the designated drop off point where a staff member (usually the classroom teacher or assistant) will receive them. They will be checked in on our attendance book and a health check assessment will be noted. Please do not use this time for individual student need discussions, as we will need to be efficient in student arrival. If you need to discuss a particular issue, please include a note in the folder or send the teacher an electronic message. Pick up will occur at the same door that you dropped off at. Anyone picking up students must be on the authorized pick-up list included in your registration packet. Photo ID must be brought and produced on demand for anyone not known to the staff. This ID will be copied and cross-checked with our records.

**Timely Pick Up.** Please be sure to pick up your child according to the program time you have selected. Our staffing needs are built upon the needs of the learning community as expressed in your registration paperwork. Our compliance ratios must always be maintained. Please call the office if you will be late picking up at your contracted time. Continuous lateness will be flagged for a change in program/tuition.

**Tuition Payments.** Tuition is due between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month. Tuition rates are based on a YEARLY tuition amount that is divided equally between either 10 payments or 12 payments depending upon the program you select (see schedule section). There is no credit or make up days provided for sick days or family vacations. Preferred method of payment is by credit/debit authorization form found in your follow up registration packet. This allows us to auto bill you on the first of each month and is the most efficient way to manage our expenses. Payment in the form of check, money order, or cash is submitted to the office between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month clearly marked with your child's name. Late payments and returned checks will be subjected to a \$25 fee.

**Withdrawing from the Center.** You must provide a 30-day notice to withdraw from the program. Accounts will be reconciled within the 30-day period and no further tuition will be collected after the 30-day period.

**Managing student behavior.** We firmly believe in positive role model, redirection, and language development and reinforcement in all matters pertaining to behavior. Every student and staff member has the right to enjoy a safe and positive classroom environment. Students who cannot conduct themselves in a manner conducive to a productive atmosphere will be referred to our school specialist for behavior modification strategies and plans to correct the negative actions. We will communicate our needs and work directly with parents to address concerns as needed. In some cases, we may refer the child for further evaluation and assessment. On the rare occasion that students pose a danger to themselves, other students, or teachers, those students will need to seek alternative placement that will better suit the child's needs. We will assist in this process.

**Supervision.** Students are supervised by a Lead Teacher and a Teaching Assistant. Full day rooms will have an additional TA assigned to the room to insure proper coverage for staff lunch breaks, and Professional development meetings, as well as staff absences. This ensures that the continuity of care continues in each room with familiar staff presence. Ratio of staff to student is in accordance with the OCFS regulation determined by age level.

**Health.** Our facility is a WELL FACILITY. This means students who are in school must be free of fever, virus, vomiting, diarrhea, excessive coughing/running nose with discolored mucus. If children begin displaying these signs of illness in program, we will contact you to arrange for them to be picked up. Parents should notify the school if you are keeping sick children home. Children must be fever free for 48 hours in order to return to school. We are a MAT certified school, which means we can administer prescription medication with the proper documentation submitted to our health compliance manager. Our health care plan is available to review in the director's office. All medical records including immunizations and physicals must be up to date.

**Allergies.** Students with known allergies must be identified to the school through our registration process and student questionnaire. Students who require emergency medication be kept on hand, such as EpiPen for anaphylaxis, MUST contact the health coordinator to obtain the forms that will need to be submitted by you and your treating physician.

**Child Abuse.** We are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse. If we suspect a child is being abused, we will contact Child Protective Services and file a report. We will follow the protocols and procedures under New York State Law.

**Confidentiality.** Our records regarding your child including any identifying information, assessments, and custodial information are confidential and will not be shared with anyone other than authorized state agencies. Records are maintained in the school office and may not be removed by staff.

**Emergency Evacuation.** If an emergency occurs that forces us to evacuate the premises the following steps will occur: 1. Students will be evacuated to one of 3 sites identified in our safety plan, 2. Parents will be notified via phone and/or email as to the nature of the emergency, 3. Students will return to the center if the emergency is resolved, 4. If the emergency is not resolved, parents will be notified to pick the child up from the evacuation location by an authorized pick up person with Photo ID required.

**Fire Drills/Shelter in Place Drills.** These are conducted routinely. Details of the drills are kept in our safety log for state review and compliance.

**Security.** All visitors must report to the main entrance door for admittance into the school. Visitors will present ID and a reason for entering (i.e. speech therapist, SEIT, etc.). All entry doors are locked and inaccessible for entry. Security personnel are provided to the building and routinely patrol the area.

**Meals.** Meals such as breakfast and lunch for full-day students are provided by you. Please pack items in a lunch box with a cold pack to keep items fresh. Please provide items your child likes to eat. Meals should include a well-balanced nutritious food selection and a drink. We do not have facilities to heat or cook food. Please do not include hard carrots, whole grapes, hard fruit (apples cut into bite size slices are acceptable) or popcorn. All items should be labeled with your child's name.

