



Bright Beginnings Learning Academy

22993 Briggs-Coleman Road

Harlingen, Texas 78550

956-496-2122

Director: Katie M. Castellanos

956-778-8351

Welcome to our Bright Beginnings Learning Academy family. We are pleased that you have chosen us for your childcare and educational needs. We, at Bright Beginnings Learning Academy, know that deciding on the right childcare for your child is one of the most important decisions parents must make. Our goal is to provide each child with a safe, comfortable, and nurturing environment. In addition, we strive to make sure that each child reaches their full academic potential.

Bright Beginnings Learning Academy's curriculum goals are for all students to gain the fundamental reading, writing, problem solving skills necessary to build a strong and solid academic foundation.

Classrooms:

Infants	6 wks–17 mo	Ratio 4:1
Toddlers	18 mo–23 mo	Ratio 9:1
2 yr old	2 yrs by 9/1	Ratio 11:1
PreK -3	3 yrs by 9/1 potty trained	Ratio 15:1

Hours of Operation: Monday – Friday 6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Our school is open all year except for the following dates:

Good Friday, 4th of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Thanksgiving Friday, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Years Eve, and New Year’s Day

Fee Structure:

Registration:	\$100.00 (Nonrefundable)
Weekly Tuition:	\$135.00
Tuition Late Fee:	\$25.00
T shirts:	\$10.00
Late Pick Up:	\$20.00

(We do not offer part time or drop-in care.)

Late Payment and Refunds: Tuition is due every Monday by 5:00 p.m. A late fee of \$25.00 will be assessed if payment is not made. BBLA does not refund tuition for any reason.

Tuition Discount: A tuition discount of 5% will be given to each subsequent sibling. Also, a 5% discount will be given to any family in which one parent or legal guardians is in law enforcement. (Work credentials will need to be verified.)

Returned Checks: Personal checks are accepted. However, there will be a \$30.00 charge for all checks returned N.S.F. plus any other charges incurred to our establishment and/ or the bank. Parents who have two N.S.F’s checks will no longer be able to pay by check.

Contact Information: If any of your contact information changes at any time such as address, phone number, email, etc., please notify us in writing immediately with changes. It is of utmost importance that all student files remain current. Parents can also update information in Brightwheel App.

Attendance/Absences: In the event a child is absent, parents should mark child absent through Brightwheel App. If a child's absence is due to illness, a doctor's excuse is required to return.

Summer Furlough: Should you decide to keep your child home for the summer, your child will need to be disenrolled. We cannot hold or reserve a spot for any amount of time. You may re-enroll your child later provided there is space available. Registration fee will apply.

Termination of care: Bright Beginnings Learning Academy reserves the right to immediately terminate childcare for the following reasons:

- Failure to return proper documentation
- NSF checks
- Failure to pay tuition or required fees
- Physical/verbal abuse of any person/property
- child behavior
- Not being able to meet child's needs
- Lack of parent cooperation

Two-week notice: A minimum of two-week notice is required for termination of childcare services. Even if your child does not attend during that two-week period, payment is still required. Any fees not paid on time with regards to termination of childcare services will also be subject to daily late fees until full payment is received. If fees are not paid, the unpaid bill will be placed into collections. Last two weeks tuition will be paid upfront during registration.

Special Needs: The early years are often the time when children's special needs are identified. Bright Beginnings Learning Academy recognizes that the appropriate support can address a child's development and learning. If a child's needs surpass what we are able to safely provide at our academy, we will compassionately partner with the parents to ensure a successful transition.

Drop Off/Pick Up Procedures:

To reduce the risk of exposure to Covid-19, parents are asked to drop their child off at the front door. Families are discouraged from congregating at the door. Parents should wait in their car until the previous child has been dropped off. Next parent in line may then bring their child to the door. There should never be two parents from different students at the door at the same time. Temperature of children will be taken, and parent must take quick Covid-related survey on Brightwheel app.

All students attending Bright Beginnings Learning Academy must be in school by 8:45. Students not at the center by 8:45 will not be able to attend that day and there will be no refund of tuition.

All infants must be awake when being dropped off. Infants are not allowed to remain in car seat for any reason.

Release of children: Children will only be released to designated parent. In the event that a parent cannot pick up child, persons listed on pick up list will be allowed to pick up child. State issued identification will need to be presented to verify identity.

Check in/out: It is imperative that we always have an accurate census of our students throughout the day. Every student must be signed in and out.

