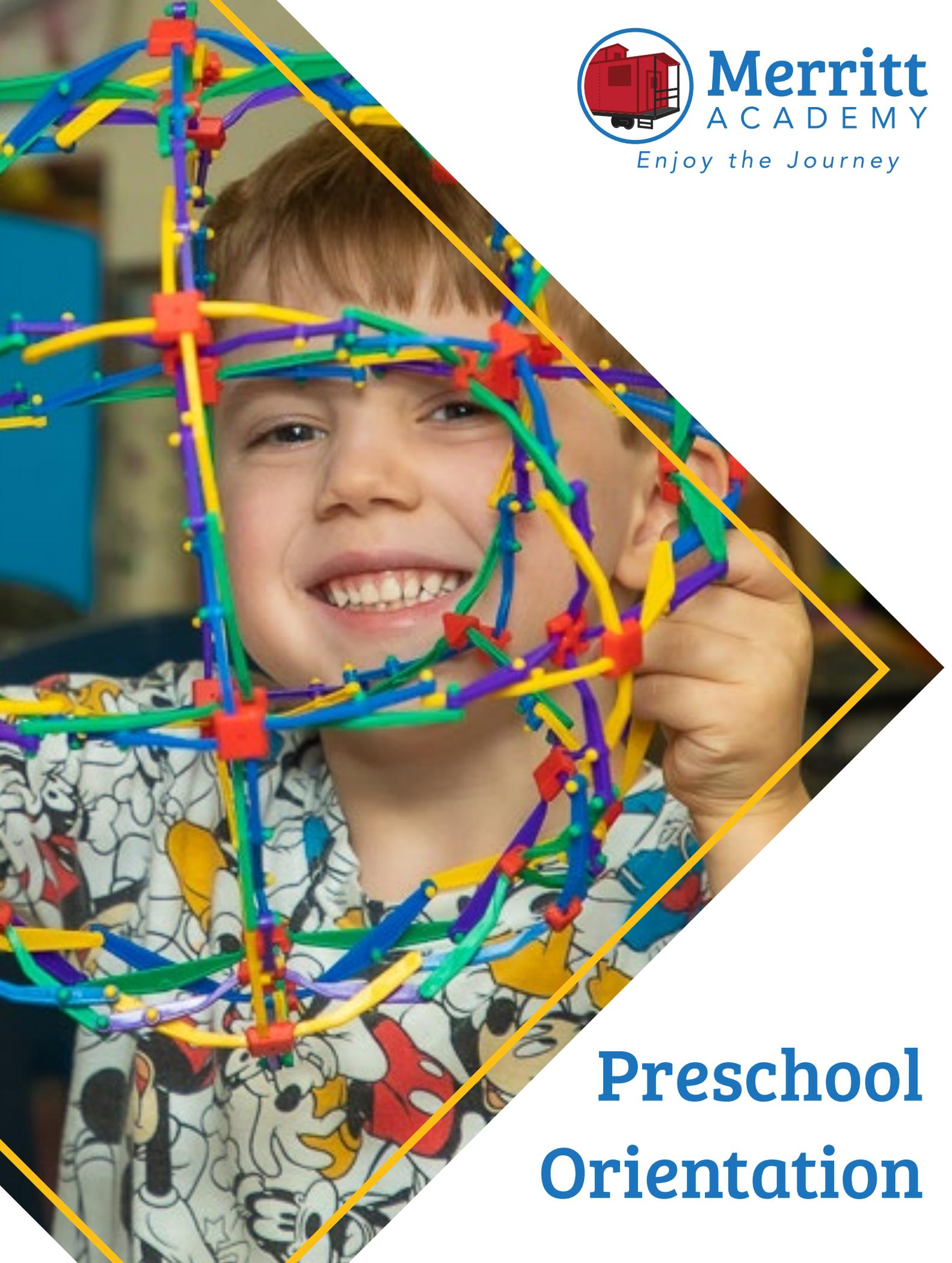




**Merritt**  
ACADEMY

*Enjoy the Journey*



# Preschool Orientation





# Welcome to

## Merritt Academy



### Our Approach to Preschool Education and Care

Thank you for choosing Merritt Academy to provide your preschooler with a warm, loving environment in which to explore and learn. Our dedicated teachers create developmentally appropriate activities, spaces and experiences designed to facilitate your child's physical, social, emotional and cognitive growth. You will find our accredited preschool program offers a variety of structured academic and social experiences created to challenge your child's mind, body and spirit. Along the way, your preschooler will be encouraged to reach developmental milestones through purposeful play and joyful exploration.

