

Big Fish Academy

Infant Classrooms

Dear Parents,

We would like to welcome you and your baby to Big Fish Academy. Our goal is to provide a safe, happy, fun home-like atmosphere where your baby can grow and develop.

The infant classroom is filled with soft, cuddly places for babies to have tummy time, roll over, begin pulling up, crawling, and walking. The classroom is equipped with toys and tools that help your little one achieve baby milestones. The teachers provide each infant with one-on-one attention by cuddling, rocking, reading to and playing with your child.

We are looking forward to getting to know you and your beautiful baby! We welcome you to email us with any questions or concerns.

Dara McCormick, Director, bigfishacademy@campbigfish.org

Ms. Aleta, truteraleta@gmail.com

Ms. Mary Beth, marybethjones18@yahoo.com

Ms. Sasha, armygirlcook@yahoo.com

Ms. Tisa, tisaham@yahoo.com

Meet Our Teachers

Ms. Aleta has been married to Louis, her husband for 27 years. They have 2 children. Her son graduated from Belmont University and her daughter works at FedEx and is studying online. Aleta has a Bachelors in Education and has taught high school. Aleta has been involved with special education elementary school and special education preschool for 10 years. Aleta and her husband are originally from South Africa. They have been in the states for 26 years. Aleta started at Grace Preschool in 2018 in the 2 year old class and transitioned to work for Big Fish Academy in 2020 and moved to the infant class. Aleta's passion is definitely working with the young students. She loves coming to work every day!

Ms. Mary Beth has been married to her husband for 4 years. They just welcomed their beautiful daughter, Eliza, in September. Ms. Mary Beth graduated from Austin Peay with an Elementary degree. She has worked in the school system for a total of 6 years. She has taught K-5 grade, special education assistant, and Title I. She also worked at Grace preschool for a year before it became Big Fish. She has also been the children's ministry director at her church for the past 4 years. Music is also one of her passions.

Sasha is a momma to a sweet 4 year old and a wild 18 month old boy! She graduated from the University of Memphis in August 2021. Sasha has two dogs and loves going on adventures with her family. She can't wait to watch all of the little ones grow and learn at Big Fish Academy!

Ms. Tisa is the mother of 2 boys, Joshua, who is 10 and attends DCA and Jacob, who is in the 3 year old classroom at BFA. Tisa's passion is taking care of infants, but she is well rounded with all age groups. Tisa and her husband moved to Nashville a few years ago from Philadelphia and loves TN! In her free time, Tisa loves to spend time with her family, cooking, baking, and traveling.

Supply List:

- 1-2 family photos (non-returnable)
- 2 cases of diaper wipes
- 1 case of diapers
- 1 box bandaids
- 1 boxes facial tissues
- 1 boxes gallon ziploc bags
- 2 clorox wipes
- 2 hand soap

What Should You Bring In Backpack Daily:

- Diapers
- Wipes
- Bottles, prepared, labeled with child's full name and date
- Extra Formula/Breast Milk, labeled with child's full name and date
- Cereal, jar food, food pouches, lunch, juice, all labeled with child's full name and date
- Sippy cup, labeled with child's full name
- Diaper cream (must have a signed medication form for staff to apply)
- Oral Pain Medication (must have a signed medication form for staff to apply)
- Gas Drops (must have a signed medication form for staff to use)
- Extra Change of Clothing and Jacket for the season, labeled with Child's full name
- Pacifiers, labels with child's name or initials

Our Mission:

We try to create a very "at home" atmosphere. We strive to make each and every child feel loved and nurtured. Each child will know that they are an important part of our group!

We give each child individual attention. Whenever we have a free minute we talk with the children one-on-one, play hand games and make funny faces. We also give lots of positive attention when we are changing diapers and bottle feeding.

We also teach children how to play independently and with their classmates. Every child has free time to choose what they want to play with, move around, and mingle with their classmates.

What can I do as a parent/guardian?

We want you to spend a few minutes talking with us when you arrive in the morning and when you pick your child up at the end of the day! How was their mood? How did they sleep? Notice anything new or exciting? When did they eat last? By sharing this important information, it allows staff to ease your child into their day and help with any schedule or feeding changes that your child may require. Open communication is key.

What is my child's routine?

Infants typically set their own routine. They tell us when they're hungry or sleepy. In fact, you probably have it down to a science! That's why we ask you for all that good information! How much do they eat? How often? What are their naps like?

However, there are some routines in our room that are constant, for example....

Every child gets to sleep in his/her own crib. If they fall asleep in our arms or a swing, they will be lovingly transferred soon after to their own crib.

Diapers are checked and/or changed every hour. Of course if we start to smell something, or we simply feel the diaper is soggy, the child would be changed immediately.

