

Our Mission and Purpose

At A-2-Z Academy of Early Learning, we offer developmentally appropriate instruction and childcare. We provide a safe, healthy, and reliable environment for our families, and maintain a dedicated, professional, and qualified team of educators. Our priority as a center is to foster strong and productive partnerships with families, staff, and the local community.

Our Background

Our center originated from a mother's love for her children and desire to contribute to their education and emotional development during their most formative years. A-2-Z was founded by our director and head teacher, Ms. Sue Jennings, in 1991 as a home daycare. As enrollment began to skyrocket, Ms. Sue was able to establish the first A-2-Z location in 1993. From there on, she fostered the development of hundreds of children and many professionals for 17 years at that location.

Upon moving to this area with her family, Ms. Sue was the director at a well-respected corporate-operated childcare center for 3 years. During her time there, she missed the personal touch and individualized instruction a privately owned center could offer children and their families. With that in mind, Ms. Sue decided to go "back to the basics," and re-establish A-2-Z in 2015. Upon re-opening her doors, Ms. Sue has dedicated herself to the "back to the basics" mentality, meaning we know every family and every child has their individual needs, and we as a staff will work everyday to meet those needs to the best of our ability.

Our Philosophy

Play is the work of children- Jean Piaget

Our philosophy of learning is something we build every single lesson we teach around. As a center, we believe children learn best through play. Research has shown time and time again, play is a multi-sensory approach to learning for children at this age. Not only does it give them an opportunity to learn to interact with one another in order to develop social/emotional skills, but play also helps children establish problem-solving strategies, and perpetuate brain function through the use of their ever-evolving imaginations.

Certification

A-2-Z is a Grow NJ Kids accredited center, licensed to serve children from infancy to 13 years of age. We are also licensed through the state of New Jersey Department of Children and Families. Our license capacity is 122 students.

Curriculum

To further align ourselves with our teaching philosophy, and to the local school districts, A-2-Z implements the use of The Creative Curriculum, a NJ Board of Education approved program for children from infancy to 5 years of age. Creative Curriculum is a research-based curriculum that prepares children to think critically and harness the power of play. This program is also designed to nurture the whole child as an individual and their unique skill progression, while offering a variety of professional development along the way for staff members to successfully implement the program. In addition to The Creative Curriculum, A-2-Z implements supplemental instruction and Wilson's Foundations for phonics. These additional educational materials are created and managed by a New Jersey Department of Education certified teacher— something you will not get at any other center! Our Supplemental Curriculum Director/Staff Trainer holds three teaching certifications (P-3, K-6, Teacher of Students with Disabilities) and comes with a wealth of knowledge and experience she uses to educate our staff on multi-sensory approaches to teaching and classroom management. These combined curriculums work together seamlessly to provide our students with unique, meaningful, and appropriate instruction.

The center takes pride in the fact that we are an accredited school with Grow NJ Kids, a program that ensures the highest quality of education for children in the state of New Jersey. In order to preserve our accreditation, the center must offer continuous professional development to staff, successfully pass room assessments/observations, and the performance of teaching staff must be reviewed throughout the year.

Enrollment

A-2-Z is a licensed childcare center: we are able to care for children from 6 weeks old to 13 years of age. **Before a child's start date**, we ask for all of the following documents to be completed in full and returned to the office:

- Signed enrollment application
- Parent receipt of information
- Parental authorization for emergency treatment
- Screening form
- Universal child health record signed by parent and physician with a record of most recent immunizations
- Religious exemption for (if applicable)
- Permission to apply insect repellent and sunscreen
- Infant feeding schedule (if applicable)

- Financial agreement
- Most recent custody documentation (if applicable)

A complete registration packet with all necessary documentation required by the state of New Jersey licensing department is provided to all parents. Please review and complete all documents in this packet prior to your child's first day of school. If you have any questions or concerns regarding registration, please contact our director Ms. Sue Jennings (email: mssuea2z@gmail.com).