Whether you are ready to embrace the full journey at Merritt Academy through our middle school program, or you wish to commit to a shorter course of preschool study, your child will advance on a personal path to establish a strong foundation in a wide range of disciplines. From math, numeracy and computation, to language arts and phonics, our teachers will also provide lessons in science, social studies/citizenship, world languages, fitness, and character education.

Establishing a strong connection with your child, our teachers will nurture your preschooler and guide growth in a wide array of skills. If your child needs to build confidence, or tackle higher-level learning opportunities, our team will differentiate instruction as needed. We will meet your child exactly where he/she is in all developmental areas, providing a safe, inspiring space to foster your child's growing drive for independence.

Our language-rich, stimulating environment complete with a dedicated school library, will help your child establish a lifelong love of learning while exploring with all five senses. You will find our campus includes ample places to spend time outdoors, along with opportunities to engage with many friends of all ages.

Service to you, as a Merritt Academy Family, stands at the forefront of our school's philosophy. We consider our partnership with your family to be our greatest teaching asset. Together, we will navigate this phase of your child's educational journey, to establish a memorable, comfortable, happy, and successful experience for you and your child.

From the very start, you will find our experienced team of educators ready to help you. Please feel free to approach your child's teachers, our early childhood coaches, and our leadership team members with questions or concerns that come to mind. We are here to help you enjoy the journey.

*Christin Soly*  
Christin Soly, Executive Director

# Play and Learning

Merritt Academy's philosophy of learning through purposeful play focuses on five core skills to encourage your child's natural curiosity. These key areas of development will help your child thrive now, while also preparing your child for our constantly changing world in the future. Our curriculum promotes learning across these key areas:

- √ Physical
- √ Social
- √ Emotional
- √ Cognitive
- √ Creative

The importance of play in promoting social and emotional skills as well as development of early literacy and numeracy skills has been highlighted at the World Economic Forum.

During indoor and outdoor play, our staff encourages positive social interactions and active engagement for your child. Your preschooler will experience the joy of discovery, make meaningful connections, develop executive functioning skills essential for success, build healthy relationships, and practice problem-solving for innovative thinking.

Your child will benefit from our accredited preschool curriculum which includes math, language arts, science, social studies, and character education as well as our award-winning foreign language program. Specialty classes include French and Spanish, Library, Music, STEAM LAB, Creative Movement for K3, and Physical Education for K4. School year specialties are provided as conditions permit.

Outdoor time constitutes an important part of your preschooler's day. Please send your child to school prepared to play outside. Closed toe shoes like sneakers are recommended for comfort, both in the classroom and on the playground.

## Dining: Lunch and Snack

Your child will enjoy two morning snacks, lunch service with milk and two afternoon snacks which are included in your tuition package. Our monthly menu will be provided prior to the start of each new month.

If you wish to send in a temperature-stable container for lunch or snack, this must be labeled with your child's full name and date. Teachers will help plate/serve food for your child if help is needed.

Our school provided lunches are nut-free. To ensure the safety of all children, no peanut products should be provided. If your child has any known allergies, you and your pediatrician are asked to complete/sign the Allergy Action Plan and associated medication forms prior to your child's start at Merritt Academy.

# Rest

Your child will have a school-assigned cot for nap time. Parents provide a fitted crib sheet and blanket or napping mat. These go home on Friday to be laundered and should return to school with your child on Monday. Cots are disinfected weekly or as needed. Nap time for K3 students runs from 12:30pm to 2:30pm daily. K4 students rest from 1:00pm to 2:30pm.

Stimulating activities throughout the day keep your child busy, so this time usually comes as a welcome opportunity to rest. If your child is unable to sleep and restless after a 30-minute period, an appropriate quiet activity will be provided by your child's teacher.

# Health and Safety

Your child will play with age appropriate toys and materials that are disinfected and washed daily and rotated as needed. Classroom furniture is disinfected throughout the day and right-sized for preschool students.

