



Merritt
ACADEMY

Enjoy the Journey



Infant Orientation





Welcome to

Merritt Academy

Our Approach to Infant Learning and Care:

Merritt Academy provides your infant with a nurturing, loving environment in which to explore and learn. Guided by caring teachers, your infant will be gently encouraged to meet developmental milestones through play and discovery. Our dedicated teachers create developmentally appropriate activities, spaces, and experiences to foster a rich variety of opportunities designed to facilitate your child's physical, social, emotional and cognitive growth.

During the 12 months of your child's participation in our infant program, we are able to establish a strong bond and truly know your child's unique needs and preferences. In this first year of school, your child will grow and change at a faster rate than at any other time of life. Our knowledgeable teachers will support you and your baby through each new stage.

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 first phase of your child's educational journey, to establish a memorable, comfortable, happy and successful experience for you and your child.

We will meet your child exactly where they are in all developmental areas, provide a safe, encouraging space in which to foster your child's growing drive for independence, as well as offer cuddles and comfort as needed. Our language-rich, stimulating environment will help your child build foundations for lifelong learning while exploring with all five senses. You will find our seven-acre campus includes ample places to spend time outdoors along with opportunities to engage with many friends of all ages.

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

Christin Soly, Executive Director

Classroom Fundamentals

- Your child's teaching team includes a lead teacher and assistant teachers, as well as our leadership team.
- Staff-to-student ratio will be 1:4 with additional staff as appropriate.
- We are regularly monitored by Virginia licensing authorities including the Virginia Department of Social Services, Department of Education and Department of Health.
- We follow best practices, policies and procedures determined by regulatory authorities.
- Your infant's daily schedule is unique. Each day you are asked to provide recent feeding, sleeping and diapering details along with other updates about your child's daily routine via the Tadpoles app.
- At the end of the day, we will provide a digital report with details about your child's day.
- As your child grows, you will see changes in eating and sleeping habits. We encourage you to communicate differences you see to your teachers.





Play and Learning

Merritt Academy's philosophy of learning through purposeful play focuses on five core areas to encourage your child's natural curiosity, even at this early stage. 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 regular outdoor play, our staff encourages positive social interactions and active engagement for your child. Your baby will delight in joyful discovery while making meaningful connections and building trusting relationships.

- We offer your child developmentally appropriate activities supported by age-appropriate resources.
- Your child will experience a range of curriculum themes and topics that change regularly throughout the year.
- Infant classes go outdoors at least three times per day on buggy rides/walks and visits to our infant/toddler playground.
- Appropriate seasonal attire (sun hat, snowsuit, mittens) is recommended for your child's comfort.
- Children will enjoy music and creative movement activities with their teaching team.
- Toys are disinfected and cleaned regularly throughout the day and rotated regularly.

Food and Feeding

- Your daily instruction, along with your child's cues, will guide our fulfillment of your child's dietary needs.
- You will be informed of the amount your child eats throughout the day through your daily report.
- Please label (using labels or tape, etc.) all bottles and food containers with your child's full first and last name as well as the date.
- Bottles and food must be pre-mixed and ready to consume.
- Breast milk, formula, or jar food must be disposed of one hour after feeding.
- Bottles containing breast milk must always be marked using a red label.
- We are unable to use glass bottles due to safety concerns.
- Feeding bibs are provided as needed and washed daily on site.
- As your child approaches 12 months, we will consult with you about offering our school lunch and snack service which is included in your tuition package.

Rest

- Teachers will follow your child's natural sleep patterns as well as your suggested routines and instructions as much as possible in the group care setting.
- Crib sheets are provided by Merritt Academy and will be laundered daily.
- Your child is assigned to their own crib which is disinfected weekly, or as appropriate.
- When your child turns 12 months old, we will begin to transition from crib to cot.
- Sleeping children are checked at least every 15 minutes.
- Licensing regulations prohibit placing any items in the crib with a child. We are not able to place pillows, blankets, or stuffed animals (including "Wubbanub" style pacifier toys) in your child's crib.

Diapers

- Please provide diapers, wipes and any diaper creams you would like used and we will notify you when your supply is low.
- Use of diaper cream requires a "Topical Authorization" form on file. The completed form should accompany the product when provided to school.
- Your child's diaper will be changed regularly and as needed. Diaper changes will be logged and communicated in your daily report.
- Our diaper changing procedures follow the sanitary procedures recommended by licensing authorities including VDOE. All staff members are trained on proper procedures.