Custody Orders Until custody has been established by a court action, one parent may not limit the other from picking-up a child in our care. The center must be notified immediately of any changes in custody orders. Certified custody orders must be given to the center director.

Clothing Guidelines: It is important that all students are dressed comfortably. School shirt is mandatory Monday-Thursday. For the safety of each student, open toe shoes such as flip flops and sandals are not allowed. We request that students wear tennis shoes and socks to school every day.

Change of clothes: Please send several complete changes of clothes for each child. This includes an extra pair of shoes, socks, and underwear. Send clothes in a Ziploc bag labeled with child's name.

Physical Activity: Infants are required to have outdoor time twice daily. During this time infants are encouraged to participate in tummy time. Older children are encouraged to stretch, throw, walk, jump, and crawl.

Screen time policy: Children two years and up participate in music and movement. TV is used to play videos while children exercise and dance. Any screen time that is used is for educational purposes only and never as a form of entertainment. Any videos must reflect the lesson or concept being taught and must be specified in the lesson plans.

Annual Review of Policies: Policies in this handbook are reviewed annually and updated if necessary. Parents are notified of new changes prior to implementation and are given a copy of said changes.

Retention Fee: In the event that a client chooses to hire on of our staff members for permanent full time care, a \$1,500.00 retention fee will be assessed to the client.

Hiring of teachers: Bright Beginnings Learning Academy assumed no responsibility for any accident, illness, or injury if our staff members are privately hired by any client for the care of children during the days BBLA is closed. In addition, use of the app is not allowed during these times.

Health

All students entering Bright Beginnings Learning Academy are required to present immunization records signed by a licensed medical physician. Records must include DPT, Polio, MMR, Hib, Hepatitis A and B, varicella, and rotavirus. If your child has had chickenpox, please provide the school with a written statement with the date of onset.

Students must have a well child statement signed by doctor upon registration.

Our facility meets the requirements of the Texas Department of Human Services. These standards deal mainly with the health of children, safety of the school, and record keeping. The school's responsibility is to comply with the requirements. Your careful attention to the following information will insure a smooth operation of our school.

When a child is sick

Parents or designated appointee will be called if a child appears ill or exhibits any of the following symptoms below. Please insure that child is picked up immediately.

- Has an illness preventing the child from participating comfortably in daily activities
- Has an illness resulting in a greater need for care than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children in our care
- Has one of the following, unless medical evaluation by a health-care professional indicates that you can include the child in regular activities:
 - A. Oral temperature of 101.0 degrees or greater
 - B. Armpit temperature of above 100 degrees accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness
 - C. Signs and symptoms of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, diarrhea, vomiting, or unusual behavior.
 - D. Changes and/or rash with fever with the past 24 hours.
- Has been diagnosed with a communicable disease by a health care professional and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that he/she is no longer contagious.

To ensure the safety and health of all students, children with serious and/or infectious illnesses should stay home until all symptoms or danger of transmission has passed. Please consult your physician should you have any questions. In addition, children who have had fever must remain fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication before returning to school.

Administering medication: If medication needs to be given during the school day, permission to dispense medication form must be signed by parent. All medication needs to be in its original packaging. We will not deviate from instructions written either on the medication or prescription. Please see your child's teacher with any questions.

Medical Emergencies: In the unfortunate even that a child becomes ill at school, parents will be immediately called. If parent cannot be located, designated alternate will be contacted. If it is necessary for student to immediately be taken to hospital, EMS will be notified, and student will be taken to the hospital designated on registration documents.

Daily health checks: A visual check of each child is conducted every day upon arrival. If something is noticed, it will be documented, and parents will be notified.

Lice: If a child is found to have lice or nits, parents will be notified immediately, and parent will need to pick up child. Child will not be able to return to school until treatment has been applied and there is no signs of nits or lice.

Application of lotion/sunscreen and insect repellent: Bright Beginnings Learning Academy will not apply lotions of any kind, insect repellent, or sunscreen to any student unless we have a written request from parent.

Safe sleep for Infants 12 months and younger: Texas Department of Licensing requires that all infants 12 months and younger sleep on their back. No bedding (except for tight fitting crib sheet) of any kind is allowed inside infant's crib. This also includes pillows of any kind, toys, and blankets. We advise that you dress your infant in a full body layette. These policies are in place and enforced to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Should your child be medically required to sleep in any position other than his/her back, a written order must be signed by your physician. See director for necessary form.