Handwashing will be encouraged upon arrival and throughout the day as your child transitions to different activities such as eating or diapering/toileting.

Preschool K3 and K4 classrooms do not include diaper changing tables. Children usually follow peer role models and adapt quickly if they have not yet completed toilet training before starting school. If you have concerns about your child's training status, please share that information on your Preschool Bio form and with your teacher.

Children are encouraged to use the restroom as needed. If regular diapering is needed, Merritt Academy reserves the right to move a child to a class with facilities to support those needs.

First Aid, CPR, and daily health training are provided to Merritt Academy staff. All enrolled students must have an up-to-date Virginia School Entrance Health Form on file.

To maintain a healthy environment for all students and staff, we ask you to maintain communication with your teacher when your child is absent, particularly in case of illness. Merritt Academy will provide information about diagnosed cases of communicable illness. A doctors' note may be required for your child to return to school.

Please consult our Parent Handbook and any school alerts for information regarding modifications to our health and safety policies.





# Communication

- Daily reports are sent to you via Tadpoles with photos, information, and personal comments about your child's activities, diaper changes, meals and nap times.
- When a communicable illness is reported in the classroom, we will notify your family via an exposure notice as appropriate. (Note: The VDH regulations state that students must be fever-free, free of vomit/diarrhea for 24 hours before they may return to school. Additionally, we may require a note clearing a student to return to school in our efforts to keep all children as healthy as possible.)
- We follow all regulations and laws regarding health privacy. Please read the Parent Handbook for details.
- You are asked to keep your child's Virginia School Entrance Health Form updated with new immunizations or changes in health status after well-child visits and submit these to our registrar.
- Two parent teacher conferences will be offered annually. Parents and/or teacher are encouraged to request a conference any time, as needed.
- Two progress reports will be sent to you with detailed information about your child's development.
- Each parent will be invited to become a member of your child's classroom Shutterfly page at the beginning of the school year. This is where you will find pictures, classroom information, and weekly lesson plans.
- The Wednesday Letter, our academy-wide weekly informational letter, will be emailed weekly.
- The Friday Letter, an informational letter pertaining specifically to your child's classroom, activities and updates will be emailed weekly.
- Merritt Academy sends text messages for important operational announcements.

# Tadpoles®

Tadpoles® is the online communication tool Merritt Academy uses to share special moments, developmental milestones and daily reports straight from your child's classroom. Family members can also enter important drop-off notes for your child's day.

Using secure technology, we document your child's activities throughout the day. At pick up time, you will receive an email and corresponding app notification featuring curated highlights, photo memories and detailed notes from our teaching staff. Through this powerful daily connection, Tadpoles® gives you easy access to your child's learning experience.

# PikMyKid

Merritt Academy provides parents/guardians complimentary access to PikMyKid, an app to facilitate your afternoon pick up service. You may download the app for your phone platform to announce your afternoon arrival. Those without the app may call our main number or request an exit slip from the front office.



# Preschool Supply List

**All items must be clearly labeled with your child's first and last name:**

- School bag/backpack (no wheels) with full spare set of seasonally appropriate clothing
- Recent potty trainers should bring multiple sets of clothing changes, including socks/shoes
- A fitted cot or crib sheet and lightweight blanket or nap mat (like Urban Infant Tot Cot®)
- A 4x6 photo of your child and one family picture
- Any over-the-counter or prescription medications must be submitted with paperwork and cleared through the school. Contact us for more information.
- Closed-toe shoes appropriate for play (recommended are sneakers, winter or rain boots)





# Sample Daily Schedule

**Morning:** Classroom opens at 7:00AM with choice of activities  
Breakfast snack  
Morning meeting or circle  
Learning centers, teacher planned activities, or specialty class as appropriate\*

**Midday:** Lunch and playground  
Story and transition time  
Nap begins for K3 at 12:30pm  
Nap begins for K4 at 1:00pm

**Afternoon:** Snack  
Teacher planned activities  
Free choice activities or specialty class\*  
Outdoor play  
Afternoon circle, learning centers, storytime, or free choice activities

**Evening:** Evening snack  
Evening playground (daylight and weather permitting)  
Classroom closes at 6:15pm with last pick up



# Administrator Contact Information



- **Genie O'Hara, Director of Early Childhood Education**  
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- **Christin Soly, Executive Director**  
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