Tuition

- Tuition is due by the 5th of every month
- You will receive an invoice via Tadpoles: please set up your payment preference there (check, credit card, etc.)
- A \$25 late fee will be applied to your account if tuition is not received by the 5th of the month
- There is a \$50 registration fee that is applied to all accounts every September for the new school year
- All tuition includes a meal plan (breakfast, lunch, and snacks)
- We offer a 10% tuition discount to all community helpers (police officers, first responders, teachers, medical professionals, military personnel, etc.)
- A credit card number must be held on file. We reserve the right to charge this card if tuition is not paid by the 5th of the month.
- Tuition is due regardless of illness, holidays, inclement weather, or any other unforeseen circumstances that may occur: including COVID.
- A \$1.00 per minute fee will be added to tuition if your child is picked up past 5:30. This fee is determined by the child's Tadpole sign out time.
- Each family receives **one week** free of vacation time to supplement the week we are closed for winter break. The center is also closed the week of 4th of July (this is not tuition free). You are still responsible for paying your full tuition invoice if your family takes any additional time off.
 - Your family must be enrolled at A-2-Z for one year to receive the one free week.
 - Please notify the center one month in advance of any additional vacation time your family is plans on taking

Pick up and Drop off Procedures

As per New Jersey state laws, parents or any other authorized individual dropping off/picking up children must sign in and out of the center on a daily basis. This is done through Tadpoles in front of the office on the computer. The center is open from 6:30am to 5:30pm Monday-Friday.

NJ Licensing

As a New Jersey State registered center, the state reserves the right to enter the center at any point to conduct a CFS/DYFS interview/investigation on any enrolled student or staff member without parental consent.

Snow/Inclement Weather Policy

In the event of inclement weather, A-2-Z will follow Washington Township School District (Long Valley) and mirror their closures and/or delays/early dismissals. All decisions regarding inclement weather will be updated on Tadpoles and Facebook. You can also access the Nixle app to receive information regarding local closures.

Required Student Materials / Dress Code

We ask all students come prepared with the following:

- A backpack labeled with their name on it
- Two complete changes of clothes (shirt, pants, socks, shoes, underwear). Clothing should be seasonally appropriate
- Insect repellent and sunscreen accompanied with a permission slip
- One empty cup (with a lid) for water
- **Crocs and boots are not permitted at the center. If you would like to bring your child to school in boots, we ask you to keep a pair of velcro shoes at the center. Please also refrain from sending your child to school in hoodies. We ask students to take off any jewelry before coming to school such as necklaces, bracelets, dangling earrings, rings, etc. Jewelry can be a dangerous choking hazard.**

Infants 0-18 Months Required Materials

- Diaper bag, diapers, wipes, creams (with permission slip)
- Sleep sack
- Bottles marked with name and date (replaced daily). Red tape for breast milk
- Food and snacks until table food from our menu is permitted (parent must inform us in writing that child has transitioned to table food)

Breastfeeding and Breast Milk

All bottles must be prepared at home and labeled with your child's name and the date. Breast milk should be labeled with red tape to inform staff they are handling a bodily fluid. We are a breastfeeding friendly center. Meaning, mothers are welcomed to come in and nurse as needed.

Potty Training Policy

We encourage bathroom usage once a child shows interest. Children should not be rushed into this very important step. It is a multi-step process and setbacks are common and to be expected. Our staff is very patient and experienced in this process, so please discuss plans for potty training with your child's teacher once you feel they are ready to move forward.

Child Accident Reports

At A-2-Z, our number one priority is the safety of our students. Unfortunately, accidents happen: especially at this age. Our policy is to inform parents via the Tadpole app and provide a written report of the incident when necessary. Parents will be asked to sign the accident report upon picking up their child to acknowledge they were made aware of the incident.

