



Merritt
ACADEMY

Enjoy the Journey



Toddler Orientation



Welcome to Merritt Academy



Our Approach to Toddler Development and Care:

Thank you for choosing Merritt Academy to provide your toddler with a nurturing, loving environment in which to explore and learn. Our dedicated teachers create learning activities, spaces and experiences to foster a rich variety of opportunities designed to facilitate your child's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth. At this age, play and discovery will be key educational elements helping your child attain new developmental milestones. Stories and more specialty instruction introduce your child to new concepts and experiences.

We will meet your child exactly where he/she is in all developmental areas, providing a safe, inspiring space in which to foster your child's growing drive for independence, as well as offer cuddles and comfort as needed. If this is your child's first time away from you, our team will help ease your child into our classroom and routines. It is normal for toddlers to experience some separation anxiety at first.

During your child's participation in our toddler program, we will establish a strong bond and truly know your child's unique needs and preferences. As your toddler becomes more mobile, confident and capable in many ways, our knowledgeable teachers are ready to support you and your child through each new stage. Over time, you will witness your toddler's mobility, socialization, vocabulary and awareness continue to grow dramatically.

Our language-rich, stimulating environment will help your child build foundations for life-long 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, Executive Director

Play and Learning

Merritt Academy's philosophy of learning through purposeful play focuses on five core areas 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 regular outdoor play, our staff encourages positive social interactions and active engagement for your child. Your toddler 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.
- Toddler classes go outdoors at least three times per day on buggy rides/walks and visit our infant/toddler playground.
- Appropriate seasonal attire (sun hat, snowsuit, gloves, etc.) is recommended to keep your child comfortable.
- Children will enjoy music and creative movement activities with their teaching team.
- Toys are disinfected and cleaned daily and rotated regularly.

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.

Toddlers will receive assistance as needed and typically begin to feed themselves independently with a spoon by mid-year. Toddlers can use a sippy cup and will begin to transition to an open cup during the year. Water is provided throughout the day.

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 toddler will have a school-assigned cot for nap time. Parents provide a fitted crib sheet and blanket or a napping mat. Pillows are not permitted. These items go home each Friday for washing and should be returned to school each Monday with your child. Cots are disinfected weekly or more often as needed. Nap time for toddlers runs from 12:30pm to 2:30pm. Most children entering the toddler class are transitioning to a single daily nap.

Stimulating and engaging activities throughout the day, along with exercise, keep your child busy. Naptime 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 materials that are disinfected and washed daily and rotated as needed. Classroom furniture is disinfected throughout the day and right-sized for your toddler. Handwashing will be supported throughout the day as your child transitions to different activities such as eating, diapering/toileting, and when returning from outdoor play and sensory play.

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.

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



Diapers & Potty Training

Each Toddler classroom includes a changing table and access to a restroom to meet the needs of your child. Diapers are changed regularly and as needed. We are unable to accept cloth diapers.

When you feel your toddler is ready to make the transition from diapers, or if you have already started training at home, please advise your child's teacher so we can support your efforts. The level of school involvement varies by age group as well as your child's individual needs.

For Toddlers, potty training is done on a case-by-case basis for children demonstrating readiness. As each child is ready for full training, a plan is devised for that child. Your toddler's classroom is equipped with an appropriate-sized toilet seat and step stool.

Looking ahead, potty training becomes a focus in the K2 program.



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 check-ins
 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



Sample Daily Schedule

Morning: Classroom opens at 6:45AM with centers and planned activities
Breakfast Snack
Morning Outdoor Play
Circle Time/Morning Meeting/Teacher Planned Activities
Morning Snack
Centers/Small Group Activities for Toddlers

Midday: Lunch
Books/Small Group Activity
Nap

Afternoon: Outdoor Playground for Toddlers
Afternoon Snack for Toddlers followed by Teacher Planned Activities

Evening: Evening Playground Time (Daylight and Weather Permitting)
Classroom closes at 6:15PM with last pick-up



Toddler Suggested Supply List

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

- Diaper bag/backpack with full spare set of seasonally appropriate clothing
- Diapers (1 full package/sleeve) – labeled
- Potty-trainers should have multiple sets of clothing changes, including socks/shoes
- Diaper cream, if needed (Topical Authorization Form required with product in original packaging)
- A box of baby wipes and 2-3 refill packages.
- A fitted cot or crib sheet and lightweight blanket or nap mat (like Urban Infant Tot Cot®)
- 2 sippy cups.
- 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)



Administrator Contact Information



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