**Outdoor Play.** Outdoor play is a required period according to state regulations. Weather permitting, we will offer outdoor activities throughout the day. Please dress your child accordingly. Sneakers are the preferred footwear. Absolutely no flip flop type sandals (including CROCS) are permitted for children or adults.

**Communication:** We have many ways for you to communicate with the school and with the teacher depending upon the circumstances of your needs. The teacher will establish her preferred communication tool for you. If you need to contact the school administration, please call directly 631-581-1234 or email [s.eastislip@aol.com](mailto:s.eastislip@aol.com). Additionally, each class will receive a weekly newsletter full of specific classroom happenings to foster the school-home connection. The school will send out a monthly newsletter with a curriculum calendar and school news items. Additionally, you will receive school-wide emails in between the newsletters as needed.

**Daily Care Sheets:** Infant through Toddlers receive daily individualized communication using our daily care sheets. This tool details caregiving routines such as feeding, sleeping, diapering/toileting as well as a place for teacher/parent communication. A copy is sent home each day, and a copy remains in the classroom to allow continuity of care and consistency between caregivers.

**Parent /Teacher Meetings:** will be offered in January and June for our 3's and 4's. This meeting will review your child's assessment portfolio which will include formal screenings using the Brigance Early Childhood screening tool as well as informal authentic work products and tasks created by your child. These tools help us to inform our instruction, individualize your child's learning plan, measure growth, and set new goals for each student. Assessment material is confidential and held securely by the teacher.

**Brigance Screening:** This early childhood screening tool is administered 3 times a year to 3- and 4-year-olds by the program service specialist. The initial screen is used as a baseline assessment snapshot for each student. From that snapshot, goals can be set as well as identification of students who may show gaps in developmental growth. Data is secured in our Brigance portal system and shared with families during teacher conference meetings. Students identified as English Language Learners will be given accommodations to meet the need of assessment in his/her home language.

**Staff Qualifications:** Each staff member meets or exceeds the standards outlined by the Office of Children and Family Service to perform the duties of their job description. Our Lead PreK teachers have NYS certifications, CDA credentials, a bachelor's and/ or Master's degree in early childhood education or a related field of study. Teaching assistants have a variety of credentials also ranging from NYS certification to CDA credentials to work with the specific age they are assigned.

**Diversity and Inclusion and admission policy:** We do not discriminate based on race, culture, religion, lifestyle or gender. Every family, student, and staff member are a welcome member of our learning community and treated with respect and equality. Admission to the program is met when all required documents are submitted, and financial obligations are in good standing. Children with disabilities are educated alongside peers in blended groups offering support services to those who qualify. Students identified by the Committee of Preschool Special Education as a student with a disability or other classification will have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) created by the committee. This plan should be shared with us by parents to help us inform the student's instruction, review the assessment results and classroom observation notes to modify lesson planning, and provide accommodations to meet the goals outlined in the plan. Our school specialist will work directly with parents to facilitate this process. Every effort is made to accommodate ELL learners in their home language.

**Parent Involvement:** We believe in partnering with our parents to build a triangle approach of school, home, and family. Parents and visitors will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities throughout the year including classroom events, special person day, holiday celebrations, guest readers, and parent occupation days. Parents are welcome to suggest a



special visit to share talents or interests with the class. An example may be a parent who can play guitar, bake a treat, knit or craft, etc.

**Transitions:** There are a variety of transition events that children will go through during the early years. Our staff is well trained in providing support for the children and parents who experience periods of change.

Separation anxiety is a common form of transitional experiences we see with our students. We will work with families to create a safe, secure environment and help children become familiar with their new surroundings. Our experience shows us that once we develop trust and a relationship with your child, the anxiety will diminish and eventually disappear. We know that tears and frustration are bound to happen but find that the more positive and resolved you are with your child about their new situation, the easier it will become for them to relax.

Transitions within the program. At times, children may need to move from one age to another due to age limitations. We limit these moves by providing a continuity of care method of grouping children by relative birthdates with each other. This insures the students and children stay consistent throughout early childhood years. Cohorts of children move through the program together. If your child needs to move from one class to another during the school year, we will develop an individualized transfer plan to adjust your child to the new environment and teacher.

Teacher changes could also happen throughout the year. This is a rare occurrence, but could happen due to health needs, maternity leaves or other personal events. We will always keep the support staff the same in the room while introducing a new teacher. This will support the continuity of care needed while addressing the needs of a new team.

Our program ends at age 5/6 and children “graduate” from Pre-K to kindergarten. Our PreK teachers will start discussing this change with the children in May and June. We will collaborate with local school districts as needed and provide information regarding Kindergarten screenings. We will hold a formal graduation ceremony every June to celebrate your new K child and give closure to the Early Childhood Experience they have had with us. We are positive and upbeat with the children as they head off to the “big kid school”!

## Age Specific Requirements and Daily Schedule Outline

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Each Age level has different requirements and management tools used to meet the developmentally appropriate practice standards required when working with children. The

daily schedules outlined below are a framework of what you should minimally expect to assume happens each day with your child. When planning classroom curriculum for young children, it is important to factor in the wide spectrum of abilities and interests of children, as well as activities that are based on the way in which we know children learn. We offer approaches to best assist children in reaching their full potential.

### **Infants 3months to 18months**

- Daily opportunity to move as supervised in an indoor and/or outdoor setting
- Exercise will include tummy time, free exploration, use of soft but stable climbing apparatus, engaging toy manipulatives meant to encourage gross motor development
- Feeding, napping schedule on demand or at individualized family instruction
- Written daily care sheets detailing feeding, napping, diaper changing and notes
- Music time
- Language development through singing, games, direct caregiver interaction
- Tender Care and early Learning Curriculum HIGHSCOPE

### **Toddlers 18months to 36months**

- Daily opportunity for structured play indoor and outdoor through scheduled playground time, indoor music and gross motor blocks and indoor free play. Opportunities include Outside: playground apparatus, field play with balls, parachutes, bubbles and chalk, various organized child friendly games such as kickball and running bases. Indoor: Music and dance, balance beam and low climbers, interactive follow along games.
- Daily opportunity for indoor free exploration of activities most interested in.
- Circle Time activities to introduce a structured meeting time. Students engage in hands on teacher led activities to build listening skills, following directions and attention span stamina and language development.
- Art Time, Center Time, Story Time, Housekeeping, Blocks and Legos, Creative Play
- Meals are served together, and children start learning self-help/feeding skills
- Napping and rest time
- Gross Motor and Music Movement
- More outdoor play!
- Tender Care and Early Learning Curriculum HIGHSCOPE

### **Preschool 3-year-olds**

- Daily opportunities for structured and unstructured play both indoor and outdoor through scheduled playground time, indoor music and gross motor blocks and indoor

free play. Opportunities include Outside: playground apparatus, field play with balls, parachutes, bubbles and chalk, various organized child friendly games such as kickball and running bases. Indoor: Music and dance, balance beam and low climbers, interactive follow along games

- Developmentally appropriate skill building activities focused on fine motor skills, letter and number recognition, prewriting skills, social and emotional skills, self help skills, language development and cognition.
- Art time, Story time, Center time, Housekeeping, Blocks and Legos, Creative Play, free exploration, imagination stations, playhouse and science activities.
- Meals are served together with children mastering self help skills and table etiquette
- Napping and rest time
- Gross Motor and Music Movement
- Transitioning from Parallel Play to Cooperative Play
- Small group activities based on interest offering choices and flexibility
- The HIGHSCOPE Preschool Curriculum

#### **Pre-Kinder 4-year-olds**

- Daily opportunities for structured and unstructured play both indoor and outdoor through scheduled playground time, indoor music and gross motor blocks and indoor free play. Opportunities include Outside: playground apparatus, field play with balls, parachutes, bubbles and chalk, various organized child friendly games such as kickball and running bases. Indoor: Music and dance, balance beam and low climbers, interactive follow along games
- Developmentally appropriate activities that encourage active learning through participation in center based, small group activities
- Emergent reading and pre-writing direct instruction in large and small group settings using Foundations
- Hands on STEM activities
- Open ended art, Free exploration of math and manipulatives, Print rich environment, playhouse, Library, social/emotional growth opportunities, Circle time with calendar concepts, public speaking, problem solving, imagination station, writers workshop
- Meals served together with self-sufficient guiding principles
- An intentional focus on the learning process and not the product
- Gross Motor and Fine Motor activities designed to support large and small muscles
- Rest Period
- Music/Gym/Library

- Transition to Kindergarten programming focusing on independence, organizational skills, listening skills and responsibility.
- The HIGHSCOPE Preschool Curriculum

## Our Commitment

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We are honored that you have chosen to join the South Shore Children’s Center family. We are committed to provide an excellent Early Childhood experience for you and your family as you journey through the early years. You can trust that your child will be cared for and treated with respect, dignity and kindness. We will build a lifelong love of learning and foster positive relationships that will become a part of their strong foundational spring board into life.

Again, Welcome!

With Kind Regards

*Annamarie LaRosa*

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Please complete and return indicating you have received this handbook

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_