Out of Center Care

A-2-Z will not be held liable for any incidents that may occur if a staff member and family arrange for out of center care. We strongly discourage families from entering in any personal arrangements (babysitting) with our staff members. Any arrangements between families and our staff members outside of the hours we operate/services we offer are considered a private matter and A-2-Z will not be connected or sanctioned in connection with said arrangements.

Social Media (facebook, Tadpoles, A-2-Z website, Google, Instagram)

In today's day and age, social media is widely used as a form of communication. At A-2-Z, we take pride in our rapport with families and love sharing what your child does in a day at school with you. With this in mind, photos are taken via the Tadpoles app and uploaded on the platform for you to view. If you wish for your child to be exempt from this practice, please indicate as such on the enrollment application. The center also takes great pride in our social media presence on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and the A-2-Z webpage. We find having a presence on these apps not only continues to help us grow, but allows other family members of your children (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) to feel connected to our school. If

you do not want your child to be featured on our social media accounts, but still would like us to post to Tadpoles for your family to view only, please indicate this on the enrollment application.

The Tadpoles App

Once you are enrolled with us, you will receive a link to the email on file asking you to join Tadpoles. This platform is where you can view/pay tuition invoices, and it also acts as a means of communication between families and staff. Our staff members use this app to update you on your child's day. When group photos are uploaded to Tadpoles, please refrain from posting them elsewhere in order to respect the privacy of our other students and families. Tadpoles is only available between the hours of 5:30am-6:30pm. Only memes of the administration team are permitted to contact parents through the app on the weekends with emergency announcements (school closures, early dismissals, delayed openings, etc.). Staff members are not permitted to have the app on their personal phones and therefore operate the app using school issued devices. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child, they must be addressed during the center's operating hours. In the event of an emergency, please contact our director, Ms. Sue Jennings.

Screen Time for Children

No student under the age of 2.5 years of age is exposed to screen time of any kind at the center. The AAP has determined the use of handheld devices and screen time can have an adverse effect on adolescent brain development. Students above the age of 2.5, are permitted to access the interactive board in our STEM room for learning purposes only and for no longer than 15 minutes 2x per week.

Sickness Policy

We pride ourselves on the cleanliness of our center, however germs and sickness still occur despite our best efforts and sanitizing procedures. We do understand that many of our families are working parents, but to prevent sickness from spreading, we do as you keep your child home if they are showing symptoms. If your child shows any of the following symptoms, they are not permitted back to school for at least 48 hours after symptoms subside. Due to the age of our students, this is a policy we take very seriously.

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Temperature higher than 100.4 F

- Yellow eyes or skin
- Lethargic
- Red or pink eye with discharge
- Severe cough with mucus
- Sores on the mouth or body
- Stiff neck
- Severe diaper rash
- Cossack

Medication Policy

When possible, we ask that you administer medications to your child at home. In the event a child is in need of an inhaler or Epi pen, please contact the director for the appropriate medication release forms to be completed by the child's physician. Diaper creams, bug spray, and sunscreen also require a medication permission form.

Discipline Policy

Please note that discipline in most cases, is relevant to the situation at hand, the children involved, the child's past history, and their age. Our goal is to provide a safe environment for our students and to prepare them for expectations outside of the center. Steps we exhaust before any other actions include: redirecting the child and reminding them of the class rules. If necessary, the child may be removed from the group. After continuous behavior issues, parents are notified and the child is subject to removal from the center.

Expulsion/Termination of Care Policy

In unfortunate circumstances, A-2-Z reserves the right to terminate care if deemed necessary. This is done after all efforts/techniques have been exhausted and/or for multiple continuous issues. As a center, we make every effort to rectify the situation before a decision is made to remove the child from the center. Our number one priority is the well being/best interest of our students, staff members, and our school environment.