Our older infants that are ready to eat sit in a highchair and eat food, we try to stick to the below schedule. Please feed your child breakfast if they will be coming to our program after 8am. Please send a healthy lunch every day for your child. Please send an insulated/non spill sippy cup of milk, 100% juice, boxed milk/juice or bottled water for lunch. We **CAN NOT** heat up food, so a thermos (steel-lined works best at keeping food warm) is a great alternative. If items need to stay cold until our 11:00 lunchtime, please include an ice pack. PLEASE LABEL all lunch boxes, ices packs, thermoses, etc.

How will I know what my child did during the day?

We record daily, all diaper changes, meals, naps, and activities on a sheet that will go home with you when you arrive for pick-up! If we are running low on supplies, we will make a note on this daily sheet as well.

Dressing for success:

Dressing for success is important even in the infant classroom! We play and get dirty, so we recommend clothing that is easily washable, soft to the touch, and weather appropriate. We recommend our newborns wear one piece outfits with snaps or zippers for easy diaper changes. As your child grows and becomes more mobile, it is important to dress them in clothing that will help and not hinder their mobility. Non slip socks are very important for our cruisers.

Naptime:

Each child will have their own crib each day. Linens and bedding is supplied by BFA. Clean bedding is applied every day and is changed as needed throughout the day. At the end of the day, bedding is stripped off each bed and washed. All mattresses are disinfected with cleaning spray.

Illness and Medications:

Please review the BFA parent handbook and be familiar with our health and medication policies. It is extremely important to keep your child at home if they are not feeling well, running a fever, or displaying any symptoms of an illness. All medications, including teething medications, gas drops, and diaper cream, have to have a signed medication form.

Separation Anxiety:

Your child may or may not have the experience of separation anxiety. As he or she begins our program, you both may experience nervousness of being in a new environment. Here are some tips for making the beginning a positive experience for all:

- Share your feelings. When it is time to separate, allow your child to express any feelings he or she may have.
- Always say goodbye. Give closure to your departure. Reinforce trust with your child by letting him or her see you leave.
- Develop a routine. Departure outlines help reassure a child who is feeling anxious. Involve your child in regular routines that might include a goodbye song, a special hug, a special goodbye phrase, etc.
- Avoid long goodbyes. If your child has a difficult time when you leave, it may help to shorten the length of time for your goodbye.
- If your child becomes entertained with objects in the room or their teacher or friend, this is a great time for you to say goodbye at the door and discreetly leave. Removing your child from their happy play to remind them again that you are leaving can upset your little one.
- Separation anxiety can occur at different stages and ages as your child develops. Each time, this stage usually passes quickly.

Infant to Toddler Room Transition Policy

- Leadership team will identify when an infant is eligible to transition into the toddler room based on the following milestones:
 - Have their 1st birthday.
 - No longer need a bottle during child care hours.
 - Must be able to drink from cup
 - Be able to walk or be able to hold their own with walkers moving around them.
 - Be able to only take 1 nap per day.
 - Be able to sit at the table and eat solids- no infant food.
 - Be able to sleep on a mat for a nap.
 - No pacifier or security item except for a nap.
- Leadership team will email the infant's parents the transition policy and set a projected date to move up to the toddler room.
- Leadership team will communicate to the infant and toddler teaching teams about this transition.
- The infant teaching team will work with the infant on meeting milestones needed for the toddler classroom and will help ease the transition to the toddler room.
- When the infant is officially ready to move to the toddler room, the leadership team will email the infant's parents and the office manager to confirm the exact transition date for administrative and tuition purposes.

Ways to help in the transition:

- Big Fish Academy staff will work with parents starting at around 6 months of age at introducing pureed foods, next stage pouches, etc.
- Big Fish Academy staff will work with parents at introducing finger foods when the child is ready. Examples: plain Cheerios, puffs, teething wafers, etc.
- Big Fish Academy staff will work with parents at introducing different stage foods and will assist parents in introducing new foods.
- Big Fish Academy staff will work with parents on having the child sit in a highchair for feedings.
- Big Fish Academy staff will work with parents at introducing more complex finger foods at approximately 9-12 months of age. Examples: rice, beans, mango, blueberries, avocado, pasta, etc.
- Big Fish Academy staff will work with parents to introduce sippy cups with water at approximately 6 months of age.
- Big Fish Academy staff will work with parents to introduce sippy cups with formula/milk prior to infants transitioning to the toddler classroom.
- Big Fish Academy staff will work with infants on sleeping on a mat once the infant turns 1 years old.
- Big Fish Academy staff will work with infants on decreasing naps to 1 per day while in our care at approximately 11-12 months of age.
- Big Fish Academy staff will work with parents on decreasing need for a pacifier and/or a security item while in our care at approximately 11-12 months of age.

These are some of the ways we will help support you during this transition. Please help us to accomplish these goals and please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

If these milestones have been met or are working towards being met, our staff will talk to you about making the transition to the toddler classroom. Good news, the tuition decreases slightly and the staff are just as amazing!