Breastfeeding mothers: Mothers have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their child while in daycare. A comfortable area will be designated for mothers who choose to breastfeed at our facility. Nursing mothers also have the option of sending breast milk on a daily basis. Please keep in mind that any breast milk not used will be returned to parent. Upon request, a compilation of breast-feeding education and support resources in the community will be provided to parents.

School Lunches

Tuition includes breakfast, lunch, afternoon snack and dinner. Our school participates in the USDA school lunch food program. All food is prepared fresh in our kitchen by our kitchen manager who is trained in food preparation, storage, and in creating healthy balanced meals.

Program Practices:

- Liquids and food hotter than 110 degrees F are kept out of reach.
- All staff are educated on food allergies and they take precautions to ensure children are protected
- All food is prepared in a kitchen that is inspected by local health officials
- Healthy snacks (as listed by the Texas Department of Agriculture) are available for school aged children as they arrive
- Milk, fresh fruit, and vegetables are available for children who bring lunches from home.

Food brought from home for birthday parties, holiday celebrations, etc. will be refrigerated if needed upon arrival and maintain appropriate temperature.

All meals are prepared following USDA standards. If your child has a food restriction or allergies, please contact your child's teacher for necessary form to be signed by doctor. Documentation needed from doctor must include a list of each food child is allergic to, possible symptoms if exposed, and steps to take if the child has an allergic reaction.

Home Lunch Practices

- All food brought into the center must be store bought and in its original packaging.
- Food brought from home for birthday parties, holiday celebrations, etc. will be refrigerated if needed upon arrival and maintain appropriate temperature.
- BBLA has policies in place outlining strategies to educate children and their parents on proper nutrition.
- BBLA will provide parents with information about foods that may cause allergic reactions
- BBLA will provide sample menus of healthy lunches for parents whose children bring food from home. Parents are encouraged to provide meals with adequate nutritional value.

Snacks: Students can bring snacks or lunch from home. For the safety of all students, teachers will not be able to leave the classroom to mix powdered drinks, warm food in the microwave, or get things from refrigerator. Please do not send candy as a snack or anything in glass containers. Gum is not allowed at any time.

Personal Property: Please make sure that all personal property including jackets, snacks, bottles, blankets, pillows, etc. are clearly marked with your child's name.

Birthdays: Your child is welcome to celebrate his/her birthday at school. You may send store bought cupcakes, donuts, fruit, juice bags. Parents choosing to send party bags can do so, they will be passed out at the end of the day upon dismissal. Please get prior approval from teacher at least 2 days in advance so that teacher can plan accordingly.

Parties: Class parties include Valentine's Day, Easter, Halloween, and Christmas. Activities will be scheduled throughout the day.

Parent Conferences: All teachers are available for conferences upon request. Formal conferences will be held twice a year. The purpose of the conferences is to share milestones, discuss student's progress, and discuss any issues or concerns parents might have. Through our Brightwheel app, parents also can message their child's teacher at any time throughout the day. Teachers also have the ability to send updates, photos, or any other important information.

Emergencies

Preparing for Emergencies: State licensing requires that we have an emergency preparedness plan in the event of emergencies such as fire, intruder, and weather.

Fire: In the event of a fire, alarm is pulled, and children are evacuated through doors in each classroom. Our meeting place is at the southernmost area of the property. Teachers will have all documents necessary to begin contacting parents.

Intruder: In the event of an intruder or unwanted person in the building, announcement will be made via intercom. Infants 1, toddlers, Twos, and Pre-K 3 classes will turn off all lights and take cover in the restroom in between the classrooms until an “all clear” is heard by intercom.

Fire Drills: Fire marshal requires we do one fire drill every month. In addition, we are required to do bad weather and intruder drills four times a year. Evacuation maps are posted in each classroom.

Inclement Weather/Disasters: In case of a hurricane or any natural disaster, our school will operate on the same schedule as Harlingen CISD. Parents need to follow instructions on television and radio that pertain to HCISD. In the event of imminent weather danger, children will take shelter in inner hallway away from exterior walls and windows until all clear is sounded.

Relocation off premises: In the event that we must relocate the property completely, we will walk the children to 20993 Montezuma Road. This property is a few houses down from our center. We will seek the assistance of Cameron County Sheriff’s Department to ensure a safe relocation of all children. All parents will be notified to pick up children at that location. Director and staff will notify parents by phone

Covid-19 Preparedness: Our Emergency Preparedness Plan will be followed during any pandemic period. Center for Disease Control, Department of Health and/or State Child Care Licensing Rules will be followed. Response will include, but is not limited to, limiting visitors in the building, monitoring symptoms in staff and students, taking temperature of all entering building, following proper hygiene protocol, isolating staff and/or students infected, and transparent communication with families and regulating agencies.