Reasons for suspension/termination may include, but are not limited to:

- The child is at risk of causing bodily harm or injury to themselves, or others
- A parental conflict that includes physical/verbal threats or intimidating acts toward staff members
- Continuous failure to pay or lateness of tuition

- Failure to complete necessary paperwork for child's enrollment
- Tardiness at pick up
- Child has not adjusted to the center in a timely manner
- Child is physically and/or verbally abusive to other children/staff
- Excessive biting
- Continuous breaking of A-2-Z policy

A child will **not** be terminated for these reasons:

- parent/guardian made a complaint against the center to the Office of Licensing regarding violations of licensing standards
- Parent reported abuse or neglect
- Questioning the center regarding certain policies or rules

The Definition of Family

In this handbook, we refer to a family as a parent, legal guardian, sponsor, or anyone else who provides immediate care and is responsible for the child in our care.

Inclusion

Our center firmly believes in the inclusion of children at all ability levels, and that they are entitled to equal education, opportunities, and acceptance despite any individual differences. We strive to make every reasonable accommodation/modification for the child in order to encourage full and active integration/participation in our program. Accommodations and modifications will be made on a case by case basis and are subject to change based on the child's individual capabilities and needs.

Non-Discrimination

At A-2-Z, we commit ourselves to offering equal educational opportunities for all children despite race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, ability, political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, or any other consideration deemed unlawful by federal, state, or local laws. Our educational programs are designed to meet the needs of all learners and their varying needs.

Confidentiality

Unless written consent has been received, all information regarding your child will not be released with the expectation of that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies

Family Involvement

A-2-Z has an open door policy for registered parents. We welcome and encourage our parents to visit throughout the day and be involved with our school. As a courtesy to staff and students, we do ask families to try and refrain from visiting during rest time (between the hours of 11am-2pm). To bridge the gap between home and school, we also offer home visits upon request and offer parent teacher conferences by request.

As an accredited center by Grow NJ Kids, we offer many parenting resources/classes. Our director is always available for meetings throughout the year shall you ever decide to take advantage of these opportunities. Back to school night is held every year in late September or Early October.

We also host a Halloween parade, potluck holiday party, Muffins with Mom, and Donuts with Dad every year. These events are open to registered families and we always encourage parents to attend/participate. Our center is a community friendly small business, so please let us know if you or your family are involved with any local groups or charities.

Please note that throughout the year, many surveys and/or questionnaires are forwarded to registered families. Your feedback helps our staff to better our center and continue to provide the highest quality of care. So, we ask you to please take the time to complete all surveys in a timely manner.

Staff Qualifications

Our center prides itself on employing highly qualified and reputable staff members. All incoming staff members are vetted through our interview process and fingerprints/background checks conducted by the state. Staff members also participate in an orientation presentation and ongoing professional development in the areas of child development, safe learning environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, individuality/cultural diversity, and professionalism.

All staff members must have the following:

- A clear criminal background check with fingerprinting
- CPR/first aid training
- Fire safety training
- Basic training in areas including recognizing child abuse, infectious diseases, and positive discipline
- All teachers must also complete 20 additional hours of ongoing training each school year

- Staff is trained to implement curriculum and uphold the states preschool standards

Child to Adult Ratios

Birth- 18 months	4:1
18 months- 2.5 years old	6:1
2.5 years old- 4 years old	10:1
4 years old	12:1
5 years old	15:1

A Note from Our Director

Dear Families,

I am writing to you on behalf of myself, my family, and the staff to thank you for trusting A-2-Z with your precious little ones. Your trust in us to nurture, teach, and care for them is an honor I hold very close to my heart. As a mother, I know how important it is to ensure your children receive a quality education, are safe, and most importantly loved. Over the years, I have been lucky enough to be a part of hundreds of children's lives, all of whose unique personalities, warmth, and smiles have fueled my mission to not only teach, but nurture and love every single child attending my school. Please know, once a child walks through the doors of the center, they become a part of my family. On behalf of everyone here at A-2-Z, thank you very much for allowing us to be a part of your children's lives.

Warmest Regards,

Ms. Sue Jennings

Email: mssuea2z@gmail.com