Health and Safety

Your child will play with age-appropriate materials that are disinfected and washed daily and rotated as needed. Classroom furniture is disinfected throughout the day and right-sized for your growing infant. Handwashing will be supported throughout the day as your child transitions to different activities such as eating, diapering/toileting, outdoor play and sensory exploration.

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 doctor's note may be required for your child to return to school.

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. This form must be updated after each well-child pediatric visit.

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 without medication 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 photo sharing site at the beginning of the school year.
- The Wednesday Letter, our academy-wide 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. Families not electing to use the app should stop by the front office for an exit slip. Please note that the PikMyKid service will not be activated until your child is registered.

PARENT APP GUIDE

- 1 Download the App**
 The Pikmykid app is available for download on your smartphone's app store (Google-Play, Apple Store). Each user will need to download and register on their own smartphone.
 Scan below to download!
- 2 Registration**
 Select "Register a New Account" and follow the prompts to sign up. You will verify your email address and phone number to complete registration.
- 3 How to Add a Child**
 Schools might connect your children automatically! If you see the "No Children" on screen and the school gave one time QR code, then select "Add Child" to scan the code and add one child at a time, else tap on "Need additional help?" to reach our support desk.
- Secure Way of Connecting**
 *Parents can use our website also - parentapp.pikmykid.com to register and make pick-up changes, report student Absence or checkins
 Note: Announcement is only available through the parent phone app.

Need Help?
Email support@pikmykid.com

Be sure to include the name of the school, the child's name, the dismissal ID, and your mobile number, with your questions.

PARENT APP GUIDE

- 4 Schedule Pickup Changes**
 Choose the Child from the Children's tab, and choose the date to change the pickup. You will be able to make single or recurring changes.
- 5 Change Default Pick-up**
 Select Default: PickUp from this screen to change your child's default pick-up mode. If the button is grayed out, the schools may have restricted this.
- 6 Check-in**
 On Checkin tab, you will be able to complete the check-in for you or your children. Contact App Support if the Check-in tab is not available for you
- 7 Announce Your Arrival**
 The app's Pickup tab allows you to see your children, view their pickup mode, and announce your arrival.

App Support

Go to the Account page (at the bottom of your home screen), and then select "Contact Support". Fill out and submit the form to be connected with a friendly customer service human or email support@pikmykid.com



Infant Supply List

What you will need to bring for your child:

***All items must be labeled with child's first and last name.**

- Diaper bag/backpack with at least three extra sets of clothing - labeled
- Diapers (1 full package/sleeve) - labeled
- Diaper cream, if needed ("Topical Authorization" form required) - labeled
- A box with baby wipes and 2-3 refill packages - labeled
- A swaddle or sleepsack - labeled (sent home daily)
- Prepared bottles clearly labeled with your child's first and last name as well as the full date (sent home daily)
- Frozen breast milk and/or unopened liquid ready to use formula (not powder: canned formula, please) and an empty bottle for emergency backup - labeled
- Sippy cup (as needed) when teacher indicates readiness (sent home daily) - labeled
- Pacifiers, if used (optional) - labeled
- Jars of food, home snacks/lunch as needed, labeled with first and last name as well as the full date - (sent home daily)
- An unopened cereal box (up to a two-week supply) may be brought - labeled with first and last name
- Two 4"x6" pictures of your child and one family picture
- Any over-the-counter or prescription medications will require paperwork and must be cleared through the school. Contact us for more information.



Sample Daily Schedule

With your input, we support the continuation of your infant's natural sleep and feeding schedule. Your baby's day will also include regular outdoor play, story time, small group and teacher planned activities. When your baby reaches the next developmental stage, typically around 12 months, we begin transitioning your infant to the classroom daily schedule.

Morning:	Classroom opens at 6:45AM with centers and planned activities
	Breakfast
	Morning Playground
	Teacher Planned Activities
	Circle Time/Movement/Transition
	Morning Snack
	Small Groups, Teacher Planned Activities and Centers
Midday:	Lunch
	Books/Small Group Activity
	Nap Time
Afternoon:	Outdoor Playground Time
	Small Groups
	Afternoon Snack
	Teacher Planned Activities
Evening:	Story Time
	Evening Snack
	Evening Playground Time (Daylight and Weather Permitting)
	Open Centers
	Classroom closes at 6:15PM with last pick-up

·Diapers checked and changed regularly, as needed throughout the day



Administrator Contact Information

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