Tuition and Covid-19: If a student receives a positive COVID-19 diagnosis, tuition for that child will be waived for the two week quarantine period. Proof of positive test must be presented. This will be done one time only. If you choose to keep your child to quarantine for whatever reason without having a positive diagnosis, tuition must be paid for the time that the child is out. If tuition is not paid, your child will be disenrolled and you may lose your spot. New registration fee will need to be paid as well upon reenrollment.

Notification of parents: If at any time information needs to be communicated with parents, Bright Beginnings Learning Academy will provide information via Brightwheel app.

Visitors: Parents are welcome to visit the center at any time during the school day. Parents are welcome to observe their child, the school's operation, and program activities without having to secure prior approval. Please see director should a need arise.

Water Activities: Occasionally during the summer program, children will be given the opportunity to participate in a "water day". Small wading pools and sprinklers for ages 4-12 may be used. Parent permission must be given for children to participate.

Family Participation: We encourage parent participation and welcome it at any time. We ask that you contact your child's teacher or director if you have a special talent you would like to share with our students. Some of the events our center encourages family participation in are:

- Read to Your Child's Class Day – During Week of the Young Child
- Muffins with Mom – Week of Mother's Day
- Donuts with Dad – Week of Father's Day
- Fall Festival- October

Parents will also be asked to volunteer for special events such as Christmas parade, Trunk or Treat event.

Communication with parents: Open communication with parents is paramount in the success of each student. We will utilize many forms of communication with parents to include text messaging, email, newsletter, and communication through our Brightwheel App.

TOILET TRAINING: Toilet training is a developmental process; children are ready to learn when they are healthy, well nourished, and not pressured to achieve at a level above their capability. Parents are requested to partner with teachers, communicating frequently, so that the home-to-school care approach is coordinated and consistent. As in many areas of child development, children must reach a certain age to begin (often between 18 and 30 months of age) or be in the proper setting or situation before they are ready to learn. Parents will provide diapers, and any needed creams and lotions for their child and will sign the appropriate authorization form to allow teachers to apply it. The product must be in its original container and labeled with the child's first and last name.

Pre-K 3 program: All children in the program need to be potty trained. If your child is accepted under special circumstances, you will be charged a \$50.00 monthly diaper changing fee until child is completely potty trained.

Discipline Policy

Discipline: CORPORAL PUNISHMENT (SPANKING) IS NEVER ALLOWED. Minimum standards state that corporal punishment (spanking) or the threat of such is prohibited in any licensed center in the state of Texas. Parents are NOT allowed to spank their children nor their child's siblings on our property or during school related events. Positive forms of discipline, which encourage positive self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction will be encouraged at all times.

Difficult Behavior

We will make every effort to work with the parent or guardian to ensure a cooperative approach for children having difficulties with behavior. A parent may be called at work or home at any time the child exhibits uncontrollable behavior that cannot be modified by the center's staff. The parent may be asked to take the child home immediately. The following steps may be taken regarding children who display chronic disruptive behavior, upsetting to the emotional or physical wellbeing of another child or an adult.

Initial Consultation: The director may request that the parent or guardian meet for a conference. The problem will be defined on paper. Intervention strategies will be discussed. The best solution toward solving the problem will be agreed upon by the center director, teacher, and parent or guardian.

Second Consultation: If the initial plan for helping the child fails, the parent will again be asked to meet with the director and teaching staff involved. Another attempt will be made to identify the problem, and establish a new, or revised, approach for solving the problem. Parents may be asked to consult outside professionals or bring in behavioral specialists to help identify the problems or provide new strategies, for BBLA to continue care. Our goal is to work as a team to better serve each child.

Disenrolled: When the previous attempts have been followed and no progress has been made toward solving the problem, the child may be disenrolled from the center at the discretion of the center director

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT: Maltreatment of a child is prohibited by school policy and the law. Staff are held to a high standard to assure that children under their care are safe and are required to report concerns of abuse/neglect by others. Training is provided to all Bright Beginnings Learning Academy staff on identifying and reporting child abuse. Our staff adhere to Texas state law on mandatory child abuse reporting. Should you suspect or know a child that has been abused, call the Texas statewide child abuse hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or you can call 911 if there is an immediate threat of danger.

Suspension/removal of student: If at any time a child becomes a danger to himself or others, parent will immediately be notified and will need to be picked up for the remainder of the day. It is the discretion of the director to determine how much time is needed as a cooling off period.

Child abuse/neglect training: All staff are required to attend annual training in the following areas:

- Warning signs of child abuse and neglect
- Prevention techniques for child abuse/neglect
- Strategies for coordination between the center and appropriate community organizations

- Actions that parents of a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect can take to obtain assistance and intervention

Signs of child abuse/neglect:

- Changes in behavior such as aggression, anger, hostility
- Apparent lack of supervision
- Frequent absences
- Reluctant to leave school
- Defiant behavior

The following sites are useful resources that give information on the prevention of child abuse and neglect:

- www.dfps.state.us/child
- www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/victims.childabuse
- www.preventchildabusetexas.org
- www.childhelp.org

Bright Beginnings Learning Academy Biting Policy: At Bright Beginnings Learning Academy, it is our priority to ensure that every child is safe while in our care. Our program provides an environment that encourages and promotes cooperative interaction, respect for others, and non-aggressive problem solving between students. Biting is a normal stage of development for young children who are teething and are still developing their language skills. It is usually a temporary condition that is most common between 13 and 24 months of age.

For safety and health concerns, we take biting seriously. When it happens, it is scary, frustrating, and stressful for children, parents, and teachers. It is also not something to blame on children, parents, or teachers and there are no quick and easy solutions to remedy it. Children bite for a variety of reasons: simple sensory exploration, panic, crowding, seeking to be noticed, or intense desire for something, such as a toy. Repeated biting becomes a pattern of learned behavior that is often hard to extinguish because it does achieve results, whether it's the desired toy, excitement, or attention. Knowing that the effect of their biting will hurt another person is not yet a part of a child of this ages' mindset, so the cause and effect relationship is not internalized. Our teachers plan activities and supervise carefully in order that biting not occur. There are times, however, when every student cannot be within arm's reach of his/her teacher to prevent every bite. We have implemented a policy to help limit or deter biting.

- Biter is immediately removed from the group with a firm NO. The child who is bitten will be consoled and bitten area washed with soap and water. If necessary, ice will be

applied to reduce any swelling or bruising. Biter is not allowed to return to play and is talked to on a level that he/she can understand then redirected

- A written incident report is given to the parents of all children involved when they are picked up that day. The name of a biting child is not released as it serves no useful purpose and will make an already difficult situation even more difficult.
- We look intensively at the context of each biting incident for patterns in an effort to prevent further biting behavior.
- We work with each biting child on resolving conflict or frustration in an appropriate manner
- We make special efforts to protect potential biting victims.

If biting becomes a daily occurrence, the following action will be taken:

- Both parents will be notified when incident occurs
- After second biting incident, parent will be notified to come and observe child during school hours
- After third documented incident, child is removed for a week. Parents will not be reimbursed for tuition.
- After fourth incident, child will be withdrawn from program. Parents will have to find daycare elsewhere.
- If a bite breaks skin, biter is sent home for the day.
- If a biter bites twice in a day, biter is sent home for the rest of the day.

Separation Procedures

Suspension and Expulsion: A child will be removed from the program for behavior that causes physical harm to either himself/herself or other students. An expulsion action is meant to be a period so that the parent/guardian may work on the child's behavior or to come to an agreement with the school.

Special Needs: The early years are often the time when children's special needs are identified. Bright Beginnings Learning Academy recognizes that the appropriate support can address a child's development and learning. If a child's needs surpass what we are able to safely provide at our academy, we will compassionately partner with the parents to ensure a successful transition.

Gang Free Zone: Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a child-care center is a gang free zone where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to a harsher penalty.

Policy Changes: Policy changes to this handbook will be posted 30 days in advance in Parent Information bulletin board. In addition, parents will be given copy of changes.

Child Care Licensing/Minimum Standards: Childcare licensing reports will be posted on parent bulletin board at the entrance of our school for a minimum of 60 days. Parents are

welcome at any time to review a copy of minimum standards for licensed care facilities. A copy of our most recent licensing inspection can be found in the front lobby on the parent information bulletin board.

Note: Falsely reporting complaints about an operation's non-compliance with minimum standards is a crime.

In the event of questions or concerns, parents may contact:

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

Child Care Licensing

601 W. Sesame Drive

Harlingen, Texas 78550

956-316-8275

www.dfps.state